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How has effective marketing and publicity in the modern artistic world become mandatory in the search for success, specifically with regards to its creator?

3,787 words (including footnotes and bibliography: 3,955 words)
Whilst crippling the grand majority of the global economy, the recent downturn of the fiscal environment left the international art scene relatively unscathed. When considering the astronomic prices and decadent lifestyle that the art market is with most commonly associated, it seems logical to have predicted that the art scene would suffer most severely; however it appears that it has survived, maintaining its notorious price-tags. Pilar Ordovas, head of post-war and contemporary art at Christie's New York, commented upon the annual Christie's contemporary art sale in October of 2008 and discussed the irrelevance of the contraction of the global economy when "the best of the best comes into the market, it still achieves incredible results and it is the rarity and the quality of the works that really has an impact"1, just as Christie's honorary chairman Christopher Burge described the art market as "alive and well"2 in response to the £21 million sale of Claude Monet's Le Pont du chemin de fer a Agenteuil in 20093. The frequent record breaking sales of the period were indicative of the control that the art market still had over international buyers (specifically the European buyers), in that the environment played no role in their spending. What is obvious is the high sales of the post-war collections were based loosely around a few renowned artists of the period, artists who had historically been known to have had a celebrated reputation and public following. Their towering status, crucial in the pricing of their work, had been achieved through their often unorthodox characters, means of expression, and importantly by a façade that had been instilled by the media, all of which as carefully constructed by the artist as the art itself.

The artist and creator being celebrated in the same category as a film actor, for example, has only been a phenomenon of the last sixty years; it can be argued that it is accountable due to the interesting and unconventional veneer that so many have possessed directly resulting in a growth in publicity. Previously, conventional skill and technical talent had made marketing redundant as the artist was merely a name to accompany a piece of high quality, not a recognisable figure. John Constable became a respected artist and subsequent Royal Academician out of his ability to capture traditionally beautiful rural scenery that could be recognised and related to by all, such as The Hay Wain4 and Wivenho Park5, two his more famous works. His conventional pieces unsurprisingly appealed to the average person as his works could be analytically deconstructed with little difficulty, appreciated for the technical and aesthetic qualities of each painting, and whilst having little reason to alienate his receiving audience. The greatest unconventional leap his art held was with the inclusion of human activity; Charles Leslie, a close friend and biographer said of Constable: "His nature was peculiarly social and could not feel satisfied with scenery, however grand in itself, that did not abound in human associations. He required villages churches, farmhouses and cottages"6, pale when compared to the politically controversial art of the same period from Theodore Gericault. As the visual media had evolved greatly from then, celebrities who had historically been known to have had a celebrated reputation and public following. Their towering status, crucial in the pricing of their work, had been achieved through their often unorthodox characters, means of expression, and importantly by a façade that had been instilled by the media, all of which as carefully constructed by the artist as the art itself.

1 Pilar Ordovas speaking to ITN.com: http://itn.co.uk/e079a01d9e35918fffaafdb0b0aa155cc0.html.
2 Christopher Bulge speaking on behalf of Christie’s New York, NY., to the daily mail: www.dailymail.co.uk/.../article.../Credit-crunch-What-credit-crunch-Art-world-oblivious-Monet-sells-record-21million.html.
3 "Le Pont du chemin de fer a Agenteuil” 1873, signed 'Claude Monet' (lower left), oil on canvas -23 5/8 x 38¾ in.
4 "The Hay Wain" 1821, John Constable. Oil on canvas., 130 cm × 185 cm.
5 "Wivenho Park” 1816, John Constable. Oil on canvas., 56.1 × 101.2 cm.
amount of stress placed upon the technical skill of the construction than that of Constable and Turner but on the artistic figure.

Andy Warhol, perhaps the most famous artist of the late 20th century, achieved his stature not through the little skill that was needed to screen-print but in his masterful manipulation of publicity and marketing. Warhol realised the growing public desire for glamour and a social celebrity culture and he placed himself in the midst of the scene in order to gain media attention. Having been born into an impoverished Pennsylvanian family and suffering from chorea from early childhood, he represented the ability to leap the social strata and the chance of overcoming unavoidable obstacles. Yet Warhol used his unfortunate hairless condition to his advantage and purchased the iconic silver wigs that made him instantly recognisable to the press and gave himself a distinguished profile; the extent of which is shown in the final line of his obituary in *The Times* newspaper where he is reduced to his appearance in being "a slight man who wore a white wig".

In altering the common perception of his representation he showed the importance of personal image not just for media figures but for future generations of young ambitious contemporary artists. However, arguably his greatest personal marketing stunt was the mysterious and endearing persona that he created in his interviews and public displays. He claimed to be merely a "voyeur", as asexual, and in a 1980 interview, a virgin; though an unconventional marketing technique, he meant to alienate his audience further and as a consequence leading people to strive for an understanding of his character. It is now commonly concluded that Warhol was in fact a homosexual and not asexual which means that art historians can debate further the plausibility of Warhol's other statements encouraging the judgement that it was all in effort for publicity. The transcendence that Warhol strived for with regards to his relationship with his audience was primarily achieved through the interviews which he gave in which he deliberately confused both the interviewer and the audience. When in an interview in which he was asked what he thought of Jasper Johns and why, he responded with: "Oh, I think he's great...um...oh...well...he makes great lunches"; its comical ridiculousness causing the public to follow him further so that they may be entertained as they had been, ironically increasing his appeal and the demand for his work.

Although Warhol was not as naturally talented at fine art as others, it was his commanding business mind that led to his success. Whilst drawing a parallel amongst the mass consumer attitude of the period the newly introduced concept of an artist's "factories", like Warhol's, removed the need for an artist's physical input and made the personal relationship that had been found between product and creator obsolete. It changed the production of art pieces into an industry where they were no longer created but manufactured. From an economical point of view the modern artist would increase the supply of the product to match the high demand of the product maximizing the profit as it also cut the time the artist had formally needed. The controversy that this revolutionary technique produced gave artists, such as Damien Hirst, vast attention as many critics disputed the morality and decency of the procedure, causing a polarised opinion to be formed. In forming a parting of beliefs the artist was seen to have the ability of altering the masses and a more transcendent figure had been established, consequently raised the prices of their works in the buyer's desire to mimic this quality.

The role of the artist changed as artists realised the impact that their individual character had on the sale of their work. More artists attempted to use their public appearances as opportunities to

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7 Obituary of Mr Andy Warhol: Art for publicity's sake (1264); published in “The Times”, MON 23 FEB 1987.
9 Andy Warhol on Jasper Johns; [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gid5qVh1hQM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gid5qVh1hQM).
act out and shock the public in order to gain interest into their work. On a live Channel 4 television debate in 1997 discussing the year's Turner Prize, Tracey Emin gained public fame when she appeared very drunk: "I'm drunk...this is live and I don't care. I don't give a fuck about it". This appearance arguably marooned her with more media attention than Gillian Wearing, who had won the Turner prize that year with his piece "Sixty Minutes, Silence", Emin's performance was renamed "Sixty minutes, noise" by the Guardian newspaper who's only reference to the real winner of the prize was made thirty-two lines down the article. Within two years Emin herself had been short-listed for the Turner Prize although many people believe she was the winner of the prize that year due to the attention My Bed drew. Her undeniably scandalous behaviour and an astonishing degree of openness meant that Tracey Emin was easily focused upon by both the art market and the tabloids, yet she did not have the aura that Warhol possessed which made him so endearing nor the cult following; however the direction and style of her work made for her own celebrity status as opposed to Warhol's who had very little personal connection. The confessional style in which Emin's work is produced makes for her character the muse and inspiration, therefore when a viewer looks at a piece of her work they would be in fact looking into the experiences and thoughts of her past and present. Human natures dictates a desire to associate her character, expressed in her art, with her profile; perhaps had she drawn from the her surrounding environment and not herself then her name may not have been as commonly known. Jeff Koons is of the same Pop-art genre as Warhol and arguably of the same fame but Koons has to some extent a more relatable persona. It is true however that his interviews are just as vague and indecipherable as Warhol's were but his physical presentation seems relatively normal. On the other hand he, like Emin, tends to use himself in his work; he and his wife are seen in the Made in Heaven series copulating in various positions with photographic images of their faces. In pairing shocking art and his face the viewer can draw a connection and his, like Emin's, recognition increases.

Shock art is the contemporary classification of intentionally disturbing pieces of art that attempt to break a taboo whether cultural or natural. In placing the viewer in an uncomfortable situation in which their education and instincts seem challenged, the likelihood of them paying attention to the artist in enhanced. The deliberately striking image is more likely to draw attention to an unbiased viewer therefore the chance of eventual mass recognition is increased. Vanessa Silberman an art critic stated in 2001 that shock art seemed to be the "safest kind of art that an artist can go into the business of making today" due to its wider covering of tabloid pages. As Shock art gradually becomes more mainstream, through a global obsession with the breaking of previous taboos, the names who support the movement become more financially successful. Damien Hirst, for example, a contemporary of Emin's and fellow YBA, is one of the prime figures of Shock art who recently broke the record for an auction sale for a single artist's works when he made more than £111 million at Sotheby's in the heart of the credit crunch, the previous record had been the £11.3 million 88 works by Pablo Picasso in 1993. What made all of the previously studied artists to become well known was their ability to shock in some sense, some being in their character and other's in the materials of their art as in Hirst's For the Love of God, the £50 million platinum and diamond encrusted Skull which shook the public for its excessiveness when at the time "Make Poverty History" campaigning was at its height.

Having gained the respect and awareness of the creative circles, artists arguably have needed to attach themselves onto a more influential project in order to widen the appreciation to the

10 “Tracey Emin on the Loose”; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKNr2LOkXYE.
12 “My Bed”, 1998. Mattress, linens, pillows, objects. 79 x 211 x 234 cm.
15 “For the love of God”, 2007- Damien Hirst; platinum, diamond, human teeth., 221.24g.
omnipotent commercial world. Many have done this by the endorsement or design of commercial objects which would bare their name. Originating with Warhol, artists have developed a relationship with commercially successful businesses; where the artist receives a greater audience in expanding their market, the company markets itself as a culturally aware brand. For Andy Warhol his relationship with advertising was instigated early in his artistic career. At the beginning of his New York based career he became a commercial illustrator, successfully being hired for his Ben Shahn inspired drawings of shoes for I.Miller. The blotchy line drawings gave him the limited but necessary following that allowed him to create other works with the confidence of a well receiving crowd. It is perhaps the commercial basis on which he began his career that inspired him to later create works revolving around society's dependency on capitalism as he himself had been a victim of its grip. Warhol initially commented the banality of advertising through his Thirty-two soup cans, in keeping the size, brand, and colour sequence consistent he imitated the basis of grand-scale marketing and in reducing the main influence of his piece further, Jasper Johns's bronze Ballantine ale cans, he added the suggestion of the depth that monotony in replication could achieve. Yet Warhol became a player in the world he had originally, contestably, criticised; he advertised both for Japanese television company TKD (still maintaining his detached guise) and also the surfing Company Quicksilver. In advertising a product and lifestyle quite the antithesis of his own, Warhol exhibits the extent at which he wished to make his name known to the general public. As it is expected that the average surfer would not have been able to afford a Warhol original, one can deduce that he merely wished to increase his public attention which he understood would make the capable buyers strive to purchase a piece from such a popular figure. Today the celebrated modern artist continues in Warhol's footsteps, gaining attention through the designing and personal branding of a relatively available object; two of such artists are American Jeff Koons and British artist Anish Kapoor. After a critically acclaimed exhibition at the Royal Academy, Kapoor's respect from the public grew to a level where the idea of his talent was appealing to nearly all creative markets, regardless of any past experience. In 2010 Anish Kapoor joined with the luxury jewellers Bulgari to design a collection of rings, his work reflected the motifs of his own work (repetition and the juxtaposition of the audacious with delicacy) but in a slightly more popular medium. In diluting the unusual manner of his work he expands the niche market, alienating fewer people therefore increasing its demand. Jeff Koons follows this unoriginal pattern with his participation in the design of the Ikepod "The Horizon (Cannonballs)" time-piece; the main feature of which is the Giant lettering of "Koons" in its advertisement, back-grounded by a collage of his Hulk and monkeys.

As a result of the increasing importance of sales reaching a financial profit in the production of art, it was not long until it took on the methods of sale of the fashion industry. Sarah Lucas and Tracey Emin's "The Shop" was a basic yet effective method of marketing the works of the two as well as others relating to YBAs, for example the Damien Hirst profiled ash-trays. The shop consisted of a collection of works by the two celebrated and followed artists of the late eighties and early nineties which meant the attention of art critics and investors was diverted from other individually selling artists to this new concept. One of these investors was Charles Saatchi of the leading advertising agency of the age Saatchi & Saatchi; he featured the two in his "Sensation" exhibition in 1997 where they began to bring in more attention. It was Charles Saatchi who began to deal in the work of Emin specifically (although Lucas was the first of the two to be recognised) bringing her to the forefront as one of Britain's most famous and successful artists. Saatchi, as with other dealers possessed the ability to market the artists further: Saatchi "was commissioning large instillations by Carl Andre, Donald Judd and Dan Flavin at a time where nobody but a few other oddballs like [him] were interested"17, all of which have become lucrative investments.

16 "Ale cans" 1964, Jasper Johns; 1964. Lithograph, composition (irreg.): 14 5/16 x 11 3/16" (36.4 x 28.4 cm); sheet: 22 13/16 x 17 15/16" (58 x 45.5 cm).
17 "My name is Charles Saatchi, and I’m an Artoholic" by Charles Saatchi, frist published by Phaidon in 2009. Page 78. All future references with be shown in the main text.
The gargantuan impact of a dealer has only been a phenomenon within the last three decades as Larry Gagosian and Leo Castelli began collecting, yet Charles Saatchi’s own participation has been shown to be/ have been shaping the direction and success of artistic genres. Tracey Emin said herself that it was interesting of "saatchi to move from the perspex, steel, oil, glass, to the tiny ordinary pieces of [Sarah] Lucus, who made things with jam and crap like that"\(^{18}\); it is now obvious that it was due to Saatchi’s alteration in purchases that made Sarah Lucas and Tracey Emin desirable names when their audience and appeal had been relatively small in comparison to their new attention. Saatchi himself realise the impact he plays in the transformation of an unknown artist into an icon as described in his book: "My name is Charles Saatchi and I'm an Artoholic" where he questions the worth of one piece from another and concludes the role of fashionable art is the key. He emphasises the impact of followed artists being exempt from the "eagle-eyed art critics at the time, though they all learned to admire [it] greatly a few years later" (page 82), suggesting the fashionable following is an outcome of marketing, only then would its worth be greater. The methods in which an artist gains financial eminence has conspicuously changed from the days of independent promotion of the nineteen-fifties (with exception of "Hirstian promotion") to the modern day where if fate gave an artist "the right contacts, got him into the right gallery, had them place his work in the right collections and shows, then switched him to the world's most powerful dealer to launch him to superstardom" (page 82) then the individual, though no more talented, would be of greater cultural significance.

Just as the introduction of the television and the growing significance of film allowed artists to publicise themselves in the fifties, the twenty-first century gave birth to the dominance of internet art marketing. The internet potentially allows an equal level of competitiveness with regards to the expanse of the career of an artist. Whilst tens of thousands of artists long for wider publicity through their own websites exhibiting their work individually (i.e. www.jeffkoons.com), others choose to continue with the search for an interested dealer. Charles Saatchi, through Saatchi online, features the work of tens of thousands of artists yet the evaluation of much of the content is inevitably absent due to time constraints. However the internet arguably offers a more secure atmosphere for both a viewer and dealer to browse through works, prompting the browsers themselves to judge a piece on their personal taste and not having to endure "some creepy gallery person patronising you"(page 82). With Art.net or commonly known as "Art on the Net" artists are encouraged to resist from placing their prices up on the website so that the exterior factors of a viewer's opinion are quenched, leaving opinions to be formed upon taste; "Our site is a non-commercial site and we request that artists not post prices or create commercial-like spaces here. We ask artists to not have things in their spaces such as order forms for art or commercial banners. Instead we hope artists will treat their spaces as if they were actual studios and gallery rooms". Yet the site wishes to convince its participants as being in an area similar to a gallery, the effect is far from it; it instead feels sterile in its physical disassociation with the piece and naked without any veneer of a publicised reputation. Regardless of the comparison between individual internet self-promotion, or the decision to participate in a widely accessible site, the point being that the artist still searches for effective marketing and the chance of publicity, in the knowledge that it is the only way to guarantee financial success.

With as many examples of artist's financial success being found through "effective publicity and marketing" it is very difficult to argue the contrary. I, like many, believe that in search for

financial success public awareness and critical focus are the necessities; however, the question arises when concluding on the topic as to whether or not success should be based upon an artist's financial achievement. The original substructure that produced the publicity of an artist/creator gradually has been eroded into its present state through trial and error, leading to a supposed perfect formula to maximize the attention and impact of any piece of work yet it is in my opinion that the level of emphasis on public attention is destructive as it removes an artist's basic desire to create and morphs it into the desire to sell.

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