

**An Evaluation of Artistic Influences on Marketing Theory and Practice  
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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** This paper evaluates the connections between art and marketing in order to develop enhanced insight into how art and the art world can inform marketing theory and practice.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** An in-depth analysis of a wide range of relevant literatures is carried out in order to heighten our understanding of art as a way of knowing within the marketing discipline. A range of meanings of art and marketing are considered and an analyses of their intersections is carried out.

**Findings:** A number of potentially useful concepts are developed, including that of the marketing manager as an artist. Viewing marketing through art is seen as an avant garde response to addressing the continuing theory/practice gap.

**Research limitations/implications:** Following an art-based way of knowing in marketing has the potential to challenge more mainstream paths of thinking by opening up the ways in which we visualise marketing theory and practice.

**Practical implications:** Artistic creativity is seen as a key factor in stimulating marketing decisions. Viewing the marketer as artist also mirrors the actual behaviour of the marketing manager by providing insight into intuitive thought processes and visualisation techniques.

**Originality/value:** Arts marketing research in general is making progress in terms of its theoretical and practical contributions to the wider marketing discipline. It is believed that papers such as this will contribute to the ongoing research agenda by stimulating much needed critical debate.

**Keywords:** Art, Marketing Theory, Marketing Practice, Critique.

**Paper Type:** Viewpoint

## **Introduction: Ways of Knowing in Marketing**

There has been extensive debate over whether or not marketing is an art or a science (Converse 1945; Hunt 1976; Brown 1996; Gummesson 2002) and if it should only apply to specific industry sectors (Carman 1973; Hirschman 1983) or broadened to account for all situations (Kotler and Levy 1969; Hunt 1994). This paper does not seek to revisit these discussions but considers the possibility that marketing can be informed by art itself. The majority of marketing studies fall within the positivist perspective which assume a single, tangible reality with generalisable truths (Hirschman 1986). However, Arndt (1985) believes that, since a single paradigm can only ever offer a partial, incomplete truth, this suggests that paradigmatic pluralism is needed, thereby giving weight to consideration of how art might inform marketing. Viewing marketing in an artistic sense means that explanations can be unveiled which acknowledge the value of empirical generalisations but which also establish situation specific constructions of the world which are grounded in individual values (Tarkovsky 1986). An artist may align to a specific school of thought but the art produced will be unique due to the subjective interpretations of the artist. Art, just as much as science, can be viewed as a way of assimilating the world, while artistic intuition can complement existing ways of knowing about marketing. Artistic knowledge can encourage marketers

to reach alternative understandings of phenomena by exploring beyond the confines of conventional, bounded, rational thought.

Scientific ways of knowing have roots in natural history, analysis and experimentation while analytical thinking in the wider social sciences often concerns the conceptual analysis of language (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2002). This paper evaluates how art is capable of creating a language of communication, visualisation and experience which connects with marketing. Marketing and other areas of management are still viewed as being dominated by the rationalist, functionalist epistemological paradigm, although more implicit aspects of organisational action are slowly becoming embedded in theory (Rutgers 1999). Guillet de Monthoux (2004) develops a substantive discussion on the uncovering of implicitly grounded art and aesthetic meanings which are of relevance to marketers and others working and researching in management. Rationality is concerned with ordered reasoning, calculation and the reality of being but holding a position of reason and observation does not necessarily guarantee certain knowledge (Hume 1999). Scientific rationality has connections with positivism and its belief that it is capable of solving all human problems (Hegel 1971). It can also result in a loss of meaning, a lack of freedom and the decreased ability of the individuals for self control. Even Karl Popper appears critical of the notion of rationality as a scientific certainty:

His view is that no theory, nor piece of knowledge, can ever be definite, nothing is sacred (Rutgers 1999:24).

The arts, rather than the sciences, are now viewed as offering higher ways of gaining knowledge while art itself can suggest innovative hypotheses which would otherwise be unlikely to occur through scientific thinking alone (Harrison et al. 1998). There is now a stream of research which draws on the arts and humanities as a rich source of ideas about marketing (Hirschman 1986; Stern 1989), while techniques from art and literary criticism can be used to inform understanding of visual and verbal communication in advertising (Stern and Schroeder 1994). The similarities between artistic and organisation theory can be compared, noting that acts of management can be viewed as artistic productions. Continued adoption of longstanding business principles do not always succeed in facilitating understanding of management practice and, alternatively, the interrogation of art is recommended:

Aesthetic principles and the History of Art could be drawn upon to support this concept, and it might even be possible to develop a function of ‘management criticism’ such as exists in relation to the conventional arts (Benghozi 1987:6)

Sumpf (2002) considers how the perceptual capability of managers can be improved by participation in art appreciation classes, proposing that common management tools be unlearned and alternative art based approaches embraced instead in order to counteract organisational blindness. These facilitate thinking around unusual juxtapositions and connections between previously unrelated fields. Art provides fresh perspectives on familiar phenomena (Murphy 1997) and helps decision makers to utilise their perceptual competencies in addressing environmental complexity and uncertainty (Henry 2001). Life is becoming more aesthetic, ephemeral and experiential while art is now becoming

located within everyday practices, suggesting that it is capable of organising experience through its framing of the human universe Venkatesh and Meamber (2006).

### **Enabling Critical Thinking Through Art:**

The first issue of *Administrative Science Quarterly* in 1956 included a call for artistic ways of knowing while, more recently, Chia (1996) recommended the exploration of the arts in providing new ways of exploring relational patterns and frames of understanding which can result in giving research a critical edge. This can be achieved by moving away from analytical problem solving to embracing resourcefulness, imagination and entrepreneurship which stimulates understanding. Belk (1986) asks whether art is only capable of suggesting hypotheses for subsequent scientific testing or if both art and science have equal claims to truth. His focus mostly concerns the relationship between art, consumer behaviour and materialism but there is no specific engagement with marketing management. Gadamer (1975:84) believed that art contains a claim to truth which is no less inferior to that of science, providing more complete, multidimensional and multisensory ways of understanding, rather than focusing on explanation alone. Extensive discussions on Gadamer and other philosophers' evaluation of art which have relevancy to marketing can be found in Vessey (2000) and throughout the writings of Guillet de Monthoux (2004).

Although art and science tend to create opposing, and sometimes, hostile perspectives, art can also be used to create complementary ways of knowing. Art can contain scientific elements such as pointillism theory while science also acknowledges the contribution of art to its field (Kieseever 2001; Kelley et al. 2001). Plato (360 BC) was an early commentator on the schism between art and science and his position is repeatedly made clear across the various books of his Republic. Despite his claims that art has a low degree of truth, the history of art demonstrates a long standing commitment to searching for truth; for example Eugene Delacroix interprets truth as the ways in which the hand of man is felt, or tangibilised, through the production and experience of an artwork (Delacroix 1938). Truth in marketing can similarly be experienced through the consumption of a product or service or as the result of a strategic decision from marketing management. Viewing marketing from an artistic perspective connects with the growing literature on aesthetics as a critical form of management discourse. Rather than just concerning the philosophical dimension of beauty, art and aesthetics can also refer to the sensing nature of decision making where intuition is just as much a part of the process as rational thinking (Strati 1999). The reconceptualisation of the organisation as an art firm also helps to visualise artistic forms of management since artistic performance is now associated with business performance (Guillet de Monthoux 2004). The central thesis in Monthoux's work is that the conceptualisation of an organisation as an art firm or an avant-garde enterprise allows for the application of the methods used by artists to create value to be contrasted against more conventional notions of market making.

*Ways of Knowing in Art:*

Instead of focusing on a single generalisable truth, the meeting of art and marketing helps to deal with ambiguity and context. Various terms have been used to describe more artistic ways of knowing within management education, including aesthetic epistemology (Nissley 1999), art as a way of knowing (Greene 1995) and creative learning (Vaill 1996). Combining artistic methods with more conventional business school approaches facilitates the construction of multiple ways of knowing through cross-fertilisation of ideas. The application of an art-based epistemology also helps to tease out the artistic elements of decision making:

A model of art...would seem defensible in studying organisations, offering a metaphor which, analogically, can help us understand and improve organisational life (Jones 1984:176).

Both marketing and art theories are the outcomes of social processes of meaning production and consumption. Artistic knowledge is now viewed as more than just the prelude to scientific testing since social scientists, including management and marketing researchers, are now embracing artistic forms of enquiry as their main data collection method (Brown and Patterson 2000a; Schroeder 2001). Fillis and Rentschler (2006) have mined the visual arts for connections with marketing, entrepreneurship and creativity. This interaction is viewed as the centre of a non-linear, free thinking understanding of artistic truth. In addition, the artworld and the marketing environment are visualised as a mutually beneficial permeable boundary where multi-directional

connections can be made between small business marketing theory and practice and arts management (Fillis 2004).

*Art and the Business Environment:*

The business environment is changing due to globalisation and technology effects, resulting in a marketplace characterised by fragmentation, mass customisation and chaos. Consequently, long accepted stepwise models of marketing planning, strategy and new product development are now found wanting. Adoption of more artistic approaches involve the omission of certain steps as the marketer establishes a greater sense of the environment and its opportunities. Art data can be used to construct marketing theory and influence marketing practice by viewing the artworld as a source of creativity. While acknowledging that not all art is creative, there is growing evidence that it can shape thinking in advantageous ways; for example, analysis of artistic philosophy and practice can help develop competitive advantage through the juxtapositioning of ideas across fields and via the incorporation of art-based marketing practices relating to innovation, vision, leadership and motivation.

*Art and Critique:*

There have been many attempts at critiquing schools of artistic thought and art criticism is a recognised area of study in its own right (Frascina and Harrison 1982). Greenberg (1960) believed that modern art was capable of using the tools of art to critique the discipline itself. Marketing should also be capable of following this path by looking



beyond mainstream approaches and adopting more critical methods as in other areas of management, the arts and the humanities (May 1989; Smallman 2006). Evaluating the methodologies used in making and critiquing art can also help to think about marketing in a more critical way so that new layers of knowledge are uncovered.

Critical thinking in marketing is not yet as highly developed as in management and organisation studies (Burton 2001; Watkins and King 2002). In their review of critical theoretical approaches across management disciplines, Alvesson and Willmott (1996) found that, despite the huge potential in marketing, critical theory was in least evidence here. This may be due to marketing's lack of interest in new theory development but approaches such as postmodernism and critical theory have begun to free up marketers' preponderance with positivism and logical empiricism by providing alternative directions (Hetrick and Lozada 1999). Critical theory enables the generation of critique through interaction with the theorist's social world, the construction of a critical account of cultural and historical influences on intellectual activity and the interrogation of the strengths and weaknesses of alternative perspectives in order to build stronger theoretical foundations (Calhoun 1996).

#### *Critical Marketing:*

Although there is a growing body of work termed 'critical marketing', the focus so far is largely on consumer research, rather than the organisation or the interface between them. It can be viewed as a radical alternative to long established ways of knowing

about marketing, both in terms of its impact on the marketing research process and as a pedagogical strategy (Catterall et al. 1999). A recent ESRC funded seminar series resulted in the publication of papers which consider what it means to be a critical marketer, questioning the assumptions which marketing makes, and evaluating current social and environmental factors which impact on the discipline (Saren et al. 2007). Saren (2007) suggests that marketing thinkers must consider how marketing phenomena are experienced by consumers, while also learning from outside the confines of conventional marketing research. He promotes the adoption of relationship and critical marketing as ways of achieving this alternative perspective. However, this ignores other calls for research into the creation of the market from within the organisation through creative, entrepreneurial thinking and practice (Berthon et al. 2004; Fillis 2005). Artists are both self critics, as well as critics of society and the environment. Also, since there is an extensive history of art criticism, its ethos can be instilled within marketing through the pursuit of art-based ways of knowing.

Saren does at least acknowledge that we should move beyond the functional approach to marketing management but does not offer any thoughts on how marketing management researchers can embrace this philosophy. We should consider, for example what has been happening within critical management and the Art of Management group of researchers. The art world has been informing debate among those attending the Art of Management conference series for a number of years and has the potential to also contribute to the debate in marketing among those moving away from positivism

(Atkinson 2006). The series' primary aim is the exploration and promotion of the arts as a way of understanding management and organisational life through broader, richer and more pluralistic interpretations than those found in the majority of management conferences. It does not seem unreasonable to propose that a similar series based around the Art of Marketing be developed. Adorno (1970/1997) believed that art, aesthetics and critical theory have the ability to uncover truths about society while Lyotard (1971) identified a liberating tension between the discursive, or verbal, and the figural, or visual. Utilising this tension in marketing has the potential to facilitate unbounded, critical and creative thinking through its intersection with art.

### **Meanings of Art and Marketing:**

#### *Definitions of art:*

Socrates described art as a mirror held up to nature while the Shakespearean character Hamlet perceived art as capable of showing what would not otherwise be perceived, suggesting that it possesses a degree of cognitive utility (Danto 1964). Gombrich (1996:365) presents two interpretations of art:

a neutral one which describes any image, as when we speak of child art or the art of the insane, and a valiative one, as when we say 'this is the work of a madman but what he has produced is a work of art'.

This latter understanding clearly hinges on the subjective interpretation of the individual making the judgement. Art can consist of artefacts or images which contain rich and complex direct and symbolic meanings. The Special and General Theories of Relativity have even been described as key modernist art works.

Art can be taken to mean a particular form of creative production involving aesthetic value resulting from a particular skill and use of imagination. However, there is no commonly agreed definition of art since what constitutes art tends to be a subjective, intuitive evaluation made by the artist, the critic and the audience (Penrose 1990). It can be viewed both as an open concept and as an empirically based entity (Berleant 1964). Art also concerns the stimulation of the human senses, mind and spirit. Thinking in an art-based way facilitates understanding of human activity and philosophy (Levinson 1979). The art world can be visualised as a social-economic network involving both artistic and business-based activities, organisations and individuals. Danto describes how the art world's members tacitly agree what is and isn't art, while Bourdieu utilises the concepts of cultural capital and social class ownership in order to unveil the social and economic underpinnings of art, the artist and the consumer (Robins 1991). Another useful element relates to the social critique of aesthetic judgements of taste (Bourdieu 1997). This has particular resonance not only for consumers of art but also for marketers and consumers generally. An institutional approach to understanding the art world acknowledges both social and economic contributions as part of a complex field of forces; for example, art and the art market can be positioned within a wider social and economic network, involving social actors engaged in competitive exchanges. Therefore, the art, social and economic worlds seem to be inextricably connected:

Art worlds typically have intimate and extensive relations with the worlds from which they try to distinguish themselves. They share sources of supply with those other worlds, recruit personnel from them, adopt ideas that originate in them, and compete with them for audiences and financial support (Becker 1982:36).

### *Marketing Knowledge:*

Rossiter (2002) evaluates what constitutes marketing knowledge, noting that there is no clear agreement on what its form or content should be. Stances range from scientific generalisations to situation specific understandings grounded in qualitative enquiry (AMA 1998; Gronhaug 2002; Ardley 2006). Creativity, intuition and analogy serve as potential sources of evidence for marketing knowledge, rather than actual forms of it. However, these aspects are also found in art and have also been used to create more appropriate forms of marketing knowledge, for example, in smaller firm marketing (Carson and Coviello 1996; Hackley and Mumby-Croft 1998). Here, improved knowledge is reached through triangulation of data from in-depth interviews, surveys, observation and other methodological approaches. Wierenga (2002) believes that Rossiter's analysis ultimately concerns the interrogation of marketing science and therefore excludes many other potentially useful perspectives; in other words, all possible insights should be considered.

### *Redefining Marketing:*

Marketing is generally held to be a profitable exchange process which satisfies individual, organisational and social needs, achieving value in a market setting. It relies on a customer-oriented philosophy which guides all related activities from conception, pricing and promotion to derivation of new ideas. However, due to heightened globalisation and technology effects and an increasingly turbulent business

environment, marketing needs to be reconceptualised. Many of marketing's current principles are still embedded in those developed for consumer and industrial goods more than fifty years ago. It is no wonder, then, that there is a discrepancy between frameworks such as the marketing mix and the needs of the twenty-first century knowledge based organisation. Marketing is now applied to all forms of organisation, from multinational corporations to non-profits, government bodies and microenterprises. However, each of these organisational forms has its own needs and it would be dangerous to suggest that one model of marketing can be applied to every situation. Also, consumer behaviour is changing and, rather than reacting to marketing actions, consumers are now actively involved in both the production and consumption process. Instead of viewing marketing as a generic function within all organisations, it should be thought of as an individualised, situation specific philosophy. Marketing makes claims about being able to respond in a sensory fashion. Thinking about the art of marketing evokes a sensual, emotional connection between the two domains, while also relating to aesthetics in terms of what is deemed good and bad art. Similar evaluations are also made with respect to products, strategies and plans.

### **The Meeting of Marketing and Art:**

Despite growing research on the relationship between marketing and art, relatively little is still known about the meeting of the two domains, beyond application of the marketing concept to art (Chong 2002) and the utilisation of art within consumption studies (Schroeder 2006a). Research which does exist tends to centre around the

application of prescriptive marketing frameworks based on the marketing mix within art organisations and environments. There is far less evidence of the inclusion of other useful contributions such as creativity research and entrepreneurial thinking (Fillis and Rentschler 2006). Despite development of marketing thought, there have been few competing schools at any one point in time (Kotler 1979). However, in the art world, the existence of rival schools has resulted in the healthy construction of alternative theoretical and practical directions. Kotler's commentary suggests that marketing theory would be more creative if artistic thinking is embraced. One potential interaction might revolve around analysing how the Surrealists made use of dreams and the subconscious as a way of generating ideas (Gibson 1997). This could then be incorporated into the marketing research process; for example, in seeking to improve understanding of consumer behaviour where subconscious thinking impacts on purchase behaviour. Art can lead to new ways of perceiving the environment. It may even be possible to consider the application of art within marketing as part of a potential paradigm shift (Bohm 1998).

#### *Art and Market Orientation:*

Analysis of art and the artist can reshape perceptions of marketing through artist-led creative reconstructions of marketing practice involving the creation of the market rather than responding to customer demands. Market and customer orientation have received a large amount of attention but product centred market creation has largely been ignored. Some studies have found that market orientation is positively linked with

improved performance but others have not, shown that the relationship is tentative at best. The marketing concept has long been criticised for being too customer focused and stifling innovation from within the organisation (Tauber 1974). This raises criticisms such as the spread of unimaginative thinking and tired, similar products (Day and Montgomery 1999). Samli et al. (1987) acknowledge that there is a need for outward technological, product-oriented push as well as customer-focused marketing while Martin and Faircloth (1995) view customer orientation in marketing as verging on obsession. An alternative is to be prepared to sometimes ignore the customer in order to create truly innovative products (Brown 2001; Berthon et al. 2004). Butler (2000) discusses the merits of product centred marketing in art, noting that artists do not necessarily follow the market but instead practice a form of product orientation which is not anti-marketing but is, rather, a refreshing re-take on the marketing concept.

Drucker (1954) believed that the main function of a business was to create and maintain its customers through the production of appropriate products and services while being customer led suggests a short term, reactive focus (Slater and Narver 1998). Berthon et al. note that in all of the market orientation scales adopted there is an almost exclusive focus on serving customers. Re-examining Drucker's original thesis shows that the organisation should not just concentrate on serving but should also endeavour to create customers too. Discussion of customer creation is lacking within the marketing literature and this is where an art-based approach to marketing can assist in heightening understanding of this need.



*Artists and the Market:*

Tracing the development of modern art, Collings (1999) constructs a critique of how business minded artists such as Tracey Emin and Damien Hirst are now eagerly embracing marketing practices once they create demand for their work. Brown and Patterson (2000b) have edited a collection of papers which consider the growing impact of art and aesthetics on marketing practice, including analytical inputs of the lives of Edouard Manet, Salvador Dali and James Joyce. These writings promote the re-imagining of the future of marketing management and consumption issues through the interrogation of art, aesthetics and the alternative, avant garde part of society. Analysis of artists' lives can generate a range of marketing data; for example, deconstructing the life and artistic output of Pablo Picasso results in the uncovering of marketing related practices such as market analysis, product and brand name development, the use of networks, product differentiation and innovation, distribution, merchandising, pricing and public relations.

Although Schroeder (2005) focuses specifically on the relationship between branding and art, he also identifies wider implications for the marketing discipline. Adding credence to why marketers should be interested in art, he argues that enhanced insight into the relationship between visual art and the production and consumption of images leads to improved understanding of branding as a strategic signifying practice. Art can be viewed as a commodity which is traded in the international marketplace and is

therefore subject to the same market forces and consumer influences as with other products. Historically, there has been a strong intellectual, cultural and conceptual separation of art and commerce (Schroeder 2000) but, as can be seen through the work of Brown and Patterson and others, there is growing evidence of a narrowing or even blurring of these differences. Schroeder focuses on brand strategy as it seeks inspiration from the world of art while Fillis (2003) unveils how art data and the artistic biography can uncover parallels between marketing management and the theory and practice of art making, evaluating artists such as Jackson Pollock and Jeff Koons.

The utilisation of biography enables the construction of detailed longitudinal insight into artistic, social, economic and marketing phenomena which would otherwise remain undetected if more common methods such as in-depth interviewing and questionnaire analysis alone had been used (Roberts 2002). Both Schroeder and Fillis analyse the artist Andy Warhol in order to generate marketing insight. Through the identification of marketing practices in Warhol's art making, the former develops knowledge about consumption processes while the latter establishes an understanding of creative, entrepreneurial forms of art-based marketing. Schroeder (2006b) extends this thinking by analysing how Thomas Kinkade, the most successful living American artist, can be used to provide insight into organisation and the commodification of artistic values. Many critics, however, view Kinkade solely as a business person and, certainly, his artistic talent is limited, verging on the kitsch. As Schroeder notes, art is capable of

representing both the highest and lowest forms of human achievement while artists have long provided critiques of society.

*The Creative Imagination of the Artistic Marketer:*

The marketing research process normally relies on the collection of data from conventional sources such as the consumer, the manager and the organisation. However, there are a number of alternative, equally useful and yet underused avenues which can also be explored; for example, Borgerson and Schroeder (2002) call for the utilisation of art historical factors within marketing research. Schroeder (2006a) uses critical visual analysis of advertising imagery in the same way that an art historian might research paintings while Halliday (1999) explores the possibility of adapting frameworks from art in order to improve insight into marketing through their ability to develop understanding of personality, aesthetics and judgement.

The promotion of an art-based form of marketing has direct connections with creativity and the imagination. A common interpretation of creativity is that it is the production of something original, useful and appropriate, while also containing value and meaning (Sternberg 1988). Artists tend to spend long periods of time engaged in creative problem-solving strategies and therefore investigation of the artistic decision making process can provide insight into creative decision making generally. Situations where only algorithmic possibilities are possible do not permit meaningful creativity. It is best achieved when flexible, exploratory, non-predetermined paths are possible (Amabile

1983). Thinking artistically facilitates the linking of remote associations in order to derive creative solutions. Piaget (1962) interprets creativity as creative imagination and, by judging a situation from a number of perspectives, this helps to shape the creative process.

Art as a manifestation of creativity can impact on a number of different levels; for example, in the various practices and philosophies of the organisation and its managers and employees. Insight can be gained by considering Warhol's creativity. Due to his artistic and business acumen, he integrated his art with his own form of marketing in order to obtain both commercial and artistic success. Those working with Warhol in his Factory did not necessarily need to share exactly the same understanding as himself. In fact, a certain degree of misunderstanding helped to fuel his own brand of art-based marketing. The ideas expressed by individuals in his workplace sometimes conflicted with his own views. Ordinarily, this might be sufficient grounds for the termination of a contract but Warhol utilised these clashes of thinking to his advantage. Unique solutions to problems often resulted so that 'when working with people who misunderstand you, instead of getting transmissions, you get transmutations, and that's much more interesting in the long run' (Warhol 1975: 99). This compares similarly to Arthur Koestler's notion of bisociation, involving the putting together of two unrelated facts or ideas to form a single identity (Fletcher 1999). The idea of synectics similarly describes the joining together of different and apparently irrelevant elements in a new or novel way so that fresh insight is gained into a particular problem or research issue.

### **The Marketing Manager as an Artist:**

Despite the aforementioned separation of art and commerce, there is also a history of viewing the manager as an artist and, given the work of Schroeder and others, the notion of the artist as a marketing manager can also be developed. Brownlie (1998), for example, visualises the marketing manager as capable of evolving into a creative artist who can use judgement to create order out of disorder. Degot (1987) views the manager as an artist, instead of someone motivated mainly by maximisation of corporate profit. Rather than reducing management activities down to economic aspects alone with managers and their actions displaced to the background, the manager can be visualised as the creator of acts of management. Both management practice and research can be thought of in terms of styles or schools where different, and even opposing, forms are evident, from the autocratic to an entrepreneurial approach.

Degot found that artistic action is not just the sole preserve of artists but impacts across all human activity. Managers and organisational leaders have also been viewed as artists who practice aesthetic forms of decision making and who utilise the framework of art as a source of managerial inspiration (Kirkeby 2002). Degot perceives the manager as an artist who belongs to a particular school of thought and who designs any action taken, even if it is on behalf of others and subject to specific constraints. A managerial work of art suggests that the manager leaves a personal imprint on it, in addition to any formal techniques used. The result of artistic action must be visible and the basic creative

design of the managerial work of art must be due to one individual. The rationale behind the promotion of the individual manager as the focus is that he/she has attained the status of 'artist' by moving beyond the conventional boundaries of endeavour in order to fulfil certain aspirations.

The marketing of art and the ability of artists to develop their own form of marketing has contributed to art history and practice for centuries and yet it is only recently emerging as an avenue for investigation within marketing research. Hirschman (1983) identifies the art world as a special case where conventional marketing concepts do not fit due to the personal values of the artist and the social norms which impact on the artistic production process. Interrogation of art and other domains show that generalised rules cannot be made to apply and that situation and sector specific thinking is instead required.

Schroeder (2005) views artists as self promoting brand managers within the cultural world, noting a reluctance among marketing researchers to think about art in a critical sense. Schroeder and Salzer-Morling (2006) edit a collection of papers on brand culture which analyse the relationship between art, consumption, brand management, corporate branding, ethics and advertising. Positioning art within a wider framework, they argue that, in addition to consumers and managers controlling branding processes, cultural codes also contribute to how brands work in imparting meaning to the consumer. Gibbons (2005) explores the connections between art and advertising, noting a mutually

enriching relationship between the artist who leaves the confines of the gallery to make use of the tactics and mass media of advertising and the advertiser who sees merit in the issues and strategies of contemporary art. Art has been described as the representation of the underlying nature of reality and the manifestation of pleasure and emotion involving direct intuitive vision (Chartrand 1990). This connection has implications for how we think about marketing and suggests linkages with other fields such as entrepreneurship where sets of competencies based around visionary leadership help shape the future direction of the organisation.

*Art history and marketing:*

Art history serves as a data source for marketing and the wider management discipline (Goodman and Kruger 1988). Historical interpretations can also aid understanding of impacting emergent themes and assist in the development of critical thinking (Carson and Carson 1998). Honig (1998), for example, explores life in sixteenth century Antwerp as a way of evaluating the development of the visual arts market and market mechanisms generally. The Antwerp paintings of this period act as pictorial representations of products, consumers and producers. The sixteenth century was a time when painting of the physical marketplace was common and so such depictions can serve as rich visual data sources. Combining visual analysis with economic and historical data of the period enhances understanding of the growth of marketing practice. Rather than continue to produce art in the conventional manner of the time, the Antwerp artist began to experiment with a variety of styles of expression. The

subsequent growth in artistic genres was in part in response to demand by the buyer. Honig's analysis uncovers an alternative way of knowing about marketing through the use of an under researched but nonetheless familiar industry.

*The avant garde and the marketing theory/practice gap:*

Thinking about marketing through art creates an alternative and even radical perspective to that taught in most business schools and can be compared similarly to the avant garde movements in art history, such as that in fin-de-siecle Paris from 1887-1900 with artists such as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Edouard Vuillard (Boyer 1998). Avant gardism focuses on the ability of artistic individuals and groups who attempt to change societal thinking (Harrison et al. 1998). Through its creativity, it also has a central role in defining culture (Chartrand 1984). Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the 19<sup>th</sup> century French philosopher and social theorist viewed art as having a much wider impact on the self and society than previously imagined. Embracing art within marketing could therefore result in similar influences on the organisation and the consumer. Brown (1995:13) and Brown and Patterson (2000a:18-19) describe their vision of an Avant Garde school within marketing which embraces the spirit of its predecessors in art:

...the engineering of some sort of "crisis" or radical break (often involving new terminologies) is vitally necessary for the "outsider" or challenging group...Not only does this help provide the challenging group with a sense of cohesion and shared purpose, but the subsequent process of accommodation eventually places the...younger generation of "radical" thinkers at the centre of power as the "establishment" ages and disengages.



The standardised research report or formulaic academic paper...could and should make way for poetry, photography, painting, performance and all manner of 'unconventional' modes of marketing discourse.

Avant garde art challenges the boundaries of convention by creating rather than responding to demand and is potentially very powerful and even revolutionary. This form of thinking can be achieved through the imagery depicted in the art work and in its narratives; for example, the digital artist Ella Bissett Johnson (2005) uses images of art, culture and commerce to construct critical messages concerning consumption behaviour, while also questioning the ethics of multinational corporations. A risk taking avant garde artist seeks to challenge conventional practices although there will always be those who are quite happy to copy and perpetuate existing approaches to art making. Transferring this notion to marketing, there are those organisations content on following long accepted forms of marketing, irrespective of whether or not these are the most effective ways of carrying out business.

### **Conclusions:**

This paper has moved beyond the debate of whether or not marketing is an art or a science by considering the merits of using art and the art world to establish alternative ways of knowing about marketing. The discussion has explored how art is capable of providing alternative ways of gaining knowledge and accessing truth when compared with more established methods of scientifically based marketing research. Such an approach stimulates creativity while evaluating marketing through art has the potential to cause a shift in thinking. Some business schools are now adopting art and its

practices as a creative ingredient of management education, in addition to the more conventional case study approach (Shinn 2003). At Babson College, for example, business students must enrol on a creative class such as poetry, painting, fiction-writing, theatrical improvisation or music. Artistic forms of marketing should be viewed as avant garde responses to the continued failure of much marketing theory to acknowledge the need for sector and situation specific understanding. This position also matches the call by Gummesson (2002) for the construction and application of more creative marketing methodologies.

Although some researchers support the marketing as art position, few actually interrogate the connection between art and marketing as a source of data and a mechanism for knowledge and theory construction (Brown 1996). Academics are now investigating marketing data within artistic sources such as books and films but the focus is often on consumption and branding issues rather than a wider interest in the implications for marketing theory itself. What is needed is a similar effort to that of Shelby Hunt in the 1970s and 1980s and his endeavour to uncover a scientific basis for marketing. This time, however, the focus should be on artistic enquiry. To date, few have sought to promote an art-based marketing paradigm as an alternative to the 'discredited scientific model, with its outmoded methods, mechanistic worldview and unattainable axiology (Brown 1996:255). Although art has been endorsed by numerous philosophers as an authentic source of knowledge, this has not been readily accepted or acknowledged within marketing and the wider business arena, save for a few critical

management and organisational thinkers. Table 1 summarises the key contributions of the discussion, highlighting how aesthetics, the history of art and art criticism have influenced marketing and the wider management disciplines.

### **Take in Table 1**

Despite the broadening of the marketing paradigm, the discipline has now reached a crossroads where decisions need to be taken about its future direction (Shaw and Jones 2005). The majority of marketing management research tends to focus on strategic, segmentation, targeting and mix issues while the addition of the meeting of art and marketing adds an alternative dimension to the marketer's portfolio. The establishment of an artistic school of marketing thought is not unachievable since there is a growing body of research in the area and a healthy number of like-minded researchers seeking artistic rather than scientific marketing understandings of the what, how, who, why, when and where of the performing of marketing activities. Rather than paradigm broadening, the art of marketing could be viewed as a shift in thinking, in the same vein as the growing body of management studies researchers who interrogate the arts and the art world. The foundations of marketing as a discipline were influenced by economics and this helps to understand why marketing has come to view itself as a science but it does not explain how and why so many marketing and consumer researchers are now turning to the arts and humanities for inspiration and insight.

This analysis has interrogated the meeting of art and marketing across a number of planes involving art theory, marketing theory and marketing practice. There are also merits in further exploration of the humanities as a valuable source of marketing data and as a contributor to marketing theory. Although the focus of this paper has mostly concerned the contribution of visual art to improving marketing knowledge, the potential contribution of other art forms such as music, film, literature and theatre are also acknowledged and could provide extensive possibilities for future research. There is some evidence already of their use in consumption studies but they only begin to explore what is a diverse and rich vein of untapped ideas.

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**Table 1: Contributions from Art to Marketing and other Management Disciplines**

<b>Avenue of Artistic Enquiry</b>	<b>Philosophical Perspective and Key Contributions to Management</b>
Aesthetics	Artistic activity viewed as basic human activity, not just in artists Human characteristics such as imagination and sensitivity are central to artistic activity; Aesthetics relates to sensory experiences such as feeling and intuition
History of Art	Used to develop the link between artistic activity and society, reinforcing need to acknowledge and understand impact of social forces on marketing and other realms of management Explains the work and lives of individuals, organisations and society Identification of trends and break-away movements within art helps to illustrate what can be achieved in research activities Distinguishes between groups and periods which display similarities Uncover sets of contrasting competencies and methodologies Biographical analysis of artists used to construct analogies and contribute to theory construction Art historical data and biographical data can be analysed to uncover innovative

marketing practices.

## Art Criticism

Sensitivity and specialist knowledge of the critic is used to understand the aims of others

Draws attention to works considered outstandingly good and meaningful to a certain public and to an established market  
Involves interpreting meaning and making critical judgments about specific works of art

The role of criticism involves focusing on that part of an action which results from more than just blind application of rules and procedures. It consists of the adaptation of thinking to a local context in a new way involving a creative act

Success is viewed holistically, rather than just in economic terms

(adapted with additions by the author from Degot 1987; Barrett 1994 and Feldman 1994)