



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

Master's Degree programme
in Economics and Management of Arts
and Cultural Activities

Final Thesis

The “Grand Tour 1997”

The 47th Venice Biennale, documenta X, and Art 28'97
A historical overview and market analysis

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Academic Year

2025 / 2026

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Abstract

The main objective of this thesis is to examine the intersections between exhibition practices and the art market during the Grand Tour of 1997, when three major exhibitions took place in the same year: the 47th Venice Biennale, documenta X in Germany, and Art 28'97 in Switzerland. First, the historical and institutional contexts of each event, including curatorial concepts and market dynamics, were investigated. A comparative analysis then focused on the interaction between exhibitions and the art market at two levels: artists and galleries represented both in the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97, those present at documenta X and Art 28'97. For the analysis of the impact of these events on the artists' post-1997 Venice Biennale or -documenta X activities and sales two datasets on the auction prices and the participations in the group and solo exhibitions were constructed. Based on these data, an econometric analysis was performed to verify the so-called Venice effect. In addition, the role and strategies of galleries as mediators of artistic production and circulation were examined, and the third dataset was compiled. The galleries that participated in Art 28'97 were invited to answer a semi-structured questionnaire. Then, their responses were analysed and systematised. By juxtaposing these three exhibitions, the thesis aims to illuminate the impact of the main art exhibitions 1997 on the globalisation of the contemporary art world.

Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

The undersigned Veronika Salnikova, student ID number 90307, enrolled at Ca' Foscari in the Master's Degree Programme in Economics and Management in Arts and Cultural Activities, author of the final degree thesis "The 'Grand Tour 1997' The 47th Venice Biennale, documenta X, and Art 28'97 — A historical overview and market analysis", thesis supervisor Matteo Bertele, aware of the penalties provided for in Article 76 of the Consolidated Act set out in Presidential Decree no. 445 of 28 December 2000, and of the loss of benefits provided for in Article 75 of the same Consolidated Act in the event of false or misleading statements, under her own responsibility pursuant to Articles 46 and 47 of Presidential Decree no. 445 of 28 December 2000,

DECLARES

that she **HAS** used generative artificial intelligence technologies to support various aspects of the research and writing of her final degree thesis, in particular:

Gemini 1.5 / Gemini 3.5 Flash (developed by Google)

The tool was used:

- revision and optimisation of texts to improve clarity and coherence;
- other: As a non-native English speaker, the author utilised Gemini for stylistic proofreading and editing from November 2025 to May 2026. Additionally, the tool was used strictly for quantitative R-code debugging from March to April 2026. All research design, data collection, analytical logic, empirical interpretations, and conclusions remain strictly the author's own.
- Introduction, Chapters I, II, III, and Conclusion (for stylistic proofreading and editing between November 2025 and May 2026); Chapter II a (for quantitative R-code debugging between March and April 2026).
- The author personally executed and manually verified all quantitative R-scripts and econometric outputs to guarantee data integrity. The tool was also used strictly to suggest improvements for grammar and vocabulary formatting. The author manually reviewed every stylistic suggestion made by the AI, carefully checking the phrasing to ensure that the original academic meaning was preserved.

Furthermore, the author personally cross-checked all text and historical details against the primary sources, archives, and official catalogues to verify their factual accuracy, maintaining total human control over the final draft.

DECLARES FURTHER

that all material generated by AI has been carefully checked, reviewed and reworked by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the quality, accuracy and scientific integrity of the work.

Acknowledgements

This master's thesis has become a very important part of my life over the past months and has helped me to deepen my understanding of art institutions and the art market. Crucially, this thesis could not have been written without the support of many people. I would like to express my deep gratitude to:

- Professor Matteo Bertele', my supervisor, and Professor Clarissa Ricci, my co-supervisor — for their invaluable feedback, support, and recommendations regarding archival sources and literature. I could not have imagined better supervisors.
- All the gallerists and art professionals who kindly agreed to answer my questions about events that took place nearly 30 years ago: Lothar Albrecht, Katharina Baumecker, Monica De Cardenas, Laure Genillard, Jay Gorney, Astrid Holsters, Simon Knass, Ed Lopez, Ben Loveless, Barbara Polla, Giorgio Salzano, Thomas Schulte, Silvia Sokalski, Bob van Orsouw, and the Noire Gallery Team. The third chapter became possible only thanks to their generous support.
- My family — my mother, father, grandmother, and my elder sister Viktoria. They supported me at every single step, and I devote this master's thesis to them.
- Til Slowik, my fiancé, who supported me throughout the entire process. Your patience, faith in me, and belief in my research were my ultimate motivations, especially when I was struggling.
- My friend, Anna Golikova, who not only supported me with her kindness and patience but also provided invaluable advice regarding the visual style of this work.
- My friend, Polina Shtukaturova, for her constant reassurance — especially when it seemed that everything was going wrong.
- My friends Polina Rybalkina, Kamilla Temurshoeva, Aruzhan Yerbakhytova, Maria, my friends in Russia, and Vin from the Universität Wien — for their unwavering faith and support.

- All the people who made my life in Venice an unforgettable experience, especially Alina Zolotareva — for her help and support with both academic and personal matters.

To everyone — thank you.

Introduction

In the summer of 1997, the global art world witnessed a series of key events that took place in close chronological and geographical proximity to one another: the 47th Venice Biennale, documenta X in Kassel, the twenty-eighth edition of Art Basel (Art 28'97) and the third edition of Sculpture Project Münster. While the term “Grand Tour” would not be formally adopted as a promotional concept until 2007 when the simultaneous occurrence prompted a unified marketing campaign, the synchronisation of the exhibitions in 1997 was similarly concentrated and arguably driven by deeper ideological divisions. The art professionals moving within this synchronised itinerary were engaged in a crucial moment for contemporary art. This specific historical juncture exposed the intersections and underlying tensions between a globalising art economy, the institutional dominance of the biennial model, and the rising structural influence of commercial art fairs.

The reason for focusing this research on 1997 is rooted in the strong ideological polarity of its two principal curators. Germano Celant, appointed curator of the Venice Biennale under considerable time and financial constraints, constructed an exhibition deeply embedded in existing gallery networks. His transhistorical model favoured familiar artists and recent production, openly intertwining with the commercial infrastructure of the art sphere. Catherine David, by contrast, had spent over three years preparing documenta X as a deliberate critique of that same infrastructure. Her curatorial framework positioned the quinquennial in the opposition to the transformation of contemporary art into commercial spectacle. Thus, in 1997, two of the most prominent international exhibition platforms represented diametrically opposed trajectories, yet both converged upon the same commercial axis: Art 28'97, which had firmly established itself as the world's significant art fair. This unique historical juncture — two curatorial extremes and a single market centre — presents a perfect historical case for examining how institutional validation interacts with commercial mechanisms. While Skulptur Projekte Münster also took place in 1997 and maintained a strong theoretical

character, this thesis narrows its empirical focus to the Venice Biennale and documenta X, analysing their direct relationship with the global art market.

Despite extensive literature dedicated to these exhibitions in isolation, the structural relationship between them has seldom been explored through a unified comparative framework. The concept of the “Venice Effect”, developed by Olav Velthuis, provides a conceptual framework for understanding why participation in the Biennale enhances artists’ market value and career. However, the academic novelty and scientific relevance of this thesis lie in addressing a critical gap in the existing literature: the relative underrepresentation of documenta X relationship with the art market, particularly during the crucial globalisation processes of the 1990s. By constructing a comparative empirical dataset drawn from the participants of both exhibitions and cross-referencing it with Art 28’97, this research empirically tests the validity of the “Venice Effect” through quantitative modelling, establishing documenta X as a methodological baseline to control for institutional prestige.

The primary research objective of this thesis is following: to what extent did institutional validation at the 47th Venice Biennale and documenta X in 1997 translate into measurable commercial success on the primary and secondary art market? From this overarching question, specific subsidiary questions are derived and researched, each systematically corresponding to the three chapters of this thesis:

1. The historical and curatorial dimension (Chapter I): what were the institutional histories, curatorial frameworks, and critical receptions of the 47th Venice Biennale, documenta X, and Art 28’97, and what conditions made their simultaneous occurrence in 1997 a structurally significant moment in the history of the contemporary art market?
2. The hierarchy hypothesis (Chapter II): does participation in the Venice Biennale generate a quantifiably greater institutional boost, measured through subsequent exhibition activity, than participation in documenta X?
3. The generational hypothesis (Chapter II): is the legitimising power of these events distributed unevenly, providing a disproportionate amplifying effect on the careers of younger, emerging artists?

4. The capital conversion hypothesis (Chapter II): does the accumulation of institutional symbolic capital (evidenced by solo exhibition frequency) directly and immediately convert into economic capital on the secondary art market?
5. The primary market dynamics (Chapter III): to what extent did galleries strategically leverage the institutional visibility generated by the 1997 mega-exhibitions to achieve commercial outcomes at Art 28'97, and what structural factors (gallery size, artistic medium, business model, and physical fair presence) determined their capacity to capitalise on this convergence?

To address these questions, an interdisciplinary, mixed-methods approach has been employed, structured specifically for each chapter:

1. Chapter I, titled “Historical and Institutional Context of the ‘Grand Tour 1997’”, relies on qualitative historical methodology, incorporating critical reception analysis. Utilising primary archival records from the Venice Biennale’s *Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee* (ASAC), official exhibition catalogues, and secondary scholarly literature, this chapter reconstructs the institutional, curatorial, and market histories of the three events. Crucially, to examine their critical reception, the chapter draws upon a genuinely multilingual source base of contemporary press coverage across Italian, German, and English newspapers and professional art journals, thereby tracing the international debate around 1997 art events.
2. Chapter II, named “Artists of the ‘Grand Tour 1997’”, adopts a quantitative methodology. Two original datasets were constructed, comprising 76 artists who participated in both the Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 (Dataset A), and 37 artists present at both documenta X and Art 28'97 (Dataset B). An eleven-year panel dataset (1992–2002) was assembled using gallery CVs and secondary market auction records sourced from the Artprice.com database. It is worth noting that the composition of these datasets is itself analytically significant: the overlap between institutional participation and concurrent commercial representation at Art 28'97 constitutes a preliminary indicator of the so-called “Venice effect”, suggesting that market actors were already responding to institutional selection

at the moment of exhibition. To isolate and measure the long-term dimension of this effect on artists' auction market trajectories, a Difference-in-Differences (DiD) regression model forms the analytical core. Additional triple-difference (DDD) and Nexus model specifications were subsequently deployed to test the generational and capital conversion hypotheses respectively.

3. Chapter III with the title “Galleries of the ‘Grand Tour 1997’” shifts to the primary market using a qualitative sociological framework and a purpose-built Dataset C comprising 68 galleries cross-referenced across all three events. This dataset was constructed by systematically identifying galleries that represented artists present at both the Venice Biennale and documenta X and held a stand at Art 28'97, drawing on the official catalogues of all three events. Of these 68 galleries, 62 were successfully contacted via a semi-structured questionnaire, of which 18 provided substantive responses. The responses underwent thematic analysis to categorise gallerists' strategies and observations, in order to assess the conditions under which institutional symbolic capital influences commercial profit.

It is essential to acknowledge the limitations inherent in this research. The econometric analysis in Chapter II operates as an exploratory, hypothesis-testing exercise. The DiD model cannot account for key hedonic variables — such as artwork dimensions, specific media, and provenance — that exert independent, heavy influence on auction pricing. However, its application is justified because the model's primary strength lies in comparing relative price trends over time; by evaluating trajectories before and after 1997, the DiD effectively isolates the macroeconomic impact of institutional validation across the artists' broader markets. Therefore, it is a focused attempt to quantify the “Venice Effect”, rather than an absolute pricing model. Furthermore, the quantitative analysis is necessarily confined to the secondary auction market, as primary market data — comprising gallery sales and art fair transactions — remains commercially confidential and is not disclosed by the galleries or fair organisers concerned. The qualitative research in Chapter III faces separate physical constraints: archival verification at the Documenta Archiv

was impossible during the research period (Autumn 2025–Spring 2026) due to ongoing cataloguing. Furthermore, the passage of nearly three decades means that many galleries operating in 1997 have closed or lost their analogue records, naturally limiting the sample size of primary testimonies.

Chapter I. Historical and institutional context of the “Grand Tour 1997”

1. The 1997 Venice Biennale: historical background and curatorial framework

1.1. The organisation process of the 47th Venice Biennale

The 47th Venice Biennale, held in 1997, unfolded against the backdrop of a rapidly changing international art scene and under a unique set of pressures including institutional transition, severe time constraints and financial issues. Moreover, the Biennale was in a “climate of uncertainty”¹, a condition underscored by the major institutional restructuring that followed in 1998. In that year, a new statute was adopted, and the institution’s legal status was transformed — from *Ente Autonomo* (Autonomous Entity) to a *Società di Cultura* (Society of Culture), a change that allowed for the raising of funds from private sources². One of the most important factors that significantly impacted the 47th Biennale was the limited time available for organisation of the exhibition.

This short period can be explained by the relatively late appointment of the artistic director of Visual Arts Department: according to Clarissa Ricci, the question of appointing a curator was first raised at the Board of Directors meeting on 11 October 1996, but remained unresolved until 29 November³. There were several candidates, but the vote centred primarily on two candidates: Achille Bonito Oliva, curator of the 38th and 45th Venice Biennials in 1978 and in 1993 respectively, and Germano Celant, former curator of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. Despite the fact that both figures were controversial, after five rounds of voting, Germano Celant was appointed curator of the 47th Venice Biennale⁴. According to Enrica Roddolo, it was rumoured that the choice of Celant was supported by the

¹ C. Alemani, H. Sarkis, A. Barbera (eds.), *THE DISQUIETED MUSES. When La Biennale di Venezia Meets History*, Venice: La Biennale di Venezia Edizioni, 2020, p. 382.

² M. Vecco, *La Biennale di Venezia, Documenta di Kassel: esposizione, vendita, pubblicizzazione dell'arte contemporanea*, Milano: F. Angeli, 2002, p. 49.

³ C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003: l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, Università Ca'Foscari, 2014, p. 215.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

then-mayor of Venice, Massimo Cacciari. At the same time, it was noted that the curator who had returned from America was widely acclaimed⁵.

But there was critically little time left — Germano Celant had just less than six months to develop the curatorial framework and organise the exhibition. This significantly influenced his selection of artists for the Biennale, as Celant frequently turned to familiar artists and galleries to expedite the process⁶. This tendency, while amplified by the constrained timeline, reflected a broader, widely observed pattern in curatorial practice, whereby existing professional relationships and institutional trust networks shaped selection processes independently of the time available.

In January 1997, Germano Celant invited Vicente Todoli, the director of the Serralves Foundation, Oporto, Nancy Spector, the curator from the Guggenheim Museum in New York, and Giorgio Verzotti, the curator at the Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art, to serve as co-curators. The latter shared his memories of the preparatory process for the exhibition. Noting that the late appointment of the Biennale's main curator can be attributed to "bureaucratic and/or political wrangles"⁷, he explained that the curatorial team was "unable to work out a serious critical theme"⁸ of the exhibition. They made a quick decision to present a historical overview of the most important artists and dominant movements in European and American art from the time span of the previous thirty years, 1967-1997. Each curator in the team was asked to compile a list of the artists for the final choice. In addition, the curatorial team also had to explore lesser-known and younger artists. To some extent, this created a contradictory situation. On the one hand, there was no *Aperto* section: on 24 January 1997, Germano Celant presented

⁵ E. Roddolo, *La Biennale. Arte, polemiche, scandali e storie in Laguna*, Venezia: Marsilio, 2003, p. 186.

⁶ R. Smith, "Silence in Venice: Bad Sign for Biennale", *The New York Times*, 14 May 1997; <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/05/14/arts/silence-in-venice-bad-sign-for-biennale.html> [last access on 29 November 2025]

⁷ G. Verzotti, *Future, Present, Past: Thirty Years of Art in Six Months of Biennial*, in Allan Kaprow. *Corso superiore di arte visiva*, edited by A. Daneri, G. Di Pietrantonio, A. Vettese, Milano: Skira, 1999, pp. 175-178, here p. 175.

⁸ Ibid.

his curatorial idea, which involved treating artists equally regardless of their age and, thus, abolishing Aperto⁹. On the other hand, Verzotti wrote: “we found ourselves pushing young artists within the historical exhibition in a bid to make up for Jean Clair’s [the curator of 46th edition of the Venice Biennale in 1995] willful omission of recent-generation artists from the Biennial’s previous outing”¹⁰.

Subsequently, the curators contacted the artists and the galleries for the next meeting, for example, Verzotti wrote that his area of responsibilities included Italy, France, Germany and England. The collected information was reviewed by the participants of the curatorial group, concluded with the final decision resting with Germano Celant. The exhibition project was developed during several meetings held in New York and Venice. The second meeting took place in Venice, where the logistics of the exhibition in the Italian Pavilion and Corderie were discussed. However, key decisions regarding the upcoming exhibition, including the selection of young artists, were made during the third meeting, which was again held in New York. Time pressure was so intense that discussions were minimised and some decisions were made by major approval¹¹. After the final selections, according to Verzotti, each curator became directly responsible for a specific group of artists, managing everything from work selection to the organisational aspects of their participation and installation. Furthermore, the final phase required intense, on-the-ground work. From mid-May 1997, Verzotti moved to Venice to personally oversee catalogue proofreading and the installation of artworks¹².

Furthermore, Giorgio Verzotti also noted the curatorial team's decision to exclude artists who had participated in Aperto section in 1993. The sole exception was Pipilotti Rist, who, as Verzotti explained, was included due to the significant stature her work had acquired since participating in the 1993 Biennale. This restriction later

⁹ C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003: l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, cit., p. 217.

¹⁰ G. Verzotti, *Future, Present, Past: Thirty Years of Art in Six Months of Biennial*, cit., p. 176.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 177-178.

drew criticism, specifically regarding the absence of artists such as Damien Hirst and Matthew Barney¹³.

However, in his memoirs, Verzotti omitted a crucial aspect of Celant's curatorial programme: the requirement for artists to provide recent artworks. This strategy not only fostered the development of a truly contemporary exhibition but also circumvented the costs associated with loans and insurance¹⁴.

Financial constraints posed another significant challenge for the Biennale and Germano Celant. Clarissa Ricci pointed out that only 7 billions lire were available for organising the Biennale. These funds were sufficient to cover only the exhibition in the Giardini¹⁵. The lack of funds necessitated a sponsorship agreement with the *Centro Italiano per le arti e la cultura* (Italian Center for the Arts and Culture) that should have provided 2 additional billions for the Biennale¹⁶. Subsequently, in March, Celant proposed reducing the number of participating artists to 60 to further lower costs.¹⁷ It is also worth noting another rationale for this reduction: according to Laura Poletto, the artist count was also dictated by the exhibition space, which needed to remain communicative and expressive for each individual artist, thereby ensuring the exhibition's appeal to visitors¹⁸.

Ultimately, the budget proved sufficient to organise the Biennale in both the Giardini and the Corderie. In an interview with *Il Giornale dell'Arte*, the curator described the financial condition of the Biennale as follows:

According to the latest estimates, we will stay well within our budget of approximately 8 billion. Sponsorship, secured thanks to the ongoing efforts of the Rome Arts Centre, has covered 15% of the entire operation. In addition, many artists, from Steinbach to Levitt, from Merz to Oldenburg, from Mochetti

¹³ Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁴ C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003: l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, cit., p. 218.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 219.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 223.

¹⁸ L. Poletto, "Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea", *Saggi e Memorie Di Storia Dell'arte* vol. 32, 2008, pp. 303–56, here p. 314; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43140853> [last access on 29 November 2025]

to Buren, from Rist to Kabakov, have raised incredible sums to realise their works, allowing this Biennale to present titanic and unprecedented projects¹⁹.

Beyond financial management, Celant introduced several significant innovations. According to Clarissa Ricci, he proposed the introduction of prizes for artists, which was a novelty for that period²⁰. Furthermore, he succeeded in including the Corderie as a Biennale venue. This decision was dictated, on the one hand, by the reduction of space in the Central Pavilion due to administrative offices, and on the other, by the unique aura of the Arsenale space²¹. Another of Celant's innovations was to limit the Italian Pavilion to just three artists, a sharp reversal of previous trends.²² Concurrently, the number of countries without permanent pavilions seeking to participate in the Biennale continued to grow. Celant viewed this as an opportunity for the Biennale to expand into the wider urban fabric of the city²³.

Another significant factor influencing the 47th Venice Biennale was the organisers' awareness, from the very outset of the preparatory process, that documenta X would be taking place concurrently. This coincidence impacted both the curatorial programme and the scheduling of the Biennale. Germano Celant made concerted efforts to ensure that the selection of artists for the Biennale and documenta X overlapped as little as possible. However, to some extent, Celant adopted the approach of documenta X curator Catherine David by revealing the list of Biennale participants gradually — even withholding details from the Board of Directors²⁴.

¹⁹ F. Fanelli, L. Capellini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1997 dal vivo*, Torino, Milano: U. Allemandi ; Distributore, Messaggerie periodici, 1997, p. 9. Original text: Dagli ultimi calcoli, risulta che rientreremo pienamente nel budget che ci è stato assegnato, intorno a 8 miliardi. Le sponsorizzazioni, che ci sono pervenute grazie all'impegno continuo del Centro per le Arti di Roma, hanno coperto il 15% dell'intera operazione. Inoltre, molti artisti, da Steinbach a LeWitt, da Merz a Oldenburg, da Mochetti a Buren, da Rist a Kabakov, per realizzare i loro lavori hanno raccolto cifre incredibili, che permettono a questa Biennale di presentare progetti titanici e inediti

²⁰ C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003: l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, cit., p. 221.

²¹ Ibid., p. 222.

²² Ibid., p. 224.

²³ Ibid., p. 225.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 223.

In addition, it should also be noted that during the preparation of the Biennale, the possibility of creating a multimedia project using the Internet was also considered. The project proposal described the possibilities of digitalising information support materials for the Biennale, including a catalogue, initially for accredited press, and later for a global audience around the world. In addition, it was also planned to create a special e-mail for journalists, which would allow them to receive instant information about the Biennale. This project has not been implemented.²⁵

On 2 May, the jury for the Biennale was appointed. In addition to the official prizes awarded primarily to artworks, a number of sponsorship awards were approved; these provided cash prizes to artists or were intended to fund the purchase of works for the Biennale. Moreover, the recipients of the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement were announced in May²⁶. They were Emilio Vedova, who had received the Grand Prize for painting at the Biennale in 1960, and the American artist Agnes Martin, who, according to Enzo di Martino, was little known to European audiences at the time²⁷. May also saw the opening of an anti-biennial exhibition curated by Achille Bonito Oliva, who was a rival of Germano Celant. Titled *Minimalia*, it took place at the Palazzo Querini Dubois²⁸.

1.2. The curatorial framework and the display of the 47th Venice Biennale

The concept of the 47th Biennale, according to Giorgio Verzotti, took shape at the second meeting of the curatorial team in New York. Unlike the previous two editions, it was not thematic. Verzotti described it as follows:

the objective difficulties we faced led us to conceive the Biennial as it should be: an overview of the best from the international art scene today as opposed to

²⁵ Proposta di progetto multimediale via Internet per La Biennale d'arte di Venezia, Undated document, Venezia, Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee della Biennale di Venezia (ASAC), Fondo storico, Serie Arti Visive, busta 661.

²⁶ C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003: l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, cit., p. 225.

²⁷ E. di Martino, *The History of the Venice Biennale, 1895-2005: visual arts, architecture, cinema, dance, music, theatre*, Venezia: Papiro Arte, 2005, p. 97.

²⁸ Ibid.

the usual exhibition shtick, often based on themes-as-pretexts and serving, more than anything else, to provide a sort of self-portrait of the critic-curator²⁹.

Celant himself addressed this in the interview “Germano Celant vs Biennale di Venezia”, stating: “I thought it was unacceptable today to present a theme and then to verify it, resorting to works of art as illustrations of an iconic or symbolic, philosophical or anthropological vision”³⁰.

Germano Celant’s curatorial concept was built on two global ideas: time and space. The latter was reflected in one of the covers of the Biennale catalogue, which featured an image of a galaxy. (In addition to the catalogue there was also published a short guide with the list of participating artists, locations of exhibitions, the information on the awards and the two articles by the curator — “which compared the viewpoints of the spectator and of the curator, i.e. *Una Biennale a cannocchiale rovesciato* [A Biennale with an inverted telescope] and *L’ho fatta astronomica e titanica* [I made it astronomical and titanic]”³¹.

The idea of time was also reflected in the title of the exhibition, *Futuro, Presente, Passato* (*Future, Present, Past*). He elaborated a highly conceptual and historically-oriented framework designed to re-evaluate the art of the previous thirty years through the lens of the present moment. His aim was to create a fluid, interconnected dialogue between artists of different generations.

Conventional temporality was deliberately dismantled by Celant: the future was placed first, and the present became the connecting element between it and the past.

Celant explained this logic:

As an historian of contemporary art, I believe history is written and rewritten continuously from one day to the next; for this reason the logic I wanted to give to the Biennale involved a reversal of the terms: “Future Present Past.” [...] Its meaning is simple: the past is my future and my future is my past; these two meet at the center; which is the present³².

²⁹ G. Verzotti, *Future, Present, Past: Thirty Years of Art in Six Months of Biennial*, cit., p. 177.

³⁰ G. Celant, *Germano Celant vs Biennale di Venezia*, in *La Biennale di Venezia XLVII: The 47th International Art Exhibition*, edited by G.Celant, Milan: Electa, 1997, pp.XXI-XXIX, here p. XXIII.

³¹ T. Migliore, *The Catalogue of Venice Art Biennale: Forms of Expression, Forms of Content*, in *Starting from Venice. Studies on Biennale*, edited by C. Ricci, Milano : Et al., 2010, pp. 147-163, here p. 162.

³² G. Celant, *Germano Celant vs Biennale di Venezia*, cit., p. XXIII.

In the co-curators' text written by Nancy Spector, Vicente Todoli, and Giorgio Verzotti, this idea of re-evaluating contemporary art in the future was further elucidated:

By identifying its starting point in the mid-1960s, the exhibition situates Minimalism and Pop Art - movements that each contained the seeds of cultural critique which came to mark postmodernist artistic strategies - as the first instance of the 'contemporary', as we currently understand it, granted, today's 'contemporary' may well become tomorrow's prelude to something wholly different, but this exhibition can only speculate about the future, while folding past and present into one interconnected continuum³³.

In the context of the exhibition's composition, this was expressed, in the words of the co-curators, through a "trans-generational"³⁴ presentation of the artists. Germano Celant did not attempt to reject the idea of generations. Reflecting on temporality, he deliberately mixed them in an open space, placing artists of different ages on an equal footing. This was achieved by asking all participants to submit their latest works or works created specifically for the Biennale. Thus, representatives of different periods of contemporary art, including the artists usually represented at Aperto, found themselves on the same temporal line — as Celant said, continuing the theme of space: "Having designed this Biennale as a hall of stars, novae and supernovae, I thought of a homogeneous surface, from and on which the stars representing the past, the present and the future could shine"³⁵. The galaxy and the universe were other central concepts for the 47th Venice Biennale, as can be seen from the previous quote.

To a certain extent, it was the concept of space that underpinned the curatorial framework; as Celant stated, "moving through a spatially indeterminable galaxy, I set myself the problem of considering only the 'time' factor; avoiding all definitions of

³³ N. Spector, V. Todoli, G. Verzotti, *Future, Present, Past: An Insiders'View*, in *La Biennale di Venezia XLVII: The 47th International Art Exhibition*, edited by G.Celant, Milan: Electa, 1997, pp. 13-15, here p. 13.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵F. Fanelli, L. Capellini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1997 dal vivo*, cit., p. 7. Original text: "Avendo progettato questa Biennale come una palestra di stelle, novae e supernovae, ho pensato ad una superficie omogenea, da e su cui le stelle che rappresentano il passato, il presente e il futuro potessero risplendere".

territory. Black holes do exist!”³⁶ Thus, both concepts are not only interrelated, but one emerges from the other.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the 1997 Biennale focused primarily on living artists, although the co-curators acknowledged, by mentioning names such as Andy Warhol and Joseph Beuys, that the legacy of deceased artists still resonated in the exhibition “as part of the very continuum that it is attempting to embody”³⁷.

The main curatorial statement had a subtitle *Labyrinth*, which was explained by Celant. By this term, he referred to art itself in an era of contradictions, where different models of interpretation had lost their power. Thus, the exhibition served as a tool for creating dissonance, with “dissolution of the homogeneous filters of art”³⁸. Earlier, in an interview with *La Stampa* newspaper, Celant noted the purpose of the Biennale as follows: “I am interested in highlighting both the simultaneity of artists’ research — and their linguistic contribution to the dialogue, by contrast and harmony, between Europe and America, between Male and Female, and between multi-cultures.”³⁹

Another crucial aspect of Germano Celant’s curatorial framework was his attempt to rethink the national structure of the Biennale. Noting that the structure of the institution was conceived at the end of the 19th century and was dictated by the idea of territory and its control, he concluded that in today’s world, dividing the exhibition along national lines was no longer relevant, asserting that art remains above such classifications. Germano Celant, by his own admission, followed in the footsteps of previous Biennale curators and sought to create an exhibition that transcended the concept of territorial separation: “For 1997, I have planned ‘Future, Present, Past,’ which should be seen as a common space, in a common time, which

³⁶ G. Celant, *Germano Celant vs Biennale di Venezia*, cit., p. XXIII.

³⁷ N. Spector, V. Todoli, G. Verzotti, *Future, Present, Past: An Insiders’ View*, cit., p. 13.

³⁸ G. Celant, *Future, Present, Past: A Labyrinth*, in *La Biennale di Venezia XLVII: The 47th International Art Exhibition*, edited by G. Celant, Milan: Electa, 1997, pp. 11-12, here p. 12.

³⁹ M. Rosci, “Celant: la mia Biennale aperta tutto l’anno”, *La Stampa*, 25.01.1997, p. 20. Original text: “Mi interessa evidenziare sia la simultaneità delle ricerche artistiche, sia il loro contributo linguistico nel dialogo, per contrasto e per sintonia, tra Europa e America, tra Maschile e Femminile, e tra multi-culture.”

challenges territoriality and seeks to liberate art from the national fold. The show [...] aspires to bypass national pertinence”⁴⁰.

This vision also influenced the Italian Pavilion, as Celant defied established trends by presenting only three artists at the exhibition *Dall’Italia (From Italy)* — Maurizio Cattelan, Enzo Cucchi, and Ettore Spalletti. In this way, he placed Italy on an equal footing with other participating countries, which generally did not present more than three artists.⁴¹ Simultaneously, Germano Celant continued the mission of promoting Italian art through the Biennale; notably, 20 per cent of the artists from each generation featured in the main exhibition were Italian⁴².

Finally, another crucial aspect of Germano Celant’s curatorial framework was the rejection of mixing different artistic languages and a return to a focus solely on the fine arts instead of combining mediums. Throughout his career, Celant had created cross-disciplinary projects and mixed different media: art, architecture, cinema, and fashion. For the 1997 Biennale, however, he consciously rejected his usual approach, turning instead to an orthodox exploration of “the inner dynamism of contemporary art”⁴³ without contamination from other disciplines.

Thus, despite the absence of a specific theme, the curatorial vision of the 1997 Biennale can be described as multifaceted. It encompassed not only an attempt to create an equal dialogue between three generations of artists but also a rethinking of the traditional division of participants by territory and the presentation of art independent of other media.

Returning to the main exhibition, it is essential to note the importance of space and exhibition design, which became an extension of the curatorial framework, reflecting and contributing to it.

The layout of the 1997 Biennale was marked by a strategy of maximum concentration. Unlike the 1993 edition under Achille Bonito Oliva, which was

⁴⁰ G. Celant, *Germano Celant vs Biennale di Venezia*, cit., p. XXII.

⁴¹ F. Fanelli, L. Capellini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1997 dal vivo*, cit., p. 7.

⁴² G. Celant, *Germano Celant vs Biennale di Venezia*, cit., p. XXV.

⁴³ G. Celant, *Future, Present, Past: A Labyrinth*, cit., p. 12.

dispersed throughout the city in a “diaspora”⁴⁴, Celant’s exhibition was deliberately focused on only two main venues: the *Padiglione Centrale* (formerly *Padiglione Italia*) in the Giardini and the Corderie dell’Arsenale. Celant himself stated that his intention was to “reinforce the exhibition impact and consolidate attention without dispersion or decentralisation”⁴⁵.

The architects responsible for the spaces of the Central Pavilion and the Corderie were Gae Aulenti and Daniela Ferretti. It was through their collaboration that Celant, in his own words, mastered “the linguistic diversity of individual architectural spaces”⁴⁶. At the same time, he emphasised the need to respect the individuality of different artists, a goal achieved through the diversity of the exhibition spaces⁴⁷.

In an interview published in the catalogue, when asked about the criteria for the exhibition design, Celant spoke of the removal of all architectural details. In a way, his approach to the exhibition’s architecture resembled his previous experience at the Biennale with *Ambiente/Arte* in 1976⁴⁸.

The dominant colours were white and iron grey. In the Central Pavilion, not only were the walls painted white, but also the air conditioning units, in order to maximise the simplicity of the space; the rooms were thus “reduced to simple outer cubature”⁴⁹. Grey was used for the flooring of both the Central Pavilion and the Corderie, thus creating a visual and conceptual connection between the two spaces — for the floor covering was used a *Calcutta* carpet, ordered from Germany.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ F. Fanelli, L. Capellini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1997 dal vivo*, cit., p. 5.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 6. Original text: “Innanzitutto serve a rafforzare l’impatto dell’esposizione e a consolidare l’attenzione senza dispersioni o decentramenti”.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 8. Original text: “diversità linguistiche delle singole architetture”.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull’arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 314.

⁴⁹ G. Celant, *Germano Celant vs Biennale di Venezia*, cit., p. XXVI.

⁵⁰ V. Todolí, A. Soldaini, “Una conversazione intorno a Futuro Presente Passato. XLVII Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte di Venezia (1997): peculiarità e lasciti”, *Germano Celant: Venezia*, <https://youtu.be/3TZcUtQiBSM?feature=shared> [last access on 2 January 2026] timestamp: [5:30:28-5:31:06];

This curator's note on maximising spatial simplicity without any superfluous details reflects, according to Clarissa Ricci, an intention towards museumification and an appeal to the concept of the white cube, which, in turn, testified to timelessness. Thus, the very concept of time ceased to be a process and suggests, rather, a pause.⁵¹ When discussing the viewing itinerary of the Biennale, Celant highlighted its openness and the possibility of exploring it from any starting point⁵². Clarissa Ricci noted that the 1997 Venice Biennale, like its predecessors, was conceived to begin in the Giardini Biennale⁵³.

The Central Pavilion was designed to be more traditional and, as described above, functioned almost as a museum space. The interior of the building was divided into individual rooms, where artists were given "closed and autonomous space"⁵⁴.

In contrast, the Corderie was conceived as a vast, open space, 300 metres in length. The long naves of the 16th-century building were "left open, without any dividing walls"⁵⁵. Celant intentionally eliminated the "fair stalls"⁵⁶ of the previous Aperto exhibitions held in the same space in the past. This open-plan layout was intended to host the artists like nomads without confines or closures.⁵⁷ It is noteworthy that Celant stated that through this open architecture, he attempted to create an atmosphere "as in a great basilica or mosque"⁵⁸ within the Corderie.

Thus, despite the structural differences between the two venues, Celant united them not only visually, through the use of a single dark grey floor covering, but also, to

⁵¹ C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003: l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, cit., p. 261.

⁵² G. Celant, *Germano Celant vs Biennale di Venezia*, cit., p. XXV.

⁵³ C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003: l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, cit., p. 259.

⁵⁴ F. Fanelli, L. Capellini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1997 dal vivo*, cit., p. 8. Original text: "uno spazio chiuso e autonomo".

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ G. Celant, *Germano Celant vs Biennale di Venezia*, cit., p. XXV.

⁵⁷ F. Fanelli, L. Capellini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1997 dal vivo*, cit., p. 8.

⁵⁸ G. Celant, *Germano Celant vs Biennale di Venezia*, cit., p. XXV.

some extent, through an atmosphere of sacredness: creating a museum-like aura in the Central Pavilion and an almost religious atmosphere in the Corderie.

Significantly, the exhibition path in both locations began with large-scale artworks. The entrance exedra of the Central Pavilion housed the massive perfume flask *Valentine Perfume*, created by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, while the entrance to the Corderie featured *Elephant* by Jeff Koons. According to Poletto, this display alluded to the influence of Pop Art on subsequent generations of artists⁵⁹.

With regard to the placement of artists within the two spaces, Celant relied on factors of history and “generational emergence”⁶⁰. In some cases, exceptions were made based on architectural considerations. The Central Pavilion began with artists of the 1960s generation. In addition to them, it featured artists whose artistic language was formed in the 1970s. Finally, the Central Pavilion hosted the winners of the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement: Emilio Vedova and Agnes Martin. Germano Celant described the contents of the pavilion as follows: “our choices fell to the representatives of Pop Art, minimalism, conceptualism, Arte Povera, Body art, Land Art, ‘cold painting’, environmental art, and Neoexpressionist painting, as well as to isolated figures independent of any such definitions”⁶¹. He also listed some of the artists exhibited there: Roy Lichtenstein, Mario Merz, Anselm Kiefer, Tony Cragg, Edward Ruscha, Gilberto Zorio, Annette Messager, John Baldessari, Reiner Ruthenbeck, Rebecca Horn, Richard Tuttle, and others.

The 1980s generation was represented at Corderie and, according to Poletto, “laid the foundations for post-production art”⁶². Furthermore, Poletto noted that subsequent generations were also exhibited in this venue, including non-Western artists (such as Mariko Mori and Cai Guo Qiang), through which Celant’s concept of

⁵⁹ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 318.

⁶⁰ G. Celant, *Germano Celant vs Biennale di Venezia*, cit., p. XXVI.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 315.

multiculturalism was realised⁶³. Among the artists presented there were Jeff Koons, Francesco Clemente, Robert Longo, Giuseppe Gabellone, Sam Taylor-Wood, Luc Tuymans, Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell, Luca Pancrazzi, Jessica Stockholder, Charles LeDray, among others.

The open space of the Corderie allowed Germano Celant's idea of osmosis between different generations of artists to manifest itself, largely defining the exhibition's character⁶⁴. It is noteworthy that, according to Poletto, it was precisely in the Corderie that the spatial perspective, freed from partitions, emphasised certain works, such as the installations by Robert Longo and Marco Bagnoli⁶⁵. Clarissa Ricci also noted the presence of video art by Pipilotti Rist and Douglas Gordon, exhibited in enclosed, darkened rooms which contrasted sharply with the otherwise well-lit, spacious environment of the Corderie⁶⁶.

1.3. The results of the 47th Venice Biennale

The 1997 edition saw the awarding of the Golden Lions (*Leone d'Oro*), following the tradition of awarding prizes, revived in 1986 after the elimination due to the protests in 1968⁶⁷.

The international jury, presided over by Suzanne Pagé, included Klaus Biesenbach, Maurizio Calvesi, Thomas Krens, and Kirk Varnedoe⁶⁸. In addition to Emilio Vedova and Agnes Martin, who received Golden Lions for Lifetime Achievement, the jury also awarded prizes to two artists for their specific contributions to the exhibition. One of these was Gerhard Richter, honoured for his work that the jury stated "leaves

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003 : l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, cit., p. 217.

⁶⁵ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 319.

⁶⁶ C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003: l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, cit., p. 255.

⁶⁷ E. di Martino, *The history of the Venice Biennale, 1895-2005: visual arts, architecture, cinema, dance, music, theatre*, cit., p. 73.

⁶⁸ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 347.

a definite mark on twentieth-century painting”⁶⁹. This award proved contentious, as not all jury members supported the decision. Maurizio Calvesi resigned in protest, having championed Anselm Kiefer for the prize and accusing the rest of the jury of an “ideological prejudice”⁷⁰ against figurative painting. Another Golden Lion was awarded to Marina Abramović for her harrowing performance *Balkan Baroque*, in which she sat amidst a pile of bloody ox bones, cleaning them while singing traditional songs from her homeland in reference to the war⁷¹. Last but not the least, the Golden Lion for Best National Pavilion (*Premio dei Paesi*) was awarded to France for the exhibition by Fabrice Hybert titled *Eau d’or, eau dort, ODOR*, which the jury praised for a “new conception of the pavilion”⁷².

Regarding the Biennale itself, the results of the 1997 edition proved to be controversial. From the outset, the event was plagued by severe time constraints and financial challenges, which heavily influenced curatorial and organisational decisions. Another factor that impacted the perception and outcome of the Biennale was the concurrent staging of the long-awaited documenta X in Kassel. This generated an instantaneous and frequently disadvantageous juxtaposition for Venice with regard to budget, preparation time, and attendance.

As previously noted, the financial situation of the Venice Biennale in 1997 was precarious and necessitated a sponsorship deal with the Italian Centre for the Arts and Culture for an additional 2 billion, which ultimately failed to materialise. This situation led to litigation with the Centre⁷³. Furthermore, the closure of the exhibition with a deficit of 585 million Lire highlighted the financial fragility of the Biennale as

⁶⁹ E. di Martino, *The History of the Venice Biennale, 1895-2005 : visual arts, architecture, cinema, dance, music, theatre*, cit., p. 97.

⁷⁰ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 347-348.

⁷¹ C. Alemani, H. Sarkis, A. Barbera (eds.), *THE DISQUIETED MUSES. When La Biennale di Venezia Meets History*, cit., p. 382.

⁷² C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003: l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, cit., p. 238.

⁷³ E. di Martino, *The history of the Venice Biennale, 1895-2005: visual arts, architecture, cinema, dance, music, theatre*, cit., p. 98.

an institution⁷⁴. According to Clarissa Ricci, such economic instability was symptomatic of a deeper institutional crisis⁷⁵.

Another negative outcome was the significant decline in attendance compared to the previous edition. The final number of visitors was recorded at 170,000, while Enzo di Martino indicated an even lower figure of 140,000⁷⁶. According to Vecco, this represented a dramatic decrease of nearly 47% from the 320,000 visitors of the 1995 centenary edition⁷⁷. Against the backdrop of documenta X's success, this halving of attendance was particularly stark and signalled a decline in the institution's international appeal⁷⁸. The Biennale's own management acknowledged this disparity; however, President Lino Micciché's attempts to frame the numbers positively were met with criticism from board members, who viewed the figures as an obvious indicator of a problem⁷⁹.

This crisis of appeal was further evidenced by the number of press accreditations issued. In 1997, 3,667 accreditations were granted (1,467 for Italian journalists [40%] and 2,200 for foreign journalists [60%]), whereas a year earlier the figure stood at 4,855⁸⁰. Thus, press interest in the Biennale had declined by roughly 25 per cent.

Regarding the exhibition itself, according to Poletto, Celant faced criticism for a perceived lack of boldness and risk-taking, yet was praised for the show's strong organisation and presentation, as well as the high standard of the artworks—thanks in

⁷⁴ C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003: l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, cit., p. 228-229.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 222.

⁷⁶ E. di Martino, *The history of the Venice Biennale, 1895-2005 : visual arts, architecture, cinema, dance, music, theatre*, cit., p. 97.

⁷⁷ M. Vecco, *La Biennale di Venezia, Documenta di Kassel. Esposizione, vendita, pubblicizzazione dell'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 71.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 193.

⁷⁹ C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003: l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, cit., p. 225-226.

⁸⁰ M. Vecco, *La Biennale di Venezia, Documenta di Kassel. Esposizione, vendita, pubblicizzazione dell'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 190.

part to young artists such as Sam Taylor-Wood and Mariko Mori⁸¹. In section IV, the audience's perception of the Biennale will be discussed in detail.

In conclusion, co-curator Giorgio Verzotti reflected on the final results of the Biennale:

Personally, I feel I can say that the Biennial as it ultimately turned out, for all its limits (some artists were unable to participate due to problems of time) cut a far from shabby figure. I would even go so far as to say that it is a perfectly worthy competitor against almost any of its previous editions, despite the pathological race against time to complete it⁸².

2. documenta X: historical background and curatorial framework

2.1. The organisation process of documenta X

documenta X was a landmark anniversary edition that sparked considerable public controversy. Unlike Germano Celant, the curator of the 1997 Venice Biennale, the artistic director of documenta X — Catherine David — benefited from more than three years of preparation time. She was selected in March 1994⁸³, becoming the first female and the first French curator in the history of the quinquennial. Before her appointment, she had worked at the Centre Pompidou and the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, and had also curated the exhibition László Moholy-Nagy at the Fridericianum in Kassel⁸⁴. According to Michael Kimmelman from *The New York Times*, for many, the renowned Frankfurt curator Kasper König had seemed a more likely candidate⁸⁵.

Traditionally, preparations for documenta X commenced with the establishment of a Supervisory Board. This body included the mayor of Kassel and a dozen local representatives from the fields of arts, business, and politics, who were tasked with

⁸¹ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 312.

⁸² G. Verzotti, *Future, Present, Past: Thirty Years of Art in Six Months of Biennial*, cit., p. 178.

⁸³ R. Smith, "2 Top Art Shows Select French Directors", *The New York Times*, 17 March 1994; <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/03/17/arts/2-top-art-shows-select-french-directors.html> [last access on 29 November 2025]

⁸⁴ A. Heinick, "Breschen schlagen", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 72, 26 March 1994, p. 10.

⁸⁵ M. Kimmelman, "Suddenly I Have Hundreds Of Friends", *The New York Times*, 14 August 1994; <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/08/14/arts/suddenly-i-have-hundreds-of-friends.html> [last access on 29 November 2025]

monitoring the exhibition's preparatory process every few months. The committee's first task was to approve the composition of the jury, which was compiled by the director of the Fridericianum⁸⁶.

Significantly, in 1994, the artistic director for documenta X was, for the first time, selected not by Kassel officials but by an independent jury. This panel included art historians Donald Kuspritt and Günther Metken, Nicolas Serota, director of the Tate, Jean Christoph Ammann, head of Frankfurt Museum of Modern Art, and Kathy Halbreich, director of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The decision-making process was widely considered complicated, having to take into account "local and international pressures"⁸⁷. The jury explained their choice by citing a desire "to find a young curator"⁸⁸ and the fact that Catherine David not only demonstrated her ability to work with both established and emerging artists, but also possessed a global mindset, particularly regarding media and aesthetics⁸⁹.

From the very outset of her appointment, Catherine David cited documenta 5, curated in 1972 by Harald Szeemann⁹⁰, as a reference point. She was critical of the previous edition of the documenta in 1992, supervised by Jan Hoet, noting the lack of interaction with artists and the absence of any function. This opinion was shared by the members of the jury, who acknowledged that David's selection was, to some extent, driven by her contrast with the previous curator⁹¹.

Two months later, on 21 May, *the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* published plans for the upcoming exhibition. It was reported that the Supervisory Board of Documenta GmbH had approved a contract with Catherine David, who was to assume her duties as artistic director on 1 July, 1994. Furthermore, it was announced

⁸⁶ R. Shone, "Selecting Documenta's director", *Artforum*, vol. 35, May 1997, no. 9; <https://www.artforum.com/events/selecting-Documentas-director-193975/> [last access on 29 November 2025]

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ A. Heinick, *Breschen schlagen*, cit.

⁹¹ M. Kimmelman, *Suddenly I Have Hundreds Of Friends*, cit.

that a temporary Documenta office would be established for her first year in Paris, after which, in 1995, Catherine David would relocate to Kassel. Moreover, by May the Supervisory Board also appointed a new managing director for documenta X — the members voted unanimously for Roman Soukup. Finally, the budget of the upcoming exhibition was announced at 20 million DM, which included 2,8 million DM from the city of Kassel and from the state of Hessen, while the German federal government was expected to provide the same amount. The remainder of the budget had to be generated independently by the quinquennial; it was noted that this funding model had already been tested during the previous edition⁹².

Three years later, in March 1997, the same newspaper reported that the Sparkasse Finance Group had become the main sponsor of documenta X. Although the exact amount of funding was not disclosed due to potential inter-bank competition, it was estimated to run into millions of DM⁹³. Other key sponsors for this edition were Deutsche Bahn and Sony — thus, for the first time, documenta X secured such significant corporate sponsorship⁹⁴. Regarding state funding, documenta X received slightly less than projected: 2,7 million Marks each from the city and the state, and 2,1 million from the federal government⁹⁵. Consequently, the final budget was estimated as 21,732,293 DM, or approximately 11,111,544,97 €⁹⁶.

It is worth noting that the professional relationship between Catherine David and the managing director, Roman Soukup, quickly deteriorated. According to Kassel's Mayor and Supervisory Board Chairman Georg Lewandowski, this stemmed from serious disagreements regarding the sponsorship strategy⁹⁷. Soukup's successor was chosen at the end of October 1995. An article in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* dated 28

⁹² "Künftige Documenta", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 117, 21 May 1994, p. 25.

⁹³ "Sparkassen- und Giroverband ist der Hauptsponsor der Documenta", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 66, 19 March 1997, p. 25.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ "Documenta-Rumoren", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 150, 01 July 1995, p. 31.

⁹⁶ K.Siebenhaar, *Documenta. A Brief History of an Exhibition and Its Context*, Berlin: B & S Siebenhaar Verlag, 2017, p. 126.

⁹⁷ "Bremse gezogen", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 153, 05 July 1995, p. 27.

October 1995 reported that it was Bernd Leifeld, who held a senior executive at the Basel Theatre. He officially assumed his duties on 1 January 1996⁹⁸. The legal proceedings with Soukup were ultimately resolved through an out-of-court settlement at the end of February 1996⁹⁹.

The catalyst for Soukup's resignation and the friction with Catherine David was his attempt to broker a deal with Sony, one of the exhibition's prospective main sponsors. Sony intended to provide 2,5 million Marks for documenta X. In return, under terms proposed by Soukup, the corporation would secure the right to use the Documenta brand and the priority right to purchase works of art from documenta X and the previous editions. This was intended to form the Sony-Documenta-Collection, for which "a double-digit million budget"¹⁰⁰ had been allocated. However, Catherine David opposed this plan. She argued that compiling a representative selection of artworks from previous editions was unfeasible without the participation of the original curators. Furthermore, such a move would publicise the acquisition process, inevitably driving up the cost of the artworks. Soukup's unauthorised negotiations with Sony eventually leaked to the press, prompting his resignation¹⁰¹. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, Sony did ultimately serve as a sponsor for the exhibition.

As for the preparation of the exhibition itself, the process was far from straightforward — Catherine David also had misunderstandings with the Kassel's department of culture. In early March 1995, Irmgard Schleier, director of culture for the city of Kassel, convened a press conference at which, among other issues, she highlighted existing information barriers regarding the future quinquennial and a

⁹⁸ "«Documenta» verliert Hauptsponsor", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* vol. 251, 28 October 1995, p. 45; <https://www.e-newspaperarchives.ch/?a=d&d=NZZ19951028-01.2.52.5> [last access on 29 November 2025]

⁹⁹ "Streit beendet", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 50, 28 February 1996, p. 33.

¹⁰⁰ "Sponsor springt ab", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 250, 27 October 1995, p. 44. Original text: "einen zweistelligen Millionenetat"

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

perceived unwillingness on the part of Documenta GmbH to cooperate¹⁰². In turn, Catherine David clearly expressed her position: while she had no intention of interfering in the work of the Department of Culture, she expected the department to refrain from interfering in hers. Furthermore, she retorted that she was accustomed to working quietly, yet had already made considerable progress in her collaboration with artists¹⁰³.

Regarding the interaction between documenta X and the city, in December 1996, Irmgard Schleier, announced that Kassel would present an independent accompanying programme aimed at an international audience that had arguably been neglected during previous exhibitions. The programme included museums, galleries, a theatre, and an open-air film festival and was supported by businesses, churches, and sponsors¹⁰⁴.

Catherine David presented the concept of documenta X incrementally. With rare exceptions, she withheld the names of participating artists until the opening. However, in July 1996, she named several names: Marcel Broodthaers, Dan Graham, Öyvind Fahlström, Gordon Matta-Clark, Gerhard Richter and Hélio Oiticica¹⁰⁵. In her view, the works of these artists reflected upon art in the age of television and advertising. She particularly highlighted the importance of Broodthaers as “the bridge between the fifties, when the documenta X was founded by Arnold Bode [...], and contemporary art”¹⁰⁶.

Additionally, it should be noted that a few months before the opening of the quinquennial, in March 1997, a list of documenta X participants was leaked on the Internet; this list was neither confirmed nor denied by the organisers¹⁰⁷. Catherine

¹⁰² C. Müller, “Das kleine Machtspiel”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol.59, 10 March 1995, p. 44.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ “Documenta X”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 296, 19 December 1996, p. 35.

¹⁰⁵ J. Martens, “Catherine David”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Magazin*, vol. 853, 05 July 1996, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Original text: “eine Brücke schlagen zwischen den fünfziger Jahren, als die Documenta von Arnold Bode [...] gerufen wurde, und der Gegenwartskunst”.

¹⁰⁷ “Documenta-Liste”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 68, 21 March 1997, p. 39.

David refused to publish her list, arguing firstly that such a list would not accurately reflect the vision of the exhibition, and secondly, it would have an impact on rising prices in the art market. However, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* article dated 4 April stated “selected artists and gallery owners have known everything for a long time. Only the image of dx, which is developing independently of the market, required refraining from publishing a list of artists”¹⁰⁸.

The “dx” mentioned in the previous quote is an abbreviation for documenta X, which also became an official logo for this edition of quinquennial. An article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* dated 7 October 1995 reported that the logo was presented as a small black d behind a large red X on the white background¹⁰⁹. The interpretation of the logo was as follows: the “X” represented the Roman numeral for ten, which looked like a cross in front of the d-symbol¹¹⁰. This design choice was not universally embraced by critics; some viewed it as an attempt to call into question the very existence of the institution¹¹¹. Others saw in the logo as a bad omen and suggested that this Documenta could be the last¹¹².

Regarding the locations for the exhibition, the concept for the *parcours* (route) of documenta X was decided and publicly presented by October 1995, and was firmly established by mid-1996. In the article from 7 October, 1995, it was reported that Catherine David envisioned a specific route for the visitors, but not meaningless, as when children looking for the easter eggs in the forest¹¹³. The list of venues for the upcoming exhibition included the newly acquired south wing of Kassel’s main train

¹⁰⁸ T. Wagner, “Spiel mit der Erwartung”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 78, 04 April 1997, p. 35. Original text: “wissen die erwählten Künstler und ihre Galeristen doch längst Bescheid. Einzig das Image einer sich unabhängig vom Markt entwickelnden d X verlangt, von der Veröffentlichung einer Künstlerliste abzusehen”.

¹⁰⁹ “Kleines d, großes X”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 233, 07 October 1995, p. 27.

¹¹⁰ E. Beaucamp, “Was erstarrt ist, soll wieder umtreiben”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 142, 23 June 1997, p. 33.

¹¹¹ Documenta Archiv, *Documenta. The history of an International Contemporary Art Exhibition*, Kassel: Documenta und Museum Fridericianum gGmbH, p. 87.

¹¹² E. Beaucamp, *Was erstarrt ist, soll wieder umtreiben*, cit.

¹¹³ *Kleines d, großes X*, cit.

station (Hauptbahnhof), the Fridericianum, the Ottoneum, the documenta-Halle, and the Orangerie¹¹⁴.

By the July 1996, the plan with the locations was solidified, confirming the route proposed earlier: beginning at the train station and winding through the city streets to the various exhibition sites. Catherine David considered the passage through the shopping streets an essential element of Documenta: indeed, she stated that if she could choose, it would be compulsory to visit it¹¹⁵. The curator was also enthusiastic about the space of the Fridericianum: “It is a formidable museum, a very beautiful room, on the condition that it is not divided into small mousetraps”¹¹⁶.

Regarding the other location, the Ottoneum, which had barely been restored, certain difficulties arose. The exhibition had two floors at its disposal, and Catherine David intended to place works related to urban culture there. Finally, following the documenta-Halle and the Orangerie, the route was intended to lead to the river and the Auepark. Thus, documenta X was envisioned to become not just an exhibition, but rather a broader cultural event¹¹⁷.

Seven months before the start of the exhibition, in November 1996, Catherine David conducted a press tour of the exhibition route, announcing that the artists and their location had already been determined, with the exception of Orangerie. It was also reported that the station had been renovated by Bahn AG at a cost of millions of DM. The post office at the station was converted into the Kunsthalle. Catherine David highlighted the appeal of the train station, citing its atmosphere, interesting rooms, and old columns.

Moreover, it was announced that part of the Ottoneum would be dedicated to young artists, while the documenta-Halle would host internet-based projects and the discussion series “100 Days — 100 Guests”, offering visitors the opportunity to

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ J. Martens, *Catherine David*, cit.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Original text: “Es ist ein formidables Museum, ein sehr schöner Raum, unter der Bedingung, daß man ihn nicht in kleine Mausefallen unterteile”.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

engage in dialogue. The latter, along with the exhibition and the catalogue, were considered, according to the David's assistant Hortensia Völckers, to be "main forms of the exhibition's expression"¹¹⁸.

The preparation of documenta X also included the launching of the website: the quinquennial became one of the first large-scale exhibition to expand beyond physical exhibition halls and present itself also on the Internet. According to the article dated 24 March 1997, documenta X presented its web server, developed with the support of one of its sponsors, IBM. The website was designed in the signature colours of documenta X — black and red¹¹⁹.

The online platform included the information regarding admission, participating artists and the upcoming event. There were also the artworks developed specifically for the web, which were divided into three groups "Surfaces & Territories", "Groups & Interpretation" and "Cities & Networks". The Internet section of documenta X was curated by the Simon Lamunière, who had previously worked as the curator of the media department at the Geneva Cultural Centre. In this section of the documenta X, the standard classification of the quinquennial was not applied — instead, Lamunière focused on current online developments. It was also announced that there would be also published the announce of the programme of "100 Days — 100 Guests" would be published in May, and was also expected to be broadcast on the website later¹²⁰.

Another crucial element in the preparation of documenta X exhibition was a detailed coverage of the process of its preparation through the *documenta.documents* series of publications, which consisted of three issues. Catherine David described them as "working papers"¹²¹, that were released in the lead-up to the documenta X exhibition

¹¹⁸ "'Documenta' mit Parcours", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 270, 19 November 1996, p. 55. Original text: "die Hauptausdrucksformen der Ausstellung".

¹¹⁹ C. Blase, "U-Bahn nach Kassel, Station Ägypten", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 70, 24 March 1997, p. 38.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ J.-C. Bailly, C. David, P. Virilio (eds.), *Documenta X: Documenta documents 1-3*, Stuttgart: Cantz, 1996–1997, vol. 1, p. 1.

in 1997 and served as a “preparatory instruction”¹²² that anticipated the themes and theoretical justification of the upcoming event. They were a key part of artistic director Catherine David's overall concept of the exhibition as a “manifestation culturelle”¹²³ (cultural manifestation) rather than just a static display of artworks. The initial goal was to make the curatorial process behind documenta X transparent. The publications were conceived as a “rough draft of the exhibition process”¹²⁴, revealing the preparations of the large-scale exhibition. *documenta.documents* were intended to be a “practical tool for discussion”¹²⁵. Rather than presenting a finalised concept, the documents were meant to interact with ideas, questions, and working hypotheses arising in the process of preparations. The content of *documenta.documents* was highly theoretical and discursive, focusing on issues like identity in an age of globalisation, the image in contemporary art and commentaries regarding “new sensual, cognitive, and political cartographies”¹²⁶. The publications included a mix of theoretical articles, interviews, statements, and working notes from artists and other figures from the cultural sphere. Thus, *documenta.documents* was an innovative series of preparatory publications that revealed the intellectual framework and curatorial process of documenta X, framing the exhibition as an evolving, discursive event rather than a finished project.

However, *documenta.documents* was not the only reflection of the preparatory process of documenta X. In 2024, the Documenta Archiv announced a new addition to its collection of video materials from film producer Brigitte Kramer. Kramer was responsible for the video artworks for Kulturbahnhof (Cultural Train Station) and, furthermore, accompanied Catherine David during her research trips to Paris, Venice, São Paulo, and Kassel for the preparation period. The donated collection includes

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Documenta Archiv, *Documenta. The history of an International Contemporary Art Exhibition*, cit., p. 90.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ J.-C. Bailly, C. David, P. Virilio (eds.), *Documenta X: Documenta Documents 1-3*, cit., vol. 1, p. 1.

¹²⁶ J.-C. Bailly, C. David, P. Virilio (eds.), *Documenta X: Documenta Documents 1-3*, Stuttgart: Cantz, 1996–1997, vol. 3, p. 1.

“interviews and conversations with artists and documented discussions and press conferences as well as editorial meetings, inspections and field trips with project participants in Kassel”¹²⁷.

From these materials a 48 minute movie entitled *Reise zu den Bildern: Catherine David und die Documenta X (Journey to the Pictures: Catherine David and Documenta X)* was produced¹²⁸. The collection comprises more than 70 videotapes containing numerous hours of the preparatory process — described as “a unique video logbook of the curator Catherine David”¹²⁹.

2.2. The curatorial approach and the display of the documenta X

documenta X has been retrospectively acknowledged as one of the most significant edition in the history of institution. It differed markedly from the previous documenta exhibition. The curatorial approach of Catherine David was deeply theoretical and political oriented. David herself explained her approach to the documenta X curation in the preface to the short guide.

In this introduction Catherine David articulated a redefinition of the goal and potential of the international art event. She deconstructed its traditional framework, offering instead a new, multi-faceted approach: one that was discursive, spatially expanded, and deeply conscious of its own limitations. In the period of globalisation, political shifts, and the increasing commodification of art, the curator felt unable to apply an exclusively aesthetic approach to documenta X. Instead, she introduced another dimension, transforming the exhibition venues into a space for critical reflection on political and historical issues. This approach was also reflected in the title of the publication that served as an essential part of the curatorial framework of documenta X: *Politics/Poetics* book.

¹²⁷ “New arrival to the media collection: Film material on Catherine David's Documenta 10 (1997)”, in “Documenta.archiv”, 05 September 2024; <https://www.Documenta-archiv.de/en/aktuell/neuigkeiten/3921/new-arrival-to-the-media-collection-film-material-on-catherine-david-s-Documenta-10-1997#:~:text=Kramer's systematic video Documentation of,Theo Roos, ZDF 1997> [last access on 29 November 2025].

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

The introductory text presented in the short guide began with the question about the aim and significance of documenta in the end of 20th century, a time when other exhibitions of the same scale were often being scrutinised. David intentionally raised a controversial topic, stating that, in her view, Documenta “over the past twentieth century has become a Mecca for tourism and cultural consumption”¹³⁰.

She then reaffirmed the importance of artistic practices, even amidst radical shifts in various spheres of life. According to David, these practices, often

condemned for their supposed meaninglessness or ‘nullity’ by the likes of Jean Baudrillard, are in fact a vital source of imaginary and symbolic representations whose diversity is irreducible to the (near) total economic domination of the real¹³¹.

Furthermore, David argued that the significance of contemporary practices possesses not only an aesthetic but also a political dimension, thereby creating a dual imperative for the curatorial approach.

Simultaneously, she emphasised the need to abandon the culture industry with its spectacularisation and industrialisation,

where art is used for social regulation or indeed control, through the aestheticisation of information and forms of debate that paralyse any act of judgment in the immediacy of raw seduction or emotion (what might be called ‘the Benetton effect’ [Catherine David is most likely referring to the Italian brand’s United Colours of Benetton usage of real images about social issues as advertising, aimed at creating a public discussion.¹³²])¹³³.

This critique established the primary antagonist for her curatorial project: an art world that prioritises spectacle over substance and emotion over critical judgment. Consequently, Catherine David stated that a possible solution in this situation lay in identifying the prerequisite and already existing artworks which can not be placed within preconceived academic framework and cannot be reduced to simple categorisation.

¹³⁰ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz, 1997, p. 7.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² C. Ekren, “Benetton Advertising Campaigns: A Masterclass in Provocative Marketing”, *Digital Agency Network*, 4 December 2025; <https://digitalagencynetwork.com/benetton-advertising-campaigns/> [last access on 6 January 2026]

¹³³ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, cit., p. 7.

David outlined a crucial condition: the importance of taking into account all the transformations both within Documenta itself and the geopolitical arena that have occurred since the institution's founding, alongside the changes "in the recent developments of aesthetic forms and practices"¹³⁴. Moreover, the curator also emphasised that these factors necessitated a reform the structure of the exhibition itself.

Then Catherine David inscribed her exhibition within the history of Documenta as the institution and the geopolitical landscape that had developed by the 1990s. She argued that its original purpose was tied to a "now-vanished era of postwar Europe, shaped by the Cold War"¹³⁵. On the one hand, Documenta reconstructed certain aspects of the history of German art that the Nazis had accused of degeneracy, albeit incompletely — as noted: "David's view of the unfinished project modernism enucleated the crisis as a leitmotif"¹³⁶. On the other hand, the exhibition also represented "the most recent developments of abstraction, which had reached their apogee in America"¹³⁷, thus becoming, in effect the embodiment of the Marshall Plan.

Over time, the exhibition has become one of the most important and largest of its kind. Despite Harald Szeemann's transformation of Documenta into an event lasting one hundred days, subsequent editions, according to David, attempted to find common ground in terms of aesthetic — with the cultural industry, and subsequently with the radical changes in the economic and political spheres occurring across Europe¹³⁸.

Catherine David stated the location of Kassel, combined with the economic downwards that was taking place at that time, rendered "the city the 'exemplary' site of an entire range of rifts and displacements, and as the focus of a political and

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ K.Siebenhaar, *Documenta. A Brief History of an Exhibition and Its Context*, cit., p. 56.

¹³⁷ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, cit., p. 8.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

aesthetic inquiry that we have attempted to inscribe in the very structures of documenta X”¹³⁹. Later, during the roundtable *1955-2055 — A Documenta Century* as part of the Art Dubai’s Global Art Forum 8 the curator mentioned the exhibition responded to the specific conditions of Kassel at the time, which David viewed as a city showing “strong and sad symptoms of many things which were changing in Europe and in the world”¹⁴⁰, such as unemployment and economic instability.

A key feature of the curatorial approach applied to documenta X was the inclusion of retrospectives, a choice deemed inevitable given that this was the final edition of the exhibition in the twentieth century. Its aim was not to celebrate the anniversary, nor to create a sense of nostalgia, but rather to offer a new critical perception ongoing changes in the world and Europe, the post-war history and the institution's own past — to “look back in order to go [...] better ahead”¹⁴¹, protesting against forgetting and using the past to move forward.

David introduced works from the recent past, specifically from the generation of artists who began working around the time of the first documenta in 1955¹⁴². Furthermore, according to David, the critical rethinking inherent in the exhibition also addressed aspects that have partially shaped contemporary art, namely

memory, historical reflection, decolonisation and what Wolf Lepenies calls the ‘de-Europeanization’ of the world, but also the complex processes of postarchaic, post-traditional, postnational identification at work in the ‘fractal societies’ (Serge Gruzinski) born from the collapse of communism and the brutal imposition of the laws of the market¹⁴³.

To enact that, she proposed critical art, which, as David defined in an interview with Robert Storr, “it has to do with [...] the radical critique of culture’s anthropological foundations—meaning paying attention to articulations, to sites of relevance, and to

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ C. David, O. Enwezor, A. Szymczyk, H.U. Obrist, *GLOBAL ART FORUM 8: 1955-2055: A Documenta Century*, Art Dubai’s Global Art Forum 8, May 2014; <https://youtu.be/yfoCwv916wY?si=Rq9-yf2azVHdBs7P>; [last access on 29 November 2025], timestamp: [10:22-10:52].

¹⁴¹ Ibid, timestamp: [10:22-10:52].

¹⁴² P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, cit., p. 9.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

shifts from one area of competence to another”¹⁴⁴. To realise this, she resorted to creating “retrospectives”¹⁴⁵ of such figures as Gerhard Richter, Marcel Broodthaers, Gordon Matta-Clark, Michelangelo Pistoletto.

Another aspect of the retrospective involved the search for models for a contemporary critical practice that could resist spectacularisation. Catherine David specifically highlighted documentary photography and drawing since 1960s and cited the artists like Jeff Wall, James Coleman, Anne-Marie Schneider as those who had developed “contemporary forms of non-spectacular dramatisation” in their artworks¹⁴⁶.

The curatorial framework of Catherine David also included a reconfiguration of the exhibition within the urban space that created a deliberate, meaningful path. David extended her critique to the physical experience of the exhibition. She rejected the conventional promenade model¹⁴⁷, which was a character trait of Documenta since its foundation.

Catherine David utilised both the places where the exhibition had already taken place and the renovated locations, turning once again to the city no longer in the matter of economic and political assessment of the past and present, but “with the “here and now” context of Kassel in 1997, by establishing a historical and urban parcours or itinerary, attentive to history as it is embedded in the city itself”¹⁴⁸.

The route highlighted not only restored Baroque landmarks but also the often-overlooked architectural and social history of post-war reconstruction. This included Treppenstraße, first in Germany designed and built intentionally in 1950s for walking and shopping, and unused underground passageways that were slated for imminent closure, which, considering the context of the recession of that time and

¹⁴⁴ C. David, R. Storr, “Documenta X”, *Artforum*, vol. 35, May 1997, no.9; <https://www.artforum.com/events/Documenta-x-193972/> [last access on 8 January 2026]

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, cit., p. 9.

¹⁴⁷ C. David, O. Enwezor, A. Szymczyk, H.U. Obrist, *GLOBAL ART FORUM 8: 1955-2055: A Documenta Century*, cit., timestamp: [11:25-12:43].

¹⁴⁸ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, cit., p. 10.

other issues, those sites of failed urban projects were presented as “recent ruins”¹⁴⁹. By juxtaposing the artworks with the urban fabric, the *parcours* connected the local specificity of Kassel to the global forces shaping it.

Laura Poletto reconstructed the location of the art objects in the *parcours* of the documenta X in detail¹⁵⁰. At the beginning of the route, at the Cultural Train Station (Kulturbahnhof), the exhibition featured an installation with Balkan plants on the abandoned railway tracks and two lamps from a Dubrovnik church by Slaven Tolj, as well as artworks by Sigalit Landau, Lothar Baumgarten, Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, Michelangelo Pistoletto, and Tunga.

In the Underpass the photographs of Suzanne Lafont and Jeff Wall were presented, alongside the site-specific installation of Peter Friedl and an art project *Volksboutique* by Christine Hill. Treppenstraße hosted artworks by Raymond Hains and Dan Graham.

The next venue on the route, the Museum Fridericianum, housed, according to Poletto, “a very high concentration of works by historical masters including Marcel Broodthaers, Gerhard Richter, Gordon Matta-Clark, Hans Haacke, Helen Levitt, Richard Hamilton, Dan Graham, Art & Language, Öyvind Fahlström”¹⁵¹. She further noted: “Some of these works perfectly encapsulated the idea of critical art in the sense of exercising judgement on reality on which Catherine David built her own exhibition”¹⁵². There were also presented the art objects by Toni Grand, Mariella Mosler, Olaf Nicolai, Penny Yassour and others.

The documenta-Halle served as the venue for the programme “100 Days — 100 Guests”, which will be described further, as well as for the contributions of the participating artists. Here, Poletto highlighted the collaborative installation *Poetics*

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 330-339.

¹⁵¹ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 333.

¹⁵² Ibid.

Project by Tony Oursler and Mike Kelley, which was based on their punk-rock band¹⁵³.

In the Ottoneum the works of such artists, as Lygia Clark, Rem Koolhaas and AYA & GAL MIDDLE EAST were presented¹⁵⁴. In the Orangerie, part of an art project by Martin Kippenberger — *Transportabler U-Bahn-Eingang (Transportable Subway Entrance)* — was displayed. Near the Orangerie stood the specially built *Haus für Schweine und Menschen (House for Pigs and People)* by Carsten Höller and Rosemarie Trockel, which was described in the historical guide of the exhibition as “perhaps the most popular work of art presented at Documenta 10”¹⁵⁵. The installation was praised for a disturbing combination of idyll and the horrors of animal husbandry.¹⁵⁶

The above is not an exhaustive list, as there were also artists participating online. In addition, it is necessary to mention the artist Carsten Nicolai, whose work aimed to penetrate urban space through sound¹⁵⁷.

Probably the most radical aspect of David’s curatorial vision was her candid acknowledgment of the exhibition's inherent limitations. She critiqued the white cube model for its alleged versatility for aesthetic perception that appeared to be inadequate in the conditions of that context. She noted:

[The] extreme heterogeneity of contemporary aesthetic practices and mediums — matched by plurality of contemporary exhibition spaces (the wall, the page, the poster, the television screen, the Internet) and the very different, even irreconcilable experiences of space and time they imply¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵³ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 339.

¹⁵⁴ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 331-341.

¹⁵⁵ Documenta Archiv, *Documenta. The history of an International Contemporary Art Exhibition*, cit., p. 89.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 331.

¹⁵⁸ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The short guide*, cit., p. 11.

Catherine David argued that the current situation requires going beyond the scope of the exhibition taking place merely in the city; although the Documenta itself was institutionally, to some extent, part of the concept of the white cube, the curator sought to redefine it.

Crucially, in the introduction to the *Short Guide*, she also identified the representation of non-Western art as a limitation¹⁵⁹, making documenta X one of the first Documentas to actively engage with postcolonial theory and art from beyond Europe¹⁶⁰. She observed that contemporary art was, in many cases, a recent import in non-Western countries and that more radical forms of artistic expression there often emerged in other fields:

[...] the pertinence, excellence, and radicality of contemporary non-Western expressions often finds its privileged avenues in music, oral and written language (literature, theater), and cinema - forms which have traditionally contributed to strategies of emancipation¹⁶¹.

Thus, rather than attempting to force these diverse practices into the conventional white cube model, Catherine David proposed to expand the very definition of the exhibition and not to limit the cultural event only to galleries in Kassel.

In the introductory text, the curator outlined the strategies the team had employed to broaden documenta X and making it not just an exhibition, but “manifestation culturelle”¹⁶² (“cultural manifestation”¹⁶³ or “cultural event”¹⁶⁴)— although David herself did not explicitly use this term in the introductory text, although it was mentioned in the description of “100 Days — 100 Guests” programme by Thomas Köhler¹⁶⁵. One of the core components of this manifestation was the aforementioned

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ N. Buurman, D. Richter, “Documenta. Curating the History of the Present”, *On Curating*, issue 33, June 2017, pp. 2-8, here p. 5.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 11-12.

¹⁶² Documenta Archiv, *Documenta. The history of an International Contemporary Art Exhibition*, cit., p. 88.

¹⁶³ K. Siebenhaar, *Documenta. A brief history of an exhibition and its context*, cit., p. 55.

¹⁶⁴ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, cit., p. 258.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

book *Politics/Poetics*. Its content, according to the short guide introduction, included the “artistic productions from 1945 to today in their political, economic, and cultural context of appearance and in light of the multiple shifts and redefinitions that have now become manifest with the process of globalisation”¹⁶⁶. At the same time, the book itself articulated the following purpose: “to stake out a political context for the interpretation of artistic activity at the end of the twentieth century”¹⁶⁷. This publication did not perform the role of a classical exhibition’s catalogue — it functioned “as an object that performs a political statement”¹⁶⁸, standing in striking contrast to the catalogue of the previous edition, which had been filled with descriptive texts. Oliver Marchart noted this distinction: “The break, on the art/theory axis, with the previous *documenta IX*, curated by Jan Hoet, is obvious”¹⁶⁹.

The volume of the published book exceeded 800 pages, and in the process of compiling it, Catherine David applied the principle of montage, which she had previously mentioned in the preparatory issues *documenta.documents* and also utilised in the curation of the exhibition itself. The content of *Politics/Poetics* was characterised by a polyphonic structure created by the variety of different materials — theoretical texts (some of them were very short — “theory bites”¹⁷⁰), literature, journalistic essays, documentary photographs, and the images of artworks¹⁷¹. This structure was conceived by Catherine David together with Jean-François Chevrier¹⁷². According to Panagiotis Kompatsiaris, the book “[...] included a ground-breaking selection of politically engaged texts from authors of diverse social, scholarly and

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁶⁷ C. David, J.-F. Chevrier, F. Joly (eds.), *Documenta 10: The Book: Politics/Poetics*, Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz, 1997, p. 24.

¹⁶⁸ P. Kompatsiaris, *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials*, New York: Routledge, 2017, p. 50.

¹⁶⁹ O. Marchart, *Hegemony Machines: Documenta X to Fifteen and the Politics of Biennialization*, Zurich, Berlin: OnCurating.org, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, 2022, p. 81.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁷¹ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 340.

¹⁷² Ibid.

cultural backgrounds”¹⁷³. Featured theorists included Edward Said, James Clifford, Claude Lefort, Édouard Glissant, however, they were represented by the extracts, following more art sphere logic, than pure theoretical one¹⁷⁴.

It should also be noted that the book also was compiled according to the prominent chronological structure: it was organised around four dates — 1945, 1967, 1978, 1989. According to Oliver Marchart, those dates were chosen deliberately: in 1945 the European democracies were founded. 1967 signalled the beginning of social upheavals as well as the struggles against imperialism in the Third World countries. 1978 was chosen as a milestone date for the onset of capitalism in the global context. Last but not the least, 1989 was a year when Socialism collapsed¹⁷⁵.

Thus, the publication *Politics/Poetics*, as the entire documenta X project, represented a significant “anti-hegemonic shift”¹⁷⁶ in the art field. It redefined the art-theory interface and the politicisation of major exhibitions, standing in radical opposition to the spectacularity, which characterised the previous editions¹⁷⁷. It is also worth noting that Catherine David believed the book's influence would be wider than that of the exhibition itself. Simon Großpietsch, citing an interview with David, noted that the publication had the potential to reach people and places far removed from Kassel¹⁷⁸.

Returning to the short guide introductory text, another crucial component of broadening documenta X as the “platform of discussion and debate”¹⁷⁹, was the programme “100 Days — 100 Guests”. This series featured daily lectures and debates with artists, philosophers, economists, scientists, writers, and other

¹⁷³ P. Kompatsiaris, *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials*, cit., p. 50.

¹⁷⁴ O. Marchart, *Hegemony Machines: Documenta X to Fifteen and the Politics of Biennialization*, cit., p. 82.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 79.

¹⁷⁸ S. Großpietsch, *Der Raum der Documenta: eine kunstwissenschaftliche Untersuchung des Szenografischen der politischen und gesellschaftlichen Öffnung der Kunstaussstellung am Beispiel der Documenta 1987 und 2002*, Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2020, p.138.

¹⁷⁹ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, cit., p. 12.

professionals invited to discuss “according to their fields of specialization and their orders of urgency, the great ethical and aesthetic questions of the century’s close”¹⁸⁰. Furthermore, this component included the screening of seven premiere films, most of which were created with the support of the institution, and a three-night marathon of theatrical productions¹⁸¹.

This programme was conceived not as an ancillary series of talks, but rather as the conceptual and discursive core of the curatorial project. It fundamentally repositioned the large-scale international exhibition from a site of primarily aesthetic contemplation to a dynamic forum for political, social, and intellectual debate. Speaking at the Art Dubai’s Global Art Forum 8 in May 2014, Catherine David explained that she built the exhibition around this programme, aiming to “push it to the center”¹⁸² of the Documenta experience. She described working “in terms of concentric circles that [...] one thing echoing in another one and making the program very precise”¹⁸³. Moreover, 100 Days — 100 Guests added another vital component to the exhibition — “the element of process”¹⁸⁴.

The programme’s purpose was to address blind spots in the art world through discourse. It was intended to make audiences aware that the limits of the event are affected and infected by discourse, memories, and misunderstandings¹⁸⁵.

The programme consisted of a daily lecture, discussion, or performance held every evening at seven o’clock throughout the entire 100-day duration of documenta X. The location itself was also significant: the documenta-Halle was specifically “redefined as a place of exchange, communication, and information, a place of

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² C. David, O. Enwezor, A. Szymczyk, H.U. Obrist, *GLOBAL ART FORUM 8: 1955-2055: A Documenta Century*, cit., timestamp: [17:31].

¹⁸³ Ibid., timestamp: [17:32].

¹⁸⁴ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The short guide*, cit., p. 258.

¹⁸⁵ C. David, O. Enwezor, A. Szymczyk, H.U. Obrist, *GLOBAL ART FORUM 8: 1955-2055: A Documenta Century*, cit., timestamp: [16:22-16:57].

critical questioning and contemplation”¹⁸⁶. Built in 1992, this space was conceived “as a multifunctional venue and recently furnished with chairs by Franz West”¹⁸⁷ — *Doku-Chair*¹⁸⁸. Peter Kogler covered one of the walls with the computer-designed labyrinth motif wallpaper¹⁸⁹, while the overall staging was created by Heimo Zobernig¹⁹⁰. Additionally, there was a bookshop created by the artist Vito Acconci¹⁹¹. Another significant feature of the documenta-Halle became a large red neon sign “KINO” (Cinema), which, according to Dorothee Richter, implied that “the status of the ‘exhibition’ had become uncertain, as had the status of the visitors as subjects”¹⁹². Thus, the documenta-Halle was transformed from a passive exhibition hall into an active arena for discussion.

The thematic scope of “100 Days — 100 Guests” was wide, with the prominent overarching theme: the globalisation and its profound social, political, and cultural consequences¹⁹³. The topics were explicitly political and interdisciplinary, covering: “the urban realm, territory, identity, new forms of citizenship, the national social state and its disappearance, racism and the state, the globalisation of markets and national policy, universalism and culturalism, poetics and politics”¹⁹⁴. This agenda positioned documenta X not merely as a survey of contemporary art, but as an active intervention into the most urgent debates of its time. It was an attempt, as David

¹⁸⁶ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The short guide*, cit., p. 258.

¹⁸⁷ Documenta Archiv, *Documenta. The history of an International Contemporary Art Exhibition*, cit., p. 90.

¹⁸⁸ K. Siebenhaar, *Documenta. A brief history of an exhibition and its context*, cit., p. 54.

¹⁸⁹ D. Richter, “Being Singular/Plural in the Exhibition Context: Curatorial Subjects at Documenta 5, dX, D12, d(13)”, *On Curating*, issue 33, June 2017, pp. 76-88, here p. 78.

¹⁹⁰ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, cit., p. 246.

¹⁹¹ D. Richter, “Being Singular/Plural in the Exhibition Context: Curatorial Subjects at Documenta 5, dX, D12, d(13)”, cit. p. 78.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 77-78.

¹⁹³ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, cit., p. 258.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

stated, to “work against a deficit in public confrontation with the content of social, cultural, and economic issues”¹⁹⁵.

A key innovation was the deliberate inclusion of speakers from far beyond the art world. Confirmed guests included seminal figures like Edward Said, who opened the debates, and a young Okwui Enwezor, who would later become the curator of documenta 11¹⁹⁶. This approach marked a significant shift in curatorial practice, moving the curator’s role from a connoisseurial selector of objects to an intellectual orchestrator of ideas¹⁹⁷.

The impact of “100 Days — 100 Guests” was profound and lasting. It is widely credited with legitimising the integration of theory and discursive programming as a central element of large-scale exhibitions, a model that has since become commonplace.

There was another component aimed at widening the exhibition platform — new media outreach, which included live internet transmissions and television broadcasts. Thus, as it was described earlier, documenta X had its own website with some of the artworks created especially for it under the curatorship of Simon Lamunière. In total, eight artists contributed to the online exhibition, among those were Heath Bunting, Holger Friese, Antoni Muntadas. Other artists, such as Martin Kippenberger (Metro-Net), Jordan Crandall, and Eva Wohlgemuth, also presented projects with significant internet components or documentation.

Moreover, the aforementioned “100 Days — 100 Guests” programme was also broadcast live online by the company Bundmedia. Moreover, the recordings of the events were also made available online as “Video On Demand”, alongside the daily three-minutes clips¹⁹⁸.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 258.

¹⁹⁶ Documenta Archiv, *Documenta. The History of an International Contemporary Art Exhibition*, cit., p. 89.

¹⁹⁷ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, cit., p. 12.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

Above all, the central component of documenta X internet presence became the “Hybrid WorkSpace” located in the Orangerie. In the short guide, it was described as “open media studio to collect, select, connect, record, and distribute information and content”¹⁹⁹. Catherine David supported the establishment of this space — as Dorothee Richter wrote: “For the first time, she acknowledged the digital space as decidedly part of the world, part of culture”²⁰⁰. Among those who organised the initiative together with curator were Hans Ulrich Obrist, Klaus Biesenbach, and Nancy Spector²⁰¹. According to Dorothee Richter, the Hybrid Work-Space group was given the use of a five-room apartment where they could invite guests, make radio broadcasts, communicate with the outside world, and establish contacts with web initiatives and make them accessible²⁰². Moreover, she noted that the “Hybrid WorkSpace” was substantially beyond control²⁰³. It is also worth noting that the space had its own dedicated URL: <http://www.documenta.de/workspace>.

The distribution network of “Hybrid Workspace” specifically encompassed “selected zones on the Internet as well as through print media and broadcasting”²⁰⁴.

Indeed, Catherine David did not limit the boundaries of the exhibition solely to the Internet. Artworks were also presented on billboards in various cities across Germany by *Deutsche Städtereklame*, alongside works broadcast via the programme “Documenta meets radio/radio meets Documenta”, supported by *Hessischer Rundfunk*²⁰⁵.

It should be noted that the curated text also did not explicitly address the educational aspect of documenta X. Nevertheless, this edition became a milestone for the field of art education, combining the practices of museum pedagogy with aesthetic theories

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 284.

²⁰⁰ D. Richter, *Being Singular/Plural in the Exhibition Context: Curatorial Subjects at Documenta 5, dX, D12, d(13)*, cit. p. 78.

²⁰¹ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, cit., p. 284.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 12-13.

and artistic strategies²⁰⁶. Mediation came to be viewed not simply as the transmission of information about artworks, but as a form of critical reflection²⁰⁷.

The organisation and execution of the mediation programme were structurally outsourced to an external agency for the first time in the institution's history, a practice that continued in subsequent Documenta editions. Approximately 60 people worked as guides for the exhibition²⁰⁸. However, it was noted that the mediation at Documenta remained, in practice, quite conventional. Nonetheless, Gila Kolb and Nora Sternfeld stated that before documenta X the term *Kunstvermittlung* (art mediation) was not a standard designation for educational practices in the art institutions.

Thus, the expansion of the various formats described above led to a shift within the exhibition itself: from a static display of objects to a dynamic, discursive, and globalised platform for critical thought, actively engaging with the ideas and forms that the traditional white cube could not contain.

2.3. The outcomes of documenta X

documenta X marked a true turning point in the history of the institution. As analysed in detail in the previous section, Catherine David, opposing the spectacular nature of art that had characterised the previous exhibition curated by Jan Hoet, conceived her exhibition as a “manifestation culturelle”, expanding its boundaries and incorporating new formats. The curator addressed documenta X to the whole spectrum of problems in various spheres of the new globalised world, turning the exhibition into a space for discussion.

Her approach can be described as analytical, — for instance, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* described 10th edition as “the show of theses”²⁰⁹. This

²⁰⁶ G. Kolb, N. Sternfeld, “ ‘Glauben Sie mir. Kein Wort.’ Die Entwicklung der Kunstvermittlung zwischen Documenta X und Documenta 14”, Documenta studien #06, May 2019, pp. 2-14, p.3.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ E. Beaucamp, “Sie lebt”, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, vol. 226, 29 September 1997, p. 41. Original text: “Thesenschau”.

framework led to the redefinition of the exhibition directing — as Klaus Siebenhaar stated:

[...] the role of the curator was extended by the position of the intellectual, which strictly demarcated from Harald Szeemann or Jan Hoet by refusing the ‘self-presentation’ as an author-subject. David’s stance as artistic director therefore aims at embodying a ‘cultural position’ that articulates in a medial-communicative way²¹⁰.

Furthermore, Catherine David attempted to move away from exhibiting art from European countries only, and turn to non-Western artists. However, according to Oliver Marchart, this inclusion merely “assumed the function of representing the non-West supplementarily”²¹¹. This addressing to postcolonialism, combined with the political discourse, had a significant impact on the subsequent edition of the exhibition — documenta 11, which was curated by Okwui Enwezor²¹².

At the same time, the results of the exhibition can be regarded as complex. Despite the transformative significance of the 10th edition in the history of the institution, it provoked a substantial wave of criticism, which will be analysed in detail in Section IV. Nevertheless, the criticism did not prevent documenta X from achieving unprecedented success in terms of both attendance and financial results.

In 1997, documenta X broke the record for visitor number, which, according to Marilena Vecco, was estimated at 631,000 attendees, exceeding the previous record of the ninth edition by 22,000 people²¹³. Thus, on average, the exhibition was visited by 6,310 people daily over its entire 100-day duration²¹⁴. Marilena Vecco also noted, based on data from the University of Kassel, that of the total number of visitors, 80,7% were from Germany, while 19,3% came from abroad; of the latter, 15,7%

²¹⁰ K.Siebenhaar, *Documenta. A Brief History of an Exhibition and Its Context*, cit., p. 56.

²¹¹ O. Marchart, *Hegemony Machines: Documenta X to Fifteen and the Politics of Biennialization*, cit., p. 63.

²¹² A. Gardner, C. Green, “Post-North? Documenta11 and the Challenges of the ‘Global Exhibition’”, *On Curating*, issue 33, June 2017, pp. 109-121, here p. 110.

²¹³ M. Vecco, *La Biennale di Venezia, Documenta di Kassel. Esposizione, vendita, pubblicizzazione dell'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 160.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

were from Europe and 3,6% from other continents²¹⁵. Vecco also provided data on journalist attendance: a total of 7,800 accreditations were issued for documenta X, of them 4158 were German (53,3%) and 3642 were foreign (46,7%)²¹⁶.

An article published on 30 September 1997 in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* also highlighted the visitor numbers for the “100 Days – 100 Guests” programme: 47,000 people attended in person, while 30,000 watched the performances online — figures regarded as an unexpectedly high level of audience engagement²¹⁷.

This success in terms of attendance was also reflected in the financial performance of the exhibition. Although an article published on 2 September 1997 in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* stated that visitor revenues did not meet expectations due to the large number of visitors availing of reduced price, it also noted that the amount of sponsorship funding was higher than announced — though most sponsors provided in-kind contributions rather than direct financial assistance²¹⁸. Another indicator of economic success of the exhibition was the 1,5 million German Marks in revenue generated for the Kassel treasury through spending by documenta X visitors, which was estimated at 50 million German Marks. As noted, “the city’s expenses for the Documenta are an investment and not a grant”²¹⁹.

Moreover, the managing director, Bernd Leifeld, also noted the significant income Documenta as a cultural institution: “[...] 60 percent (12 million) DM [Deutsche Marks] of the own income from admission tickets, donations, sponsorship grants, catalog sales and licensing”²²⁰. Later, an article dated 30 September provided exact

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 226.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 193.

²¹⁷ “Waren so viele Leute”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 227, 30 September 1997, p. 43.

²¹⁸ “Sponsoren sind die Sahne auf dem öffentlich-rechtlichen Kaffee”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 203, 02 September 1997, p. 24.

²¹⁹ Ibid. Original text: “seien die Ausgaben der Stadt für die Documenta eine Investition und kein Zuschuß”.

²²⁰ Ibid. Original text: “[...] seien 60 Prozent (12 Millionen) DM Eigeneinnahmen aus Eintrittskarten, Spenden, Sponsorenzuschüssen, Katalogverkäufen und der Vergabe von Lizenzen”

sales figures for publications: *Politics/Poetics* sold 33,500 copies, and the short guide sold 131,000 copies²²¹.

Finally, an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 6 October 1997 announced that the financial situation of documenta X had reached a balanced budget, a result that satisfied the sponsors. It was also noted that Volkswagen, which had provided transport for visitors with limited mobility, expressed a desire to continue supporting the institution. Furthermore, according to a survey conducted by the University of Kassel, 72 per cent of respondents interviewed during the exhibition (the total number was not mentioned in the article) expressed a desire to visit Documenta again in 2002²²².

3. Art'28 1997: historical background and market context

The 1997 edition of Art, which would be renamed Art Basel the following year, embodied the transformation that had taken place at the fair throughout the 1990s, by the end of which it was considered “as the premier global show”²²³.

The changes presented also on the Art 1997 were a response to the profound shifts happened in this decade: “radical globalisation and the launch worldwide web spearheaded the digital revolution”²²⁴. Furthermore, the fair had to contend with the crisis of the early 1990s. This downturn was triggered by the Gulf War in 1990-1991²²⁵ and the delayed effects of the 1987 stock market crash, which impacted the art market significantly by 1990. This led to the closure of many galleries²²⁶ and

²²¹ “Waren so viele Leute”, cit.

²²² “Die Sponsoren sind mit der Documenta zufrieden”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 231, 06 October 1997, p. 20.

²²³ C. Dirié, G. Gavillet, M. Spiegler (eds.), *Year 50: Art/Basel*, Geneva: JPR Editions, 2020, p.5.

²²⁴ C. Crousel, E. Presenhuber, A. Jaar, M. Spiegler, *Conversations | 50 Years of Art Basel: the 1990s*, Art Basel Youtube Channel, broadcast on 8 October 2020; https://youtu.be/BUSDK7aHUvc?si=kqnW-BvhSI_2hzTU [last access 13 June 2026]; timestamp: [0:55].

²²⁵ Ibid., timestamp: [1:05].

²²⁶ F. Shultheis, E. Single, S. Egger (eds), *When Art Meets Money: encounters at the Art Basel*, Köln: Verlag Der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2015, p. 183-184.

the dramatic decrease in sales — particularly for Impressionists and Classical Modernists artworks, but also for contemporary art²²⁷.

Moreover, there was another factor that impacted the art market in 90s — the rapid proliferation of art events. As noted, “biennials and fairs grew tremendously in their number and influence showcasing a new wave of socially engaged practices and in general [...] bringing a broader range of artists to a broader range of people”²²⁸. The combination of these factors led to the reinvention of the very concept of the Art fair, which evolved from a traditional European trade show model into a global brand associated with prestige, quality, and the concept of event. These changes in the positioning and organisation of the fair were the result of the strategy deliberately implemented by the Lorenzo A. Rudolf, who was appointed to the directorship for the Art in 1991²²⁹.

1991 was also marked by the holding of the event “Art against AIDS” with the participation of Hollywood stars such as Audrey Hepburn and Elizabeth Taylor. According to Genoni, this was a strategic move described as a “grandiose diversionary tactic” designed to deflect attention from the market crisis²³⁰. At the same time, this event signalled a shift in the art fair’s strategy that started aiming not only to prestige but also to the visibility. It associated “Art” with a major social cause and generated significant media attention, reinforcing its cultural importance beyond mere commerce at a time when commerce was struggling²³¹.

Nevertheless, the global restructuring of Art Basel began in earnest later, in 1993. Genoni stated the following:

Early on, the new exhibition director Lorenzo A. Rudolf realised that it was time to rethink the stalled and sometimes outdated structures of the art. His

²²⁷ I. Genoni, „Just What Is It That Makes It So Different, So Appealing?“ *Art Basel. Von der Verkaufsmesse zum Kulturereignis (PhD Thesis)*, Universität Zürich, 2009, p. 160.

²²⁸ C. Crousel, E. Presenhuber, A. Jaar, M. Spiegler, *Conversations | 50 Years of Art Basel: the 1990s*, cit., timestamp: [1:12-1:20].

²²⁹ I. Genoni, „Just What Is It That Makes It So Different, So Appealing?“ *Art Basel. Von der Verkaufsmesse zum Kulturereignis*, cit., p. 160-162.

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 161.

²³¹ C. Crousel, E. Presenhuber, A. Jaar, M. Spiegler, *Conversations | 50 Years of Art Basel: the 1990s*, cit., timestamp: [3:14-3:56].

second art fair, Art in June 1993, was already marked by profound reforms [...]. Together with the three gallery owners Felix Buchmann, Pierre Huber and Gianfranco Verna, Rudolf had developed a new concept for the Basel Art Fair. Buchmann, Huber and Verna were all long-standing exhibitors of Art and members of the exhibitor advisory Board and the Art Committee, respectively²³².

Marc Spiegler in his article “Fifty Years of Art Basel, and Beyond”, published in the anniversary edition of the fair catalogue, also mentioned the crucial role of the gallerists and the director in those strategic changes. He explained the main innovation they introduced:

Art world veterans know that Art Basel was not always the powerhouse it is today. [...] But in 1993, after a nearly existential crisis caused by faulty air-conditioning and a global recession, three gallerists [...] convinced Art Basel director, Lorenzo Rudolf, to overhaul the selection procedures, putting in place a rigorous system that would force the fair to constantly rejuvenate itself by seeking out the best possible roster of galleries every year. The implementation of this new approach at first proved brutal, with longstanding galleries ejected in favor of more dynamic newcomers. But the surging quality rapidly justified that difficult triage²³³.

The mention of quality as the main distinctive feature in the organisation process of the art fair also appears in the in an excerpt from Ilona Genoni’s thesis, where she quotes the director’s recollections: “[...] we are building, or we are trying to position the exhibition as a mark of quality”²³⁴. He also mentioned that it was precisely for this reason that the selection process was introduced and the art fair itself was slightly shortened²³⁵.

Another aspect of the new concept that transformed Art Basel in 1990s was, according to Genoni, the eventisation of the art fair²³⁶. This included, for instance, a more festive atmosphere at the vernissages and the launch the branding “pARTy” for

²³² I. Genoni, „Just What Is It That Makes It So Different, So Appealing?“ *Art Basel. Von der Verkaufsmesse zum Kulturereignis*, cit., p. 162.

²³³ C. Dirié, G. Gavillet, M. Spiegler, C. Manchester, E. Manchester, *Year 50:Art/Basel*, cit., p. 4-5.

²³⁴ I. Genoni, „Just What Is It That Makes It So Different, So Appealing?“ *Art Basel. Von der Verkaufsmesse zum Kulturereignis*, cit., p. 162.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ I. Genoni Dall, *Art Basel — die bessere Biennale?*, in *Biennale Venedig: die Beteiligung der Schweiz, 1920-2013*, edited by R. Krähenbühl, B. Wyss, Zürich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2013, pp. 333-350, here p. 342.

the 25th anniversary of Art Basel²³⁷. Gradually, other art institutions and the local community in the city began to get involved in Art Basel events: Rudolf consciously transformed the fair into a major social and cultural event for the city²³⁸.

Genoni asserted that Art Basel's strategy continues to be based on both concepts—quality and eventisation²³⁹. However, several additional changes were also introduced in the 1990s — most notably, corporate partnerships, which connected Art Basel with the financial sphere. Thus, in 1994 — as Genoni mentioned in the context of preparations for pARTy—the Swiss Bank Corporation became the sponsor of Art²⁴⁰. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* wrote on 15 June 1994 that the sponsorship included the video prize, which was awarded in equal parts to Pipilotti Rist and Enrique Fontanilles²⁴¹. Now named UBS, this bank has been the main partner of the art fair ever since.

Moreover, in 1995, another section was introduced at Art Basel — the “Video Forum”, where the participating galleries could present the video artworks by their artists free of charge. In total, this section would feature in five editions of the art fair. Another important aspect of Art Basel's development in the 1990s, noted by participants at the “50 Years” conference, was the fair's embrace of cutting-edge technology: in 1996, Art Basel launched its own website. In an era when the internet was still nascent, this was a forward-thinking move that amplified the fair's global reach and established it as an innovator in digital communication within the art market²⁴².

²³⁷ I. Genoni, „Just What Is It That Makes It So Different, So Appealing?“ *Art Basel. Von der Verkaufsmesse zum Kulturereignis*, cit., p. 164.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 165.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 164.

²⁴¹ “Ein Vierteljahrhundert «Art» in Basel”, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, vol. 137, 15 June 1994, p. 20; <https://www.e-newspaperarchives.ch/?a=d&d=NZZ19940615-01.2.26.9> [last access on 29 November 2025]

²⁴² C. Crousel, E. Presenhuber, A. Jaar, M. Spiegler, *Conversations | 50 Years of Art Basel: the 1990s*, cit., timestamp: [3:56-4:25].

Furthermore, 1996 was a notable year for Art Basel for several reasons. Firstly, a new section of the fair was established — Art Statements, which replaced the sector dedicated to “young galleries with young artists”²⁴³. Art Statements retained the purpose of the previous section, in which “selected young galleries present individual exhibitions with young artists at reduced stand prices — a programme promoting the international recognition of young new talents”²⁴⁴. According to the Art Basel anniversary catalogue, in 1996 “23 solo shows by young artists” were presented²⁴⁵.

Lukas Gloor wrote the following regarding this innovation:

The fact that specially-appointed experts helped the Committee to select the Statements artists gave younger art dealers a voice, which was not unimportant after an alternative fair [...] near trade fair premises was well received by collectors and the public when it was held for the first time in 1996²⁴⁶.

The fair he mentioned was Liste, which was founded by the galleries that had been rejected by the selection committee. According to Shultheis, this art fair was not considered as a competitor exhibition, “but as a rehearsal stage for young galleries with the distant goal of participating in Art Basel”²⁴⁷. Genoni also supported this statement, highlighting the fact that the positioning of Liste was not as a counter-event to Art but as a complement to it. She cited to the words of the director Liste Peter Bläuer, who noted that launching something against the world’s number one art fair (which Art Basel already was) would have been naive²⁴⁸. Despite this stated position, which did not contradict the main fair, the initial reaction of the Art Basel administration was not positive; however, over time Liste became a complementary and cooperating event for Art Basel²⁴⁹.

²⁴³ F. Shultheis, E. Single, S. Egger (eds.), *When Art Meets Money: encounters at the Art Basel*, cit., p. 37.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ C. Dirié, G. Gavillet, M. Spiegler, C. Manchester, E. Manchester, *Year 50:Art/Basel*, cit., p. 72.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ F. Shultheis, E. Single, S. Egger (eds.), *When Art Meets Money: encounters at the Art Basel*, cit., p. 37.

²⁴⁸ I. Genoni, „Just What Is It That Makes It So Different, So Appealing?“ *Art Basel. Von der Verkaufsmesse zum Kulturereignis*, cit., p. 172.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 173.

Furthermore, 1996 saw another significant innovation: on 11 June, an association of leading international art fairs was established²⁵⁰. Named ICAFA (International Contemporary Art Fairs Association), the organisation included, alongside Art Basel, ARCO (Madrid), Art Cologne, Arte Fiera (Bologna), FIAC (Paris), Gramercy Park Art Fair (New York)²⁵¹. Membership in this association entailed signing a charter that established guiding principles and rules of operation²⁵². This charter was subsequently published in the Art 28'97 catalogue. The organisation's goal was defined as follows: "to support trade in art through professionally-run galleries and to offer the best possible market platforms via the vehicle of art fairs"²⁵³.

Thus, by 1997, the reforms implemented by Lorenzo A. Rudolf and innovations in line with overall globalisation had established Art Basel as the world's leading platform for the art trade. The coincidence of dates with the Venice Biennale and documenta X led to an unprecedented concentration of the international art world's elite—curators, collectors, and museum directors²⁵⁴—to Basel, reaffirming its status as an unmissable event.

On 4 June, the *Walliser Bote* newspaper reported that Art 28'97 would take place from 11 to 18 June, with the artworks by more than 1000 artists from 260 galleries in 21 countries expected to participate²⁵⁵. It was also reported that approximately 40,000 visitors were expected. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* added in an article dated 7 June 1997 that "all the major art movements of the 20th century, from classical modernism to the latest trends in video and photography, will be represented in high-

²⁵⁰ U. Diehr, I. Fechter, *Art 28'97: Die Internationale Kunstmesse*, München: Weltkunst Verlag GmbH., 1997, p. XX

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² C. Dirié, G. Gavillet, M. Spiegler, C. Manchester, E. Manchester, *Year 50:Art/Basel*, cit., p. 72.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ W. Wiegand, "Parade der großen Namen", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 135, 14 June 1997, p. 39.

²⁵⁵ "«Art 28'97» in Basel", *Walliser Bote*, 4 June 1997, p.8; <https://www.e-newspaperarchives.ch/?a=d&d=WAB19970604-01.2.30> [last access on 29 November 2025]

quality works”²⁵⁶. The emphasis of high quality can be directly attributed to the positioning of Art Basel developed by Lorenzo A. Rudolf. This article also mentioned the parallel Liste fair, which was expected to feature 36 galleries from 16 countries²⁵⁷.

The opening of the fair was described by the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* in the review dated 11 June 1997 as a “festive vernissage”²⁵⁸, a description that corresponds to the eventisation strategy implied by Rudolf. The *Thurgauer Zeitung* published an article on the same date providing further details regarding the art works exhibited and the art sections; for instance, it was mentioned that a total of 263 galleries were present (compared to 261 participating galleries in 1996). Moreover, there was information about the Video Forum section, which featured the participation of the music TV channel MTV for the first time in the history of Art Basel²⁵⁹. It was also noted that the Video Forum was held thanks to the sponsorship of the bank²⁶⁰, which was evidently the Swiss Bank Corporation, listed in the catalogue as the main sponsor of the event. Art 28’97 was also supported by companies such as Moët&Chandon, Sony, Saab, Vitra, Fürst Messebau AG, Salute Landscaping LTD, Dobler Gärtnerei AG and the airlines Swissair and Crossair.

As in previous editions, the venue for Art 28’97 was Messe Basel, with the exhibition occupying Halls 201–214 and covering a total area of 17,275 square metres²⁶¹. Alongside the aforementioned “Statements” and “Video Forum” sections,

²⁵⁶ “Die Art mit junger Begleiterin”, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, vol. 129, 7/8 June 1997, p. 47; <https://zeitungsarchiv.nzz.ch/read/10729/10729/1997-06-07/47> [last access on 29 November 2025] Original text: “Sämtliche bedeutenden Kunstrichtungen des 20. Jahrhunderts - von der klassischen Moderne bis zu neuesten Trends im Video- und Photobereich - werden mit qualitativ hochstehenden Werken vertreten sein”.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ “Eine hochkarätige Kunstmesse”, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, vol. 132, 11 June 1997, p. 20; <https://www.e-newspaperarchives.ch/?a=d&d=NZZ19970611-01.2.26.2> [last access on 29 November 2025] Original text: “festlichen Vernissage”.

²⁵⁹ “Basel: Kunstmesse Art eröffnet”, *Thurgauer Zeitung*, vol. 132, 11 June 1997, p. 15; <https://www.e-newspaperarchives.ch/?a=d&d=TGZ19970611-01.2.26.1> [last access on 29 November 2025]

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ I. Genoni, „Just What Is It That Makes It So Different, So Appealing?“ *Art Basel. Von der Verkaufsmesse zum Kulturereignis*, cit., p. 206.

these spaces also hosted sectors such as Art Reviews, Photography, and Editions. The latter, an innovation of the 1990s introduced in 1993, aimed to present “leading publishers of editioned works, prints, and multiples, who show the result of their collaboration with the renowned artists working with a wide range of techniques and approaches”²⁶². Moreover, 1997 marked the introduction of a new feature at the fair: the VIP Lounge, which was mentioned in the catalogue for the first time²⁶³.

Regarding the catalogue itself, the preface focused heavily on the calibre of the art on display. According to Lorenzo A. Rudolf, “The fair’s consistent orientation towards quality has proved correct and successful, yet again”²⁶⁴. The director further elucidated the notion of quality at Art Basel: “Quality at Art means highly interesting and highly acclaimed art. Quality at Art also means the competent and sensitive presentation of art by the galleries selected to participate. And, last but not least, quality at Art means that exhibitors stand for serious, distinctive and responsible gallery work, working primarily with the artists in the field of contemporary art”²⁶⁵. This guiding principle was applied rigorously across all sections; for instance, the preface for the Video Forum similarly highlighted that “The selector placed the emphasis on quality and on ensuring a many-faceted Forum, both from the points of view of content and form”²⁶⁶.

While acknowledging that a gallery's desire to make a profit is legitimate, Rudolf noted that “the main emphasis is always on the competent and committed mediation of both art and artists”²⁶⁷. He reinforced this statement by adding: “The search for ways and means of increasing the business community’s willingness to invest is of the utmost importance, particularly in our day and age. However, enabling

²⁶² C. Dirié, G. Gavillet, M. Spiegler, C. Manchester, E. Manchester, *Year 50:Art/Basel*, cit., p. 232.

²⁶³ C. Dirié, G. Gavillet, M. Spiegler, C. Manchester, E. Manchester, *Year 50:Art/Basel*, cit., p. 73.

²⁶⁴ U. Diehr, I. Fechter, *Art 28’97: Die Internationale Kunstmesse*, cit., p. XIV.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 541.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. XIV.

intellectual investment is just as important”²⁶⁸. In addition, the director also pointed out that the fair “supported the galleries that perform serious mediation work”²⁶⁹. Last but not the least, he referenced the newly organised ICAFA, described above, which brought together other art fairs adhering to this principle.

It is also worth noting the practical application of the principle of the strict selection policy at the 1997 edition. According to this text, for the Art in 1997 “600 galleries from all five continents”²⁷⁰ applied for the participation. Based on the final number of participants, it can be concluded that more than half of applicants were rejected. The Selection Committee for Art 28’97 included the following members: Felix Buchmann (Buchmann Galerie, Basel, Cologne), Victor Gisler (Mai 36 Galerie, Zürich), Karsten Greve (Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Paris, Milan), Wolfgang Günther (Galerie Limmer, Cologne), Pierre Huber (Art&Public, Geneva). Furthermore, there were also additional experts on the Art Committee: for “Statements” — Esther Schipper (Galerie Schipper & Krome, Berlin), for “Editions” — Franck Bordas (Galerie Franck Bordas, Paris), for “Photography” sector — Kaspar Fleischmann (Galerie Zur Stockeregg, Zürich) and Rudolf Kicken (Galerie Rudolf Kicken, Cologne)²⁷¹. In addition to the the Selection Committee in 1997, there was also “a Committee of Art Ambassadors comprising 19 gallerists active in Europe, North and South America, and Australia”²⁷².

Finally, regarding the geographical distribution of the 263 galleries, the majority hailed from Germany (56 galleries) and Switzerland (44). A significant number of galleries also represented France (37), the USA (31), Italy (22), and the United Kingdom (20).

Regarding the art mediums and works presented, an increasing presence of photography and video was observed, reflecting their growing acceptance in the

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. XXVI.

²⁷² C. Dirié, G. Gavillet, M. Spiegler, C. Manchester, E. Manchester, *Year 50:Art/Basel*, cit., p. 73.

market²⁷³. Additionally, according to Ilona Genoni, in 1997 there was a pronounced emphasis on sculpture. This tendency directly led to the creation of the Art Sculpture sector in 1998, which would later evolve into the Art Unlimited platform in 2000²⁷⁴. The increasing interest to sculpture at Art Basel can be correlated to the exhibition *Skulptur Projekte Münster*, which in 1997 began to become institutionalised²⁷⁵ and was considered by the press in conjunction with the 1997 Venice Biennale, documenta X and Art 28'97.

Moreover, Genoni mentioned several prominent artworks presented in 1997, based on the newspapers' reviews, — the installation *Bonjour Tristesse* by Ugo Rondinone, *Horror at Home* by Damien Hirst, and artists — Elizabeth Peyton, Daniele Buetti, and Atelier van Lieshout²⁷⁶. In total, citing the opinion of various journalists, she highlighted that the exhibition looked “rejuvenated”²⁷⁷. The critical reception of the Basel fair will be examined in the following section.

Attendance at the 1997 edition of Art exceeded expectations: according to an article in the *Thurgauer Zeitung* dated 19 June 1997, a total of 47,000 visitors attended the fair, which exceeded the previous year's figures by 3 per cent²⁷⁸.

Regarding sales, art dealers present at Art Basel were equally satisfied. According to an article in *WirtschaftsWoche* published on 26 June 1997, “the mood was euphoric, the sales were mostly brilliant”²⁷⁹. For example, the gallerist Heinz Holtmann stated that he sold almost everything he presented, including a painting by Sigmar Polke for

²⁷³ I. Genoni, „Just What Is It That Makes It So Different, So Appealing?“ *Art Basel. Von der Verkaufsmesse zum Kulturereignis*, cit., p. 166-167.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 167-169.

²⁷⁵ 1997. *Skulptur. Projekte in Münster 1997*; <https://www.skulptur-projekte-archiv.de/de-de/1997/> [last access on 29 December 2025]

²⁷⁶ I. Genoni, „Just What Is It That Makes It So Different, So Appealing?“ *Art Basel. Von der Verkaufsmesse zum Kulturereignis*, cit., p. 167.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ “Kunstmesse «Art»”, *Thurgauer Zeitung*, vol.139, 19 June 1997, p. 15; <https://www.e-newspaperarchives.ch/?a=d&d=TGZ19970619-01.2.22.2.2> [last access on 29 November 2025]

²⁷⁹ “Alles verkauft”, *WirtschaftsWoche*, vol. 027, 26 June 1997, p. 110; archiv.wiwo.de/document/WW_20f71ef1d856c7c104ff81b0347c4c06aab40ae4 [last access on 29 November 2025] Original text: “Die Stimmung war euphorisch, die Verkäufe verliefen überwiegend glänzend”.

around 400,000 Marks. The photography sales were also successful: for instance, Rudolf Kicken sold two artworks by Helmut Newton for 24,000 marks. Furthermore, it was noted that “the newest art at affordable prices was also represented from nine countries”²⁸⁰. According to the article, the price range for this category was between 1000 and 8000 marks.

The success of sales at Art Basel in 1997 was confirmed even after the fair concluded. An article published on 23 July of the same year in the *Freiburger Nachrichten* noted the following:

more customers are interested in contemporary art again. There were also more sales at the art fair Art in Basel than in the previous year. Furer notes a growing buying interest for European contemporary art, especially in the Asian region. Furthermore, figurative painting would be bought more often again. Photography has established itself as a medium²⁸¹.

An almost identical article in another Swiss newspaper, the *Thurgauer Zeitung*, published on the same day, included an addition to this statement: “Furer also recognised as a trend that sculptures were more often purchased by private individuals”²⁸².

4. Critical reception and interpretation of the Grand Tour 1997 exhibitions

The 1997 Venice Biennale, documenta X, and Art 28’97 attracted considerable media attention and sparked significant debate. The very coincidence of these events generated ambiguous perceptions. For instance, Franco Fanelli from *Il Giornale*

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ “Hohes Qualitätsbewusstsein der Kunden - Vertrauen in den Markt ist gestiegen”, *Freiburger Nachrichten*, 23 July 1997, p. 20; <https://www.e-newspaperarchives.ch/?a=d&d=FZG19970723-01.2.137> [last access on 29 November 2025] Original text: “[...] interessieren sich erfreulicherweise wieder mehr Kunden für Gegenwartskunst. Auch an der Kunstmesse Art in Basel seien mehr Verkäufe getätigt worden als im Vorjahr. Furer [...] stellt vor allem im asiatischen Raum ein wachsendes Kaufinteresse für europäische Gegenwartskunst fest. Ferner würde wieder häufiger gegenständliche statt figurative Malerei gekauft. Fotografie habe sich als Medium durchgesetzt”.

²⁸² A. Weibel, “Vertrauen in den Kunstmarkt steigt”, *Thurgauer Zeitung*, vol. 168, 23 July 1997, p. 7; <https://www.e-newspaperarchives.ch/?a=d&d=TGZ19970723-01.2.16.1> [last access on 29 November 2025] Original text: “Als Trend erkannte Furer ferner, dass Skulpturen häufiger auch von Privaten erworben würden”.

dell'Arte analysed in his article²⁸³ whether the three exhibitions simultaneously marked the beginning of a new golden age or, conversely, signalled a deeper crisis in the entire art system. At first glance, the “magical constellation”²⁸⁴ — a concept Fanelli extended to include *Sculpture Projects Münster* — seemed to indicate that Europe was regaining its leading position in the art world from the United States. However, he argued that this perception did not correspond to reality— the art world was in crisis. In his article, Franco Fanelli predicted a global transformation and the erosion of established roles: instead of the conventional scheme “artist-gallery-museum”²⁸⁵ there would be “a single large ring”²⁸⁶, where the large-scale exhibitions such as the Biennale would attract an audience and serve as a space for experimentation on a scale that galleries could not afford. Furthermore, the author noted that this shift was already underway, yet the essential role of galleries in these ostensibly non-commercial events was either unacknowledged or merely credited in catalogues with a generic “courtesy of...”²⁸⁷.

Another critical review of the 1997 art events was published in *Tema Celeste* magazine, written by Massimo Minini²⁸⁸. It should be noted that Minini also analysed the sculpture exhibition in Münster, but made virtually no reference to Art Basel — as indicated by his title — limiting himself to mentioning the commercial nature of the fair. At the same time, the other three exhibitions, according to the author, were unconsciously united by a common theme, epitomised by the title of the Venice Biennale, which encapsulated a nostalgia for the recent past. Moreover, Minini also observed the tendency in all three shows for artists to collaborate and create a group artwork (like Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler).

²⁸³ F. Fanelli, “Basilea, Biennale, Documenta: è vera belle époque?”, *Il Giornale dell'Arte*, no. 156, June 1997, p. 103.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid. Original text: “artista-galleria-museo”.

²⁸⁶ Ibid. Original text: “un unico grande anello”.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ M. Minini, “Basel, Venice, Münster, Kassel”, *Tema Celeste*, July/October 1997, pp. 113-115, here p. 113.

It is also worth noting that Minini used his article to defend Germano Celant, whose edition of the Biennale had been criticised as “disappointing”²⁸⁹ and “too politically correct”²⁹⁰. He highlighted the Biennale must also serve a wider public, for whom works by artists like Haim Steinbach or Rebecca Horn are not yet predictable or commonplace. Minini also pointed out that, despite the difference in the preparation time, the results were not drastically different. The author rejected the notion that a curator or gallerist could or should predict or channel the direction of art: “The future of art will be determined by the artists when the time comes. Who can say where art will go tomorrow morning? [...] Let’s leave them in peace, the artists, so they can truly surprise us”²⁹¹.

In other articles published in the same issue of *Tema Celeste*, Celant’s curatorial work faced harsher criticism. Demetrio Paparoni noted that Celant acted more as a “secretary”²⁹² for artists than as a critic and historian. According to the author, Celant “has invited friends”²⁹³ granted them the agency to choose which artworks to present. Paparoni suggested that the curator should have made the selection himself; however, Celant described the decision as democratic, implying that it demonstrated “a greater respect for him”²⁹⁴. Additionally, he pointed out the shortcomings of the *Future, Present, Past* main principle, noting that artists often did not reflect their specific era. Furthermore, he highlighted a disparity in the quality of the works: some were deemed weak (Oldenburg, Koons, Dine, Clemente, Kabakov), while others — such as Abramović, Horn, and Kiefer — created artworks devoid of “a sense of emptiness”²⁹⁵. In the first article of the volume Paparoni also mentioned the lack of a fully elaborated curatorial statement: “The critical text proper takes up only two

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² D. Paparoni, “Venice in the Age of Aquarius”, *Tema Celeste*, July/October 1997, pp. 115-116, here p. 115.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

pages of the catalogue and cannot be said to have a critical stance. And so the role of the critic seems to coincide with that of a marketing expert”²⁹⁶.

The lack of a unifying concept was also noted in the article “Jetzt, aber mit Gefühl” (“Now, but with Feeling”) published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* dated 19 June 1997. The main exhibition was criticised for abandoning any thematic or art-historical framework. Instead, it relied simply on bringing together different generations of artists without creating a meaningful dialogue or structure. The author, Thomas Wagner, suggested the following:

the freedom that artists, works and curators thus give the viewer is perhaps an imposition, the result of a lack of courage and a lack of assets, to at least try out a possible, perhaps even an illuminating constellation of works²⁹⁷.

A similar critique regarding the weak curatorial concept was expressed in the *Artforum* review by Dan Cameron, who highlighted that “the works assembled [in the separate room in the Central Pavilion] look so inert and disconnected, it’s like walking through an art fair”²⁹⁸. At the same time, Cameron considered the halls of Cragg, Fabro, Abramović, Ruscha “exceptional”²⁹⁹.

Pier Giovanni Castagnoli of *La Repubblica* argued that Celant had created a technically impeccable exhibition, but in doing so, he failed to produce a vivid show that would constitute a true act of criticism³⁰⁰. Similarly, Angela Vettese, writing for *Il Sole-24 Ore*, critiqued the 47th Biennale for being built on an “old ‘business’ model”³⁰¹ that failed to engage with pressing contemporary issues of globalism, identity, and the purpose of international art shows in a post-1989

²⁹⁶ D. Paparoni, “The Venice Biennale, the choice is a right, theory a duty”, *Tema Celeste*, July/October 1997, p. 113.

²⁹⁷ T. Wagner, “Jetzt, aber mit Gefühl”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, vol. 139, 19 June 1997, p. 35; Original text: “die Freiheit, die Künstler, Werke und Kuratoren dem Betrachter damit verschaffen, womöglich eine Zumutung ist, das Ergebnis fehlenden Mutes und mangelnden Vermögens, eine mögliche, vielleicht sogar eine erhellende Konstellation aus Werken wenigstens zu erproben”

²⁹⁸ D. Cameron, “the 47th Venice Biennale”, *Artforum*, vol. 36, September 1997, no.1; <https://www.artforum.com/events/the-47th-venice-biennale-193947/> [last access on 29 November 2025]

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ F. Fanelli, L. Capellini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1997 dal vivo*, cit., p. 11.

³⁰¹ Ibid., p.11. Original text: “vecchio modello ‘aziendale’”.

world³⁰². Furthermore, Pietro Marino of *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* noted that Celant had essentially created a “museum of great names”³⁰³, a point that aligned with the common criticism of the Biennale’s museumification³⁰⁴.

There was an opposite view published in a supplement to *Il Giornale dell’Arte* published for the opening of the Biennale: “Conceptualism is the strongest connecting theme in this assembly [...]”³⁰⁵. A review in *Libération* praised “the seriousness of the selection”³⁰⁶ and the fact that Celant had expanded his focus beyond his Arte Povera roots, presenting a coherent and passionate critical reflection³⁰⁷.

Roberta Smith from the *New York Times* also critically reviewed the 47th Venice Biennale, labelling it “one of the weakest Biennales in recent memory”³⁰⁸. Given the severe time constraints, she highlighted that it was a “miracle” that the Biennale opened at all. However, she noted that this urgency affected the content of the exhibition. Smith emphasised the market-oriented nature of the show: the 1997 edition “is weighed down by big-name, over-the-hill talents, including many artists with whom Mr. Celant has worked in previous exhibitions. Walking through it, one can almost hear the sound of chips being cashed in”³⁰⁹. Another issue with the Biennale, according to Smith, was that it appeared “so incoherent and arbitrary that it simply echoes the randomness of the national pavilions”³¹⁰.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid. Original text: “museo di grandi firme”.

³⁰⁴ C. Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia 1993-2003: l'esposizione come piattaforma (Tesi di dottorato)*, cit., p. 278.

³⁰⁵ F. Fanelli, “Biennale Vademecum”, a supplement of *Il Giornale dell’Arte*, no. 156, June 1997.

³⁰⁶ F. Fanelli, L. Capellini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1997 dal vivo*, cit., p. 11. Original text: “la serietà della selezione”.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

³⁰⁸ R. Smith, “Another Venice Biennale Shuffles to Life”, *The New York Times*, 16 June 1997; <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/06/16/arts/another-venice-biennale-shuffles-to-life.html> [last access on 29 November 2025]

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

Smith also observed that exhibitions in both the national pavilions and the Central Pavilion highlighted a waning interest in traditional media, with the rare exceptions of paintings by Robert Colescott and sculptures by Rachel Whiteread and Thierry De Cordier, contrasted by the increasing prominence of video art (such as Mariko Mori's work)³¹¹. This shift towards video, alongside photography, was also noted in a review published in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on 17 June 1997, which highlighted the video artwork by Pipilotti Rist³¹².

It is also worth noting that Italian critics (for example, Paolo Vagheggu of *La Repubblica*) highlighted the presence of the aforementioned Rachel Whiteread, Pipilotti Rist, and Mariko Mori, together with Rei Naito, Gia Edzgeradze, and other female artists, as a positive aspect of the 47th Biennale³¹³. The strong presence of women artists was also highlighted in Laura Poletto's article.³¹⁴

In contrast, the Italian Pavilion, featuring the works of Enzo Cucchi, Ettore Spalletti, and Maurizio Cattelan, was singled out for overwhelmingly negative reviews (and all male artists). Dan Cameron dismissed it as "an ultimately pointless collaboration" between the Italian artists³¹⁵. Gillo Dorfles from *Corriere della Sera* also critiqued it, arguing that the artists' paintings were "unnecessarily dilated and damaging each other"³¹⁶. Geneviève Breerette of *Le Monde* found that the intentional confrontation between the three artists meaningless and particularly detrimental to Spalletti, whose work is reduced to "the effect of a window dressing"³¹⁷. Fabrizio D'Amico of *La*

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² M. Frehner, "Ein Schnellschuss, wenig Treffer", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, vol. 137, 17 June 1997, p. 45; <https://zeitungsarchiv.nzz.ch/read/9525/9525/1997-06-17/45> [last access on 29 November 2025]

³¹³ F. Fanelli, L. Capellini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1997 dal vivo*, cit., p. 10.

³¹⁴ L. Poletto, *Biennale di Venezia - Documenta di Kassel 1997: prospettive sull'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 311.

³¹⁵ D. Cameron, *the 47th Venice Biennale*, cit.

³¹⁶ F. Fanelli, L. Capellini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1997 dal vivo*, cit., p. 10. Original text: "inutilmente dilatati e che si danneggiano a vicenda".

³¹⁷ Ibid., p.11 Original text: "l'effetto di una decorazione in vetrina".

Repubblica delivered the most brutal verdict, calling the Italian pavilion “the ugliest in twenty years at least”³¹⁸.

The critical perception of documenta X was also intensely polarised. The radicalism in the curatorial vision of Catherine David generated both praise for its intellectual rigour and criticism for its perceived didacticism and visual austerity.

From the perspective of curatorial concept, the documenta X was praised for its integrity and versatility. In a review in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* dated 23 June 1997, Eduard Beaucamp highlighted Catherine David’s radical critique of the art world:

She competes against everything: against complacent aesthetic consumption, against the inescapable entertainment epidemic, against the market, against a representative or even neo-feudal art in the service of social power - in short, against rampant cultural prostitution³¹⁹.

This stance led her to exclude numerous artists who had been popular during the art boom of the preceding decades.

Mónica Amor also pointed out the politicisation of the exhibition in the opposition of the Venice Biennale:

more than a survey of contemporary art, which usually entails — as the Venice Biennale and its loose ‘Past, Present and Future’ exhibition demonstrated [...]— a personal rearrangement of (mostly) New York legitimised artists, Documenta discursively constituted itself as a ‘cultural event’ imbued with the political aspirations that characterised postwar neo-avantgarde practices³²⁰.

A similar opinion was presented in a review in *The New York Times* by Michael Kimmelman: “Ms. David's measure of independence in selecting artists is something. [...]. She doesn't pretend to have discovered an avant-garde. She hasn't succumbed to the pressure of quotas”³²¹.

³¹⁸ Ibid., p.10. Original text: “in assoluto il più brutto almeno da vent'anni a questa parte”.

³¹⁹ E. Beaucamp, *Was erstarrt ist, soll wieder umtreiben*, cit. Original text: “Gegen alles tritt sie an: gegen den selbstgefälligen ästhetischen Konsum, gegen die unentrinnbare Unterhaltungseuche, gegen den Markt, gegen eine repräsentative oder gar neofeudale Kunst im Dienst gesellschaftlicher Macht - kurz gegen die grassierende Kulturprostitution”.

³²⁰ M. Amor, “Documenta X, Reclaiming the political project of the avant-garde”, *Third Text*, vol. 11, Issue 40, 1997, pp. 95-100, here p. 95.

³²¹ M. Kimmelman, “Few Paintings or Sculptures, But an Ambitious Concept”, *The New York Times*, 23 June 1997; <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/06/23/arts/few-paintings-or-sculptures-but-an-ambitious-concept.html> [last access on 29 November 2025]

Furthermore, Mónica Amor also highlighted that one of the key success of the 10th edition was its interdisciplinary nature, including films, series of lectures and other diverse means “to expand the Euroamerican classical canon of Documenta”³²². This view was shared by Madeleine Grynsztejn, Curator at the Carnegie Museum of Art, who praised documenta X not only for presenting underestimated artists from the sixties, but also for shifting the very character of the exhibition from visuality to “one that discursive, multidisciplinary, and takes place over an extended period of time (e.g., “100 Days–100 Guests”)”³²³.

Another prominent aspect of the documenta X, according to Boris Groys and MoMA curator Robert Storr, was its logo. Storr described it as “the powerful and controversial symbol”³²⁴ subject to various interpretations. Furthermore, Dan Cameron of *Artforum* highlighted the publication *Politics/Poetics*, as “the most interesting part of Documenta X”³²⁵, despite his overall negative perception of the exhibition. Matthias Frehner, critic for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, stated that Catherine David’s interdisciplinary concept was more successfully realised in the book than in the exhibition itself³²⁶.

At the same time, criticism extended to many aspects of the quinquennial. Negative reviews often cited the insufficient representation of traditional media — painting and sculpture — and a pervasive sense of monotony. Thus, Dan Cameron found documenta X “monotonous and humourless”³²⁷. He also criticised Catherine David’s approach as “anathema toward visual art in favor of blind theory”³²⁸. Lars Nittve

³²² M. Amor, *Documenta X, Reclaiming the political project of the avant-garde*, cit., p. 100.

³²³ D. Birnbaum, “LITTLE D BIG X Documenta X: THE ARTFORUM QUESTIONNAIRE”, *Artforum*, vol. 36, September 1997, no.1; <https://www.artforum.com/features/little-d-big-x-Documenta-x-the-artforum-questionnaire-201766/> [last access on 29 November 2025]

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ M. Frehner, “Kopfgeburt und Kunstsalat”, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, vol. 147, 28/29 June 1997, p. 67; <https://www.e-newspaperarchives.ch/?a=d&d=NZZ19970628-01.2.80.4> [last access on 29 November 2025]

³²⁷ D. Birnbaum, *LITTLE D BIG X Documenta X: THE ARTFORUM QUESTIONNAIRE*, cit.

³²⁸ Ibid.

held a similar opinion, stating that “The concept has a stronger presence than the art”³²⁹. Michael Kimmelman also noted this tendency: “There are almost no paintings or sculptures in it, and the few painters here are included not because of how they paint, but because of what they paint [...] Pleasure without pain is verboten at this show”³³⁰.

Simultaneously, the highly theoretical curatorial approach influenced the exhibition in an unforeseen way. Richard Flood, Chief Curator at the Walker Art Center, noted that due to David’s complicated relationship with the press, documenta X became “a sociological phenomenon”³³¹. In his opinion, this was a disadvantage because “the theory was the point; it just wasn’t news”³³².

Another negative aspect, according to a review in *Artnet* by Rosanne Altstatt, concerned the lack of coherence between exhibits: “David has an eye and a mind for fantastic artworks, but the relationships aren’t always clear”³³³. The ubiquitous presence of new media—photography and video art—was also received with ambivalence. According to reviews in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, such extensive use of photography, film, and video occurred “because they document social contexts or ecological findings that are no longer perceived and attended to by art”³³⁴. Conversely, Renato Barilli of *Corriere della Sera* stated that the numerous video screening rooms were “boring and uniform”³³⁵.

The use of the Internet at documenta X also met with mixed reactions. Despite the fact that documenta X was the first exhibition to be presented online, this aspect was

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ M. Kimmelman, *Few Paintings or Sculptures, But an Ambitious Concept*, cit.

³³¹ D. Birnbaum, *LITTLE D BIG X Documenta X: THE ARTFORUM QUESTIONNAIRE*, cit.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ R. Altstatt, “Documenta X: Path and Periphery”, *Artnet*, 1997; http://www.artnet.com/magazine_pre2000/features/altstatt/altstatt97-7-29.asp [last access on 29 November 2025]

³³⁴ E. Beaucamp, *Was erstarrt ist, soll wieder umtreiben*, cit. Original text: “weil sie soziale Kontexte oder ökologische Befunde dokumentieren, die von der Kunst nicht mehr wahrgenommen und betreut werden”.

³³⁵ R. Barilli, “Improvvisazione in Laguna, rigore a Kassel”, *Corriere della Sera*, 11 June 1997; Original text: “noiose e uniformi”.

criticised because the artists represented online were grouped not conceptually, but merely according to their use of the medium. Moreover, the lack of a live internet connection at the exhibition itself — which relied on a local area network — provoked a negative reaction³³⁶. Furthermore, the archiving of the entire exhibition website onto a CD-ROM was described as the “most notorious failure”³³⁷, as it was based on a denial of the intrinsic nature of the Internet.

Catherine David’s stated appeal to non-Western countries as part of the exhibition was also criticised. Dan Cameron noted that this was disappointing because, ultimately, David “has produced a relentlessly Eurocentric exhibition”³³⁸. In addition to this, left-leaning critics such as Geeta Kapur argued that documenta X’s “representation of the Third World was inadequate”³³⁹. At the same time, Kapur acknowledged that “the fact that such an argument [about multiculturalism] was seriously engaged with at dX was itself a considerable achievement”³⁴⁰.

Furthermore, critics on the left also drew negative attention to the fact that documenta X was generously sponsored by corporations, creating a contradiction with Catherine David’s attempts to emphasise the non-commercial nature of the exhibition³⁴¹.

An important point to note is that criticism of the 10th edition often shifted from the exhibition itself to Catherine David personally, particularly targeting her appearance (a tendency observed among critics of both sexes). Critics also frequently mythologised her, portraying David variously as a Pythia or a Joan of Arc³⁴².

³³⁶ C. Jones, “The Copy and the Paste. Documenta X’s 1997 Net Art Exhibition and Vuk Ćosić’s ‘Documenta Done’”, *Rhizome*, 02 March 2017; <https://rhizome.org/editorial/2017/mar/02/the-copy-and-the-paste/> [last access on 29 November 2025]

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ D. Cameron, “The endless biennial”, *Artforum*, vol. 36, December 1997, no. 4; <https://www.artforum.com/columns/the-endless-biennial-201667/> [last access on 29 November 2025].

³³⁹ M. Miyoshi, “Radical Art at Documenta X”, *New Left Review*, I/228, March/April 1998, pp. 151-160, here p. 157.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 158.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² D. Schwarze, *Im Schatten der Documenta. Kritiken und Aufsätze zur Kunst*, Berlin: B&S Siebenhaar, 2016, p. 35-38.

Although Art Basel received less attention in general reviews of the 1997 art events compared to its counterparts, the fair was nevertheless covered extensively in German and Swiss newspapers, as well as in *The Art Newspaper*. In general, most critics regarded Art 28'97 as an extremely high-quality fair, placing it on a par with the exhibitions described earlier: "In addition to the Venice Biennale and the "Documenta" in Kassel, which will open their doors this month, the Basel Art Fair is the third in a series of three world-class art events"³⁴³. Bruno Muheim, a journalist for *The Art Newspaper*, also evaluated it as "the best contemporary art fair in the world by a long way, and in some respects [...] have achieved perfection"³⁴⁴.

Moreover, reviewers noted that the galleries had indeed presented their most significant works for the fair. Confirming earlier expectations, Wilfried Wiegand of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote that the participants were "armed to the teeth with high and the highest quality"³⁴⁵. Philipp Meier of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* entitled the review of the Art 28'97 as "Quality-conscious, versatile and elegant"³⁴⁶.

According to a review in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, numerous masters of modern art were presented by the galleries, among them Picasso, Dubuffet, Twombly, De Kooning, and Francis Bacon — works described as being of "[...] and consistently in good, not infrequently in museum quality"³⁴⁷. The *Engadiner Post* described the presentation of these works as "the culmination of the multifaceted

³⁴³ *Eine hochkarätige Kunstmesse*, cit. Original text: "Neben der Biennale in Venedig und der «Documenta» in Kassel, die diesen Monat ihre Tore öffnen werden, ist die Basler Kunstmesse die Dritte im Bunde dreier Kunstereignisse von Weltrang".

³⁴⁴ B. Muheim, "A teeny bit middle aged: Art Basel 1997", *The Art Newspaper*, 30 June 1997; <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/1997/07/01/a-teeny-bit-middle-aged-art-basel-1997> [last access on 29 November 2025].

³⁴⁵ W. Wiegand, *Parade der großen Namen*, cit. Original text: "bis an die Zähne bewaffnet mit hoher und höchster Qualität".

³⁴⁶ P. Meier, "Qualitätsbewusst, vielseitig und elegant", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, vol. 135, 14 June 1997, p. 47; <https://www.e-newspaperarchives.ch/?a=d&d=NZZ19970614-01.2.57.1>. [last access on 29 November 2025] Original text: "Qualitätsbewusst, vielseitig und elegant".

³⁴⁷ W. Wiegand, *Parade der großen Namen*, cit. Original text: "durchweg in guter, nicht selten in musealer Qualität".

exhibition”³⁴⁸. Spurred by a retrospective at the Centre Pompidou, Fernand Léger achieved that status of the fair’s star, with fifteen galleries offering his work. The Galerie Berggruen dedicated its entire stand to 27 of his works³⁴⁹. His painting *Les Acrobates*, alongside the triptych by Francis Bacon, were considered as the most highly estimated artworks — 7,5 and 8 million respectively³⁵⁰.

Critics observed two main trends. The first was an increasing presence of photography in the art market. Wilfried Wiegand pointed out a shift in photographic art away from the hyperrealism of the Becher School toward the “private themes and technical sloppiness of Nan Goldin”³⁵¹. According to the author, this type of photography reflected the spirit of the times and resembled the imagery people were accustomed to seeing in the press.

A second trend identified in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* review was the “a subtle, yet clearly noticeable presence of East Asian art”, presented not only by Japanese and Korean galleries but also integrated into the selections of European gallerists³⁵². As examples for this trend, Wiegand cited Japanese artist Leiko Ikemura, presented at Art Basel by Galerie Karsten Greve, and the Korean Artists Shin Sung-Hy and Duck Hyun Cho.

However, while acknowledging the fair’s merits, Bruno Muheim of *The Art Newspaper* also criticised several aspects of the event. Thus, in an effort to please a certain audience — a wealthy, Anglo-Saxon male collector over fifty, the fair lost its vividness³⁵³. According to Muheim, the artworks presented at Art Basel were by a predictable set of artists, usually of similar size and condition — selected “to suit the

³⁴⁸“«Art»iges aus Basel”, *Engadiner Post*, vol. 68, 14 June 1997, p.10; <https://www.e-newspaperarchives.ch/?a=d&d=EDP19970614-01.2.40> [last access on 29 November 2025] Original text: “Einen Höhepunkt der vielseitigen Ausstellung”.

³⁴⁹ W. Wiegand, *Parade der großen Namen*, cit.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid. Original text: “privaten Thematik und technischen Schlampigkeit von Nan Goldin”.

³⁵² Ibid. Original text: “eine dezente, aber doch deutlich spürbare Präsenz ostasiatischer Kunst”.

³⁵³ B. Muheim, *A teeny bit middle aged: Art Basel 1997*, cit.

taste of our model collector and to fill the empty space above his sofa or his writing desk”³⁵⁴.

Furthermore, the author directed his most significant criticism at the galleries that had started to dominate at Art Basel: those acting as secondary market dealers who bought art at auctions and resold it at the fair³⁵⁵. This resulted in a situation where “the stands at Basel look much more like a sales catalogue for [...] auctions than a reflection of what is going on in art today”³⁵⁶. Consequently, Muheim noted a scarcity of artists from the Venice Biennale at Art Basel, suggesting that the art world establishment might prefer to skip the fair in favour of the 47th Biennale or documenta X. He concluded his review by advising Art Basel to “try not to be so conservative and frigidly elegant”³⁵⁷ and add “a bit of bad taste and boldness”³⁵⁸.

Thus, the reception of the major exhibitions of 1997 revealed a distinct dichotomy within the art world. While documenta X and the Venice Biennale sparked fierce debate regarding theoretical radicalism and political engagement — whether for their excess, as with documenta X, or their perceived scarcity, as with Venice — “Art” was critiqued for the opposite: a retreat into safe, quality-oriented conservatism. Yet, precisely this division of roles — between the intellectual rigour of the curated exhibitions and the market stability of the fair — allowed these events to coexist and influence each other.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

Chapter II. Artists of the “Grand Tour 1997”

1. Methodology and limitations of the research

This research was inspired by the article *The Venice Effect* by Olav Velthuis, in which he explored the impact of the participation at the Venice Biennale on the artistic careers and art market performance. Despite the distinct efforts of the institution to distance itself from the art market, Velthuis argued that the Venice Biennale is still a power influencing the prices of artworks: “[...] showing in Venice is widely perceived as a signal of artistic quality, lending legitimacy to an artist’s oeuvre and therefore contributing to shaping collectors’ tastes (read: their willingness to pay for art)”³⁵⁹. In addition, he claimed that the Biennale’s effect is stronger than that of other major exhibitions, such as Documenta.

Velthuis also identified four specific paradoxes that can reveal why the Biennale’s attempts to escape from the market actually strengthens the commercial impact. The first feature is that the curators’ intention to create a non-market-oriented exhibition is the main proof of the artist’s good reputation and high quality of art, which the market needs to validate the prices. The second paradox is connected with the fact that the curators of the Biennale prefer the younger and lesser-known artists to avoid commercialisation. Thus, the impact is far greater for these unknowns than for established artists, whose prices are already set. Furthermore, the third aspect of the Venice Effect is that the curators choice of works of art that are not in demand on the market (for example, installations) is often accompanied by financial support from dealers that interested in building “symbolic capital”³⁶⁰ in this way and prove that they are not only selling art. Last but not the least, the fourth characteristic is the prominence of the Biennale and its proximity to Art Basel, which allows art world elite to significantly save time.³⁶¹

³⁵⁹ O. Velthuis, “The Venice Effect”, *The Art Newspaper Magazine*, 20 (225), 2011, pp. 21–24, here p. 22; http://www.velthuis.dds.nl/art_newspaper_biennale_effect.pdf [last access on 30 April 2026]

³⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 23.

³⁶¹ Ibid, p. 23-24.

Thus, Olav Velthuis highlighted an inescapable symbiosis between the art market (represented by Art Basel) and the Biennale. However, describing observations and giving examples, he does not mention the methods by which it was possible to obtain confirmation of the paradoxes. Such an attempt was made later by a group of scientists from Australia and described in the article *Is there a ‘Venice Effect’? Participation in the Venice Biennale and the implication for artists’ careers*. The methods used in this work are partially based on the methodology described in the aforementioned article and further extended to visualise the network between major art events (Venice Biennale, documenta X and Art Basel) in 1997.

To test Velthuis’s theory, I compiled two datasets encompassing both institutional exhibition activities and secondary market performance. The decision to restrict the dataset to artists present at both an institutional exhibition and Art 28’97 warrants methodological clarification. This intersection was not arbitrary: its very existence reflects an initial market signal, insofar as gallery participation at Art Basel implies an active commercial decision to capitalise on institutional visibility. However, the present analysis is not concerned with this contemporaneous effect. Rather, by tracking auction records across an eleven-year panel from 1992 to 2002, the DiD model is designed to isolate the sustained institutional effect — that is, the degree to which participation in the Venice Biennale or documenta X produced measurable long-term consequences for artists’ market valuations, independent of short-term commercial exposure.

The overarching design of these datasets inherently addresses Velthuis’s fourth paradox (the geographical and institutional symbiosis between mega-exhibitions and the art market). To test the first and second paradoxes (capital conversion and generational bias), I synthesised data from multiple open-source galleries’ archives to map individual exhibition trajectories (solo and group shows) and merged this with secondary market data collected from the Artprice.com database. This approach allowed me to build an eleven-year panel dataset capable of tracking the longitudinal evolution of both symbolic and economic capital.

However, while constructing and analysing this empirical model, I encountered several limitations connected by the nature of the available statistical data and the methodology. First, my analysis relies on auction results aggregated by Artprice.com, which restricts the scope of the research exclusively to the secondary art market. The choice of this metric was necessitated by the severe lack of transparency in the primary market (gallery sales and art fairs), where the financial details of transactions are strictly confidential and unavailable for systematic quantitative analysis³⁶².

Furthermore, certain aspects of Olav Velthuis's theoretical framework remained beyond the scope of the research due to the conceptual boundaries of the quantitative method. Specifically, I did not test the third paradox, which concerns the undisclosed financial support of non-commercial artworks (e.g., large-scale installations) by art dealers. Current databases do not allow for the empirical verification of such hidden sponsorship flows. Consequently, exploring the conversion of symbolic capital in relation to the material characteristics of art and gallery financing remains an avenue for the future research.

2. Data Collection and Transformation

For this research two samples were collected. The first sample included the artists participated in both Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 (Dataset A). The selection was made by comparing the list of participants of the main exhibition and the collateral events mentioned in the catalogue and the list of participants of the art fair. The second sample, compiled in the same way, included the artists exhibited in both documenta X and Art 28'97 (Dataset B). Already deceased artists were excluded from each sample in order to eliminate the so-called death effect, when the death of

³⁶² J. Miguet, *A Brief Impact of Art Fairs on Prices*, in *Double Trouble in Exhibiting the Contemporary : Art Fairs and Shows*, edited by C. Baldacci, C. Ricci, A. Vettese, Milano: Scalpendi editore, 2020, pp. 107-125, here p. 107.

the painter impacts the data, for example, the prices of the artworks due to scarcity of supply³⁶³. Thus, the samples included 76 and 37 artists.

For each artist the CV published online were collected. Most of the CVs were taken from artists' personal pages on galleries websites. Galleries' CVs were used because most of the artists in the sample did not have personal resume pages. For the sample of Biennale-Basel participants, CVs of 6 artists were not available online. For the sample of documenta X — Art 28'97, 1 participant did not have a CV with the exhibitions available online. It was assumed that CVs contain the most complete information about participation in exhibitions of artists and are the most reliable source of information.³⁶⁴

For each artist, based on their CV, the career stage was determined at the time of participation in the Biennale and documenta X in 1997. The method developed by Phip Murray was used for this purpose³⁶⁵. The artists were divided into three categories according to the date of the first exhibition they participated in: emerging (5-10 years since the first exhibition), mid-career (11-20 years since the first exhibition) and established (more than 20 years since the first exhibition)³⁶⁶.

Data was collected within a eleven-year period (1992-2002): five years before and five years after the participation in Venice Biennale or documenta X. Data regarding group and solo exhibitions for all the artists for aforementioned eleven-year period for both samples was collected, since participation in exhibitions can be considered

³⁶³ H. W. Ursprung, C. Wiermann, *Reputation, Price, and Death: An Empirical Analysis of Art Price Formation*, in *Economic Inquiry*, 49, 2011, pp. 697-715, here p. 697; <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/share/CCHT852FBTNRKNN7BPS2?target=10.1111/j.1465-7295.2009.00279.x> [last access on 30 April 2026].

³⁶⁴ K. Johanson, B. Coate, C. Vincent, H. Glow, *Is there a 'Venice Effect'? Participation in the Venice Biennale and the implications for artists' careers*, in *Poetics*, 92, 101619, 2022, pp. 1-14, here p. 5; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2021.101619> [last access on 30 April 2026].

³⁶⁵ P. Murray, *Talking Points: A Snapshot of Contemporary Visual Arts 2013-14*. Independent Research Report. Commissioned by The Australia Council for the Arts, 1 May 2014; https://creative.gov.au/sites/creative-australia/files/documents/2025-03/au2000_talkingpoints_final_13_-543256d38f5f6.pdf [last access on 11 June 2026].

³⁶⁶ K. Johanson, B. Coate, C. Vincent, H. Glow, *Is there a 'Venice Effect'? Participation in the Venice Biennale and the implications for artists' careers*, cit., p.5.

as proof of building a reputation and career achievement for an artist³⁶⁷. It should also be noted that if the exhibition was presented in several cities, it was considered a new event in each new city, as it attracted a new audience in each location.

The data on hammer prices of the artworks at the auctions for both samples was also collected for the period 1992–2002. The source of this type of the information was Artprice.com database, which is considered “one of the most comprehensive in terms of the number of fine art auctions and artists it cover”³⁶⁸. The average price methodology was applied for each year, which made it possible to identify the average prices for each year before and after the participation in the 1997 Venice Biennale or documenta X.

There was no information in the Artprice.com database regarding 4 artists, whose artworks were exhibited in the 1997 Venice Biennale³⁶⁹, and 5 artists participated in documenta X³⁷⁰.

To ensure long-term trend comparability, this paper uses the Euro (EUR) as the primary currency for the selected period. Despite the fact that the Euro did not enter circulation as legal tender until 2002, it serves as a stable unit of account for cross-market comparability, allowing auction records from both European and American markets to be expressed in a single currency across the full eleven-year panel. For the pre-1999 period, the figures are reported in “synthetic euro” based on the European Currency Unit (ECU) and official historical exchange ratios. This approach eliminates double volatility, the distortion caused by fluctuating USD/FRF exchange rate rather than actual art market activity. Furthermore, the data accounts for the fixed conversion rate established on January 1, 1999 (1 EUR = 6.55957 FRF), during which the French Franc functioned as a sub-unit of the Euro. The accuracy of these

³⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁶⁸ C. McAndrew (ed.), *Fine Art and High Finance*, New York: Bloomberg Press, 2010, p. 70.

³⁶⁹ The following artists from the 47th Venice Biennale were excluded from Dataset A due to the absence of auction records in the Artprice.com database: Mario Airò, Marco Bagnoli, Maria Norman, and Jaki Irvine.

³⁷⁰ The following artists from the Documenta X were excluded from Dataset B due to the absence of auction records in the Artprice.com database: James Coleman, Liam Gillick, Hervè Graumann, Christian Philipp Müller, Anne-Marie Schneider.

conversion protocols was verified through direct correspondence with Artprice.com, ensuring that the transition from the Franc to the Euro provides a seamless and scientifically robust reflection of price tendencies.³⁷¹

Following the data collection and cleansing phases, the secondary market pricing data were transformed using the R programming language. The annual records were aggregated to calculate key market indicators for each year: the total number of lots offered, the number of lots sold, average prices, and total sales revenue. This structured transformation was essential to establish baseline data trends and facilitate the subsequent econometric analysis. This approach ensures computational accuracy and reproducibility. For graphical representation and descriptive statistics visualisation, the structured datasets generated by R were exported and processed via spreadsheet software (Google Sheets).

Thus, on the basis of the following data collected, cleansed and transformed, the cohort was compiled. It is essential to highlight that three artists — Gerhard Richter, Franz West and Rosemarie Trockel participated in all three events. Franz West and Gerhard Richter were at the established stage of their careers in 1997. For instance, for the timespan of 1992-2002, according the Artprice.com, 839 artworks by Gerhard Richter were presented in the art market, while only 174 artworks by Franz West appeared at the secondary market. This disparity reflects Richter's exceptional and long-established status: according to the *Kunstkompass* rankings of 1996, 1997, and 1998, Richter consistently held second place among the most influential living artists internationally³⁷², which prefigured his later recognition as the most valuable living artist. Given the substantial distortion his auction volume would introduce into the panel dataset, Richter is treated as a statistical outlier and excluded from the following analysis. Franz West and Rosemarie Trockel were also excluded to ensure the internal validity of the Difference-in-Differences (DiD) model and the overall integrity of the econometric experiment. This data cleaning allowed to accurately

³⁷¹ Email sent by Daniella Liénard, Artprice.com Customer Care, to the author, 2 April 2026.

³⁷² L. Rohr-Bongard (ed.), *Kunst=Kapital: Der Capital Kunstkompass von 1970 bis heute*, Cologne: Salon Verlag, 2001, pp. 108-119.

isolate the specific institutional effect of each exhibition and avoid the problem of confounding effects.

3. Data Trends

3.1. Demography description of the 1997 Venice Biennale, documenta X and Art 28'97

Before analysing the intersectional composition of Dataset A and Dataset B, this section outlines the baseline characteristics of each researched event of 1997. This comprehensive population overview is applied selectively: the main exhibition of 47th Venice Biennale, documenta X, and Art 28'97 are examined solely with respect to gender and geography, utilising unified macro-regional metrics for all the exhibitions.

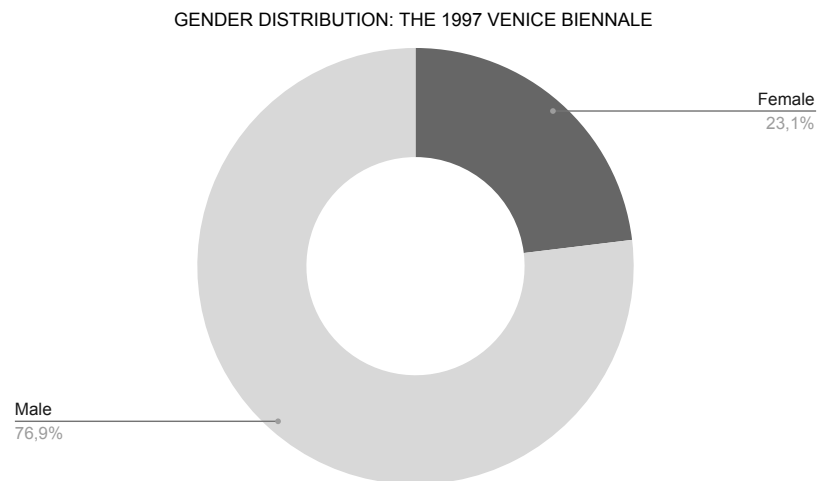
In contrast, the subsequent econometric datasets (Datasets A and B) encompass a broader institutional boundary defined by official documentation. Dataset A incorporates all validated participants listed in the Venice Biennale official general catalogue (including the main exhibition, national pavilions, and collateral events) who were concurrently presented at Art 28'97. Similarly, Dataset B comprises the documenta X participants represented at the Basel fair. This inclusive sampling is methodologically intentional: it establishes the official printed catalogues as the definitive baseline registers of institutional validation, whilst optimising the panel dataset's observations to enhance the robustness of the quantitative analysis. Meanwhile, the evaluation of career stages remains strictly confined to the intersecting parameters of Datasets A and B.

By establishing these specific baselines, the analysis captures the broader demographic environment of the period and delineates the extent to which the combined datasets mirror the overarching tendencies of the commercial and institutional spheres.

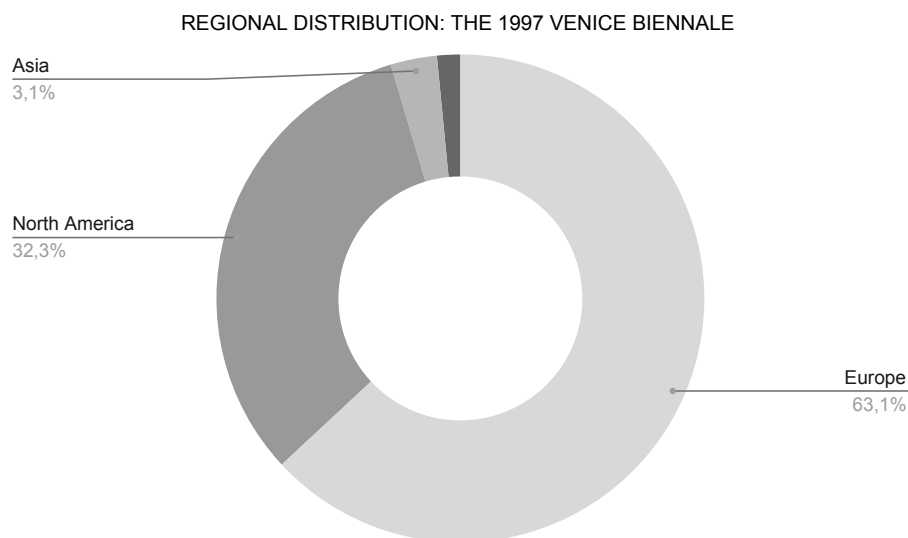
The demographic composition by gender for the participating artists at the 1997 Venice Biennale is presented in Ill.1. The data indicates a pronounced disparity in the selection, demonstrating that more than three-quarters of the exhibited artists were

male — 76,9%. Conversely, female representation accounted for the remaining 23,1% of the total cohort.

Ill. 1. Gender distribution of the 1997 Venice Biennale cohort



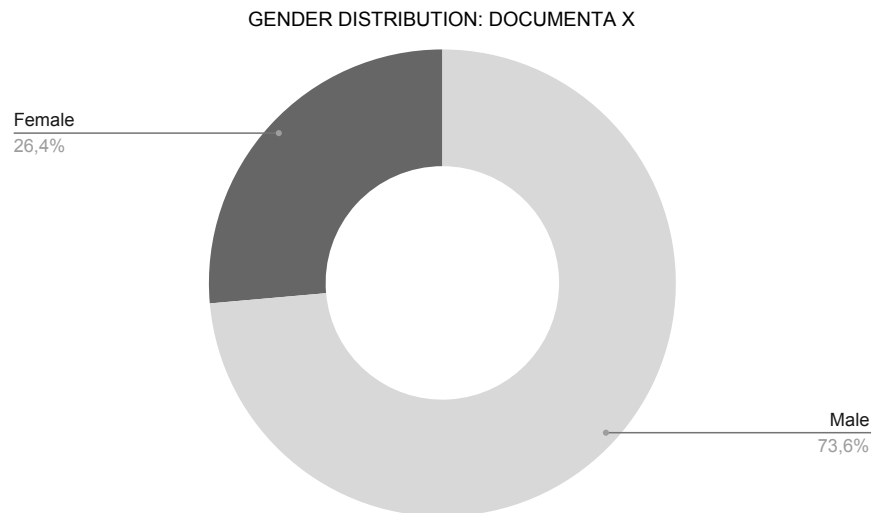
Ill. 2. Geographical (macro-regional) distribution of the 1997 Venice Biennale cohort



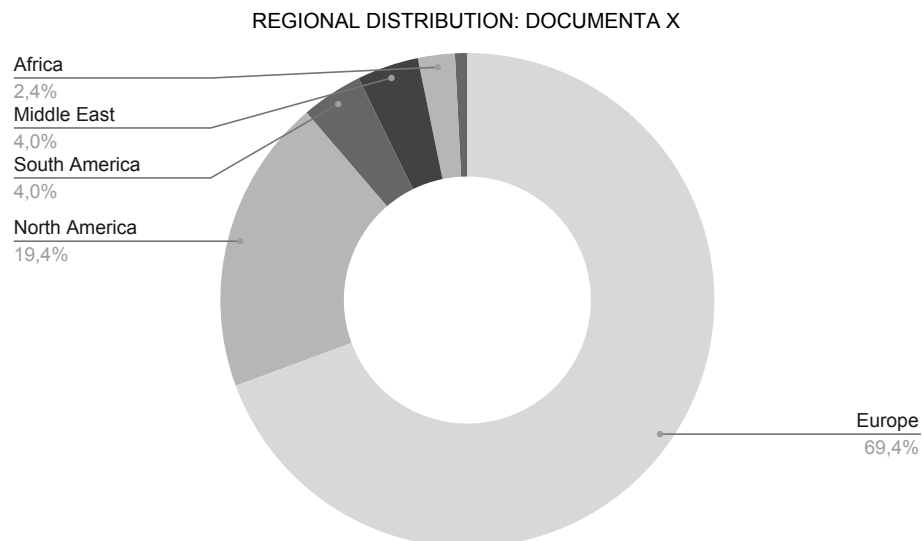
Ill. 2 demonstrates the macro-regional distribution of artists at the 47th Venice Biennale. Europe constitutes the absolute majority of the cohort at 63,1%, followed closely by North America at 32,3%. Collectively, artists from Europe and North

America account for 95,4% of the entire main exhibition's cohort. Conversely, representation from non-Western countries is strictly marginal, with Asia accounting for a minimal 3,1% share.

Ill. 3. Gender distribution of documenta X cohort



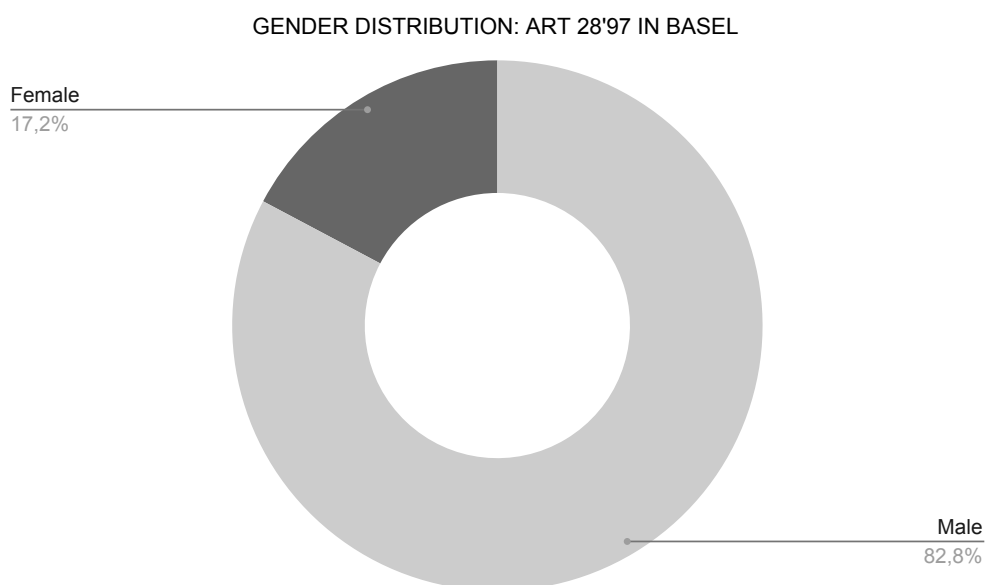
Ill. 4. Geographical (macro-regional) distribution of documenta X cohort



The gender distribution of artists participating in documenta X is presented in Ill. 3. Male artists constituted the majority at 73,6%, while female artists represented 26,4% of the total cohort. The distribution exhibits a gender imbalance broadly comparable to that observed in the 47th Venice Biennale (Ill. 1), suggesting that both major institutional exhibitions of 1997 reflected similarly skewed gender dynamics in their selection processes.

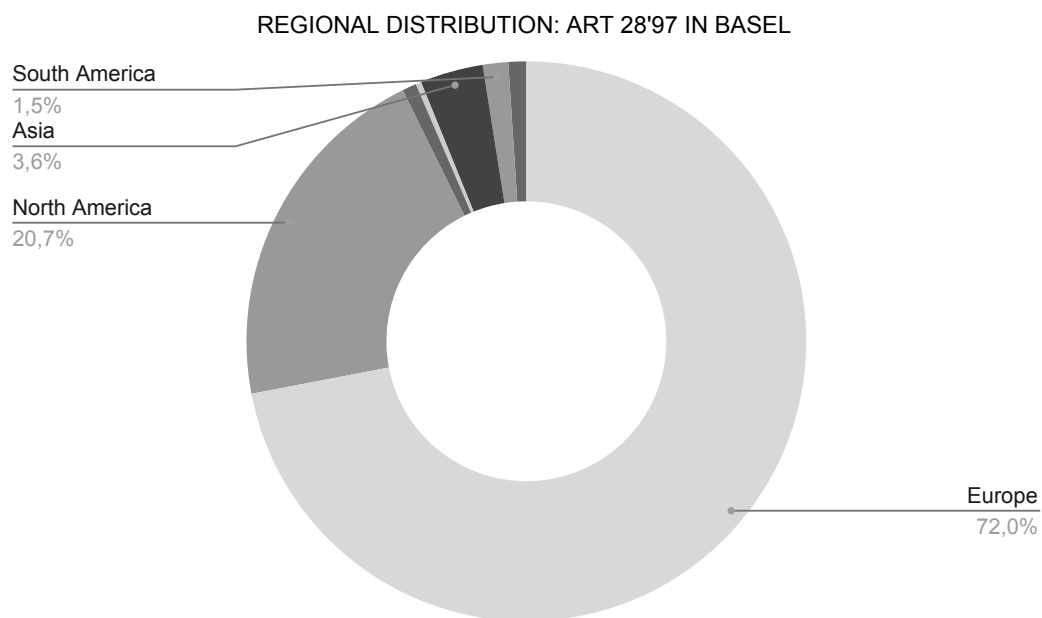
The macro-regional distribution of artists participating in documenta X is detailed in Ill. 4. Due to the high fragmentation and significantly larger number of individual nations represented in this exhibition, the data has been aggregated into broader geographical regions to preserve statistical and visual clarity. The distribution demonstrates that Europe constitutes by far the largest regional grouping, accounting for 69,4% of the total cohort, followed by North America at 19,4%. The other artists' country of origin were in the Middle East (4,0%), South America (4,0%), and Africa (2,4%). In contrast to the geographical distribution of the 47th Venice Biennale (Ill. 2), where American artists formed the single largest national contingent, documenta X displays a markedly more Eurocentric composition, whilst simultaneously demonstrating a comparatively broader — if still limited — degree of representation from non-Western regions.

Ill. 5. Gender distribution of Art 28'97 cohort



Ill. 5 presents the gender distribution of artists represented at Art 28'97 in Basel. Male artists constituted the majority at 82,8%, whilst female artists accounted for 17,2% of the total. This gender imbalance is more pronounced than that recorded at either the 47th Venice Biennale (Ill. 1) or documenta X (Ill. 3), indicating that the commercial fair context of Art 28'97 exhibited a comparatively lower degree of female representation than the two institutional exhibitions held in the same period of time.

Ill. 6. Geographical (macro-regional) distribution of Art 28'97 cohort



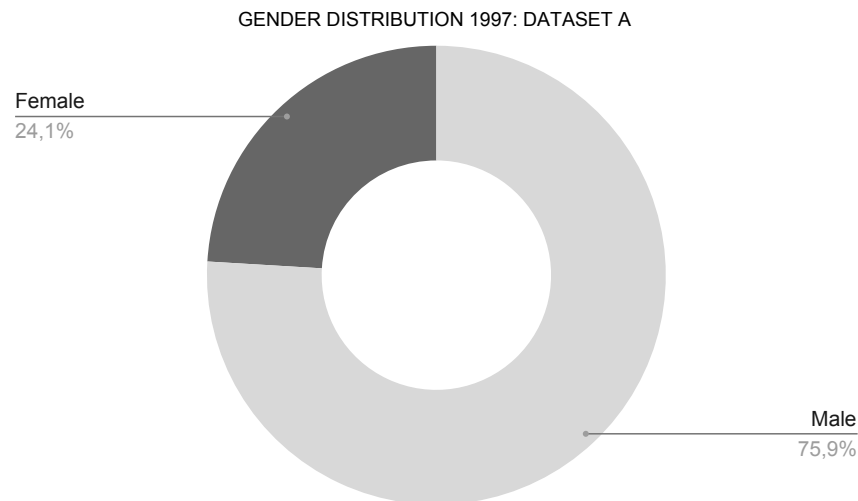
The macro-regional distribution of artists represented at Art 28'97 in Basel (Ill. 6) , aggregated by region to ensure statistical alignment with the documenta X sample, is visualised in Ill. The dataset demonstrates Europe constitutes the dominant regional grouping (72,0%), followed by North America (20,7%), Asia (3,6%), and South America (1,5%). The regional composition of Art 28'97 is broadly comparable to that of documenta X (Ill. 4), whilst both events display a markedly limited representation of non-Western regions.

3.2. Intersectional Data Trends: Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale & Art 28'97 artists in common)

3.2.1. Demography description of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)

Having established the macro-regional and gender baselines for the isolated mega exhibitions, this section shifts the focus to the intersectional dynamics within Dataset A. Comprising artists who received official validation through inclusion in the catalogue of the 47th Venice Biennale and who were concurrently represented at Art 28'97, this joint cohort bridges the institutional and commercial spheres.

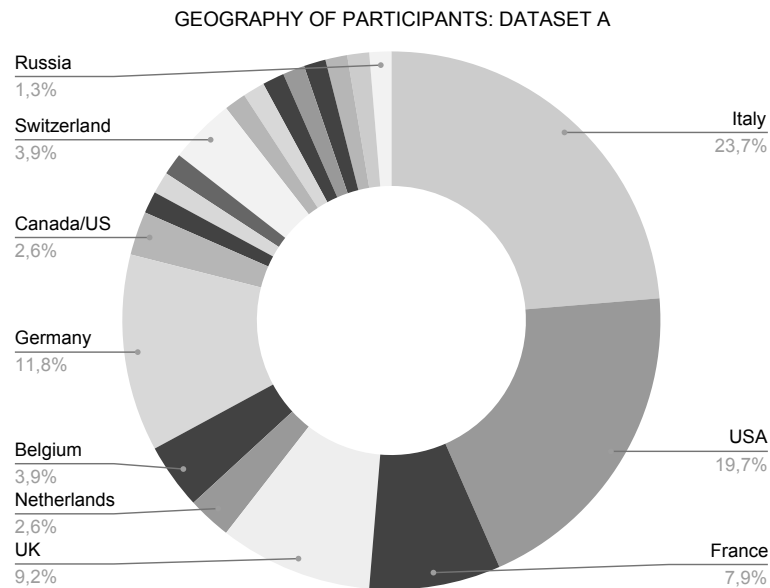
Ill. 7. Gender distribution within Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)



While mega exhibition cohorts are evaluated macro-regionally for institutional comparability, the geographical analysis of Dataset A transitions to a country-specific level to reflect the granular national categories. The geographical distribution of the Dataset A sample (Ill. 8) demonstrates a high proportion of artists from Western countries. The three most represented countries are the United States (24,7%), Italy (22,4%), and Germany (11,8%), which overall account for 58,9% of the total cohort. While artists from Western countries constitute the numerical majority, the data also shows the inclusion of artists from non-Western countries, although in a significantly

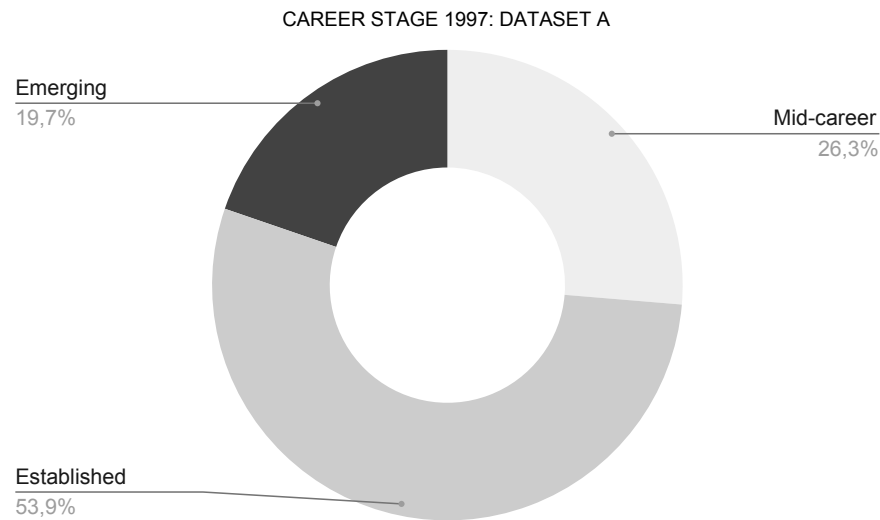
lower proportion. The sample is characterised by a dominance of North American and European artists, with a secondary, smaller percentage representing the global art scene beyond these core regions.

Ill. 8. Geographical distribution within Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)



An analysis of the career stage distribution (Ill. 9) reveals a pronounced presence of established, whose first exhibition, as described above, was more than 20 years ago, artists, who constitute 57,4% of the sample. In contrast, the emerging subgroup embodies the smallest segment, accounting for only 18,4%. The remaining share of the distribution is comprised of mid-career artists. The results indicate that more than half of the artists in common of the Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 had achieved a high level of professional recognition prior to the event, while new talent formed a numerical minority.

Ill. 9. Career stage distribution within Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)

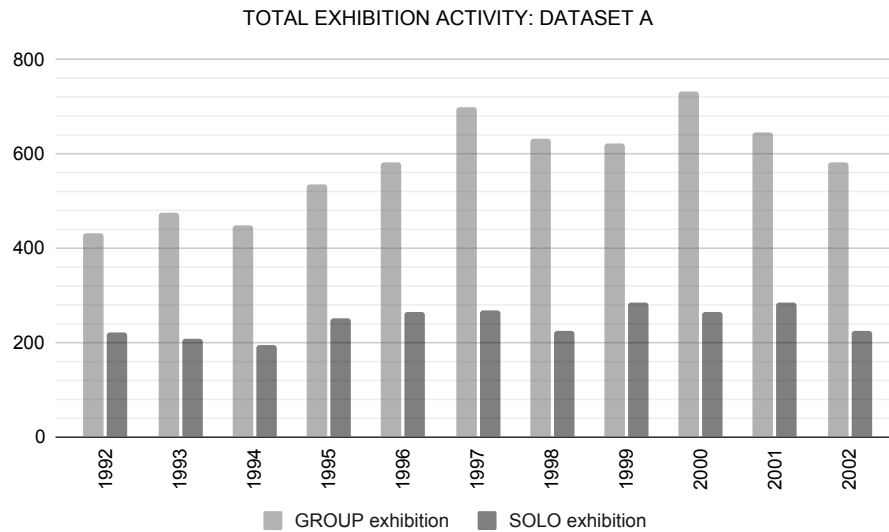


3.3. Trends in the exhibition activity within Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)

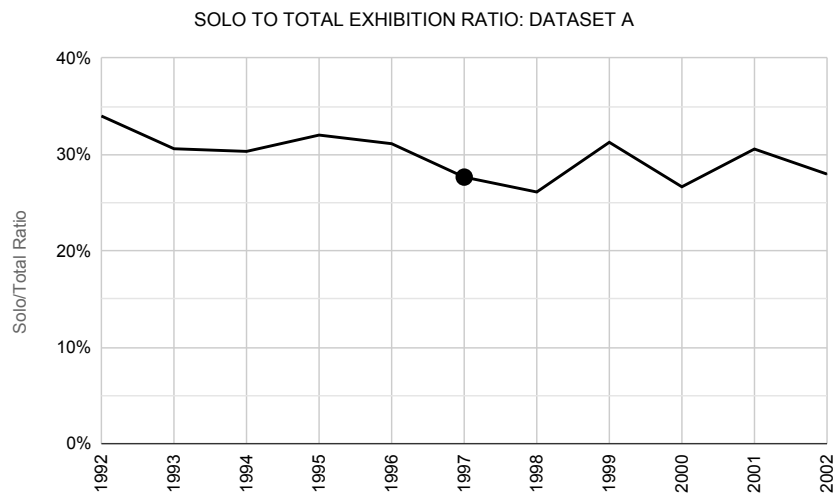
Following the review of the data trends in the demographic composition of the Dataset A (Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common), it is also important to observe the trends of career trajectories through exhibition activity.

Turning to the total exhibition activity over the 11-year period (Ill. 10), the volume of group exhibitions demonstrated a steady upward trend between 1992 and 1996. In 1997, a notable increase was recorded, with the total number of group exhibitions reaching approximately 800. Following the events of 1997, group exhibition activity stabilised at a higher baseline, generally ranging between 700 and 800 annual exhibitions, with a secondary peak observed in 2000. Conversely, solo exhibition activity followed a different trajectory, characterised by more frequent fluctuations and a lower overall growth rate compared to group exhibitions. In 1997, a slight decrease in the number of solo exhibitions was recorded relative to the previous year. The post-1997 period for solo exhibitions is marked by two distinct peaks occurring in 1999 and 2001.

Ill. 10. Total exhibition activity within Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)



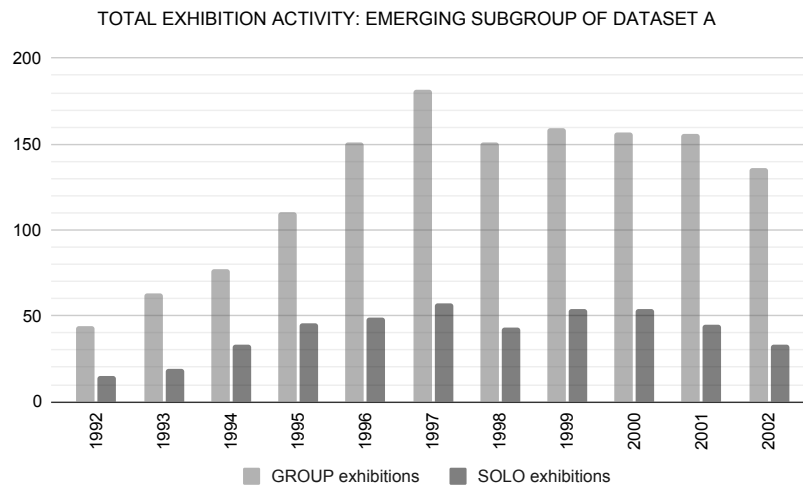
Ill. 11. Solo to Total Exhibition Ratio within Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)



The ratio of solo exhibitions to total exhibitions for the entire sample (Ill. 11) remained relatively constant between 1992 and 1996, fluctuating within the range of 30–35%. In 1997, a decline to approximately 27% was recorded. This shift in the ratio corresponds with the disproportionate increase of group exhibition volume

during the same year, as shown in Ill. 10. In the period after 1997, the data shows a recovery and a sustained upward trend, culminating in a peak in 2001.

Ill. 12. Exhibition activity of the emerging subgroup within Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)

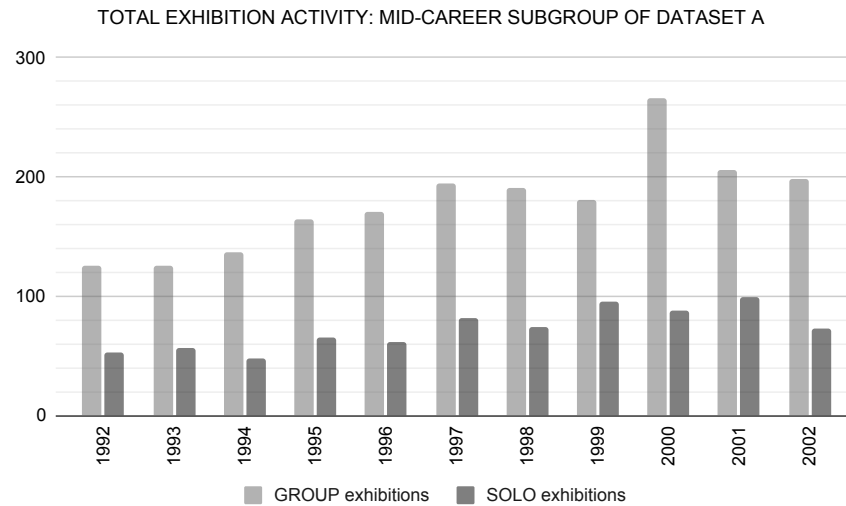


Visualising the career trajectories of the emerging artist subgroup (Ill. 12), the data shows a consistent upward trend between 1992 and 1996, with the volume of group exhibitions increasing nearly fourfold relative to the baseline of 1992. A peak in group exhibitions was recorded in 1997, followed by a sustained level of activity that averaged approximately 150 exhibitions annually in the post-1997 period. Additionally, solo exhibition activity for this subgroup exhibited growth over the 11-year timespan, reaching a volume three times higher than the levels recorded in

For the mid-career subgroup (Ill. 13), exhibition activity before 1997 maintained a consistent baseline, averaging approximately 130 group exhibitions annually between 1992 and 1996. Following the participation in the 1997 Venice Biennale, a significant increase in group exhibitions was recorded, culminating in a secondary and higher peak in 2000, where participation exceeded 260 events. The solo exhibition data for this subgroup shows a different pattern, characterised by two distinct peaks in 1999 and 2001. The results indicate that for mid-career artists, the increase in group exhibition volume was followed by a subsequent rise in solo

exhibition frequency with a two-year interval.

Ill. 13. Exhibition activity of the mid-career subgroup within Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)



Ill. 14. Exhibition activity of the established subgroup within Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)

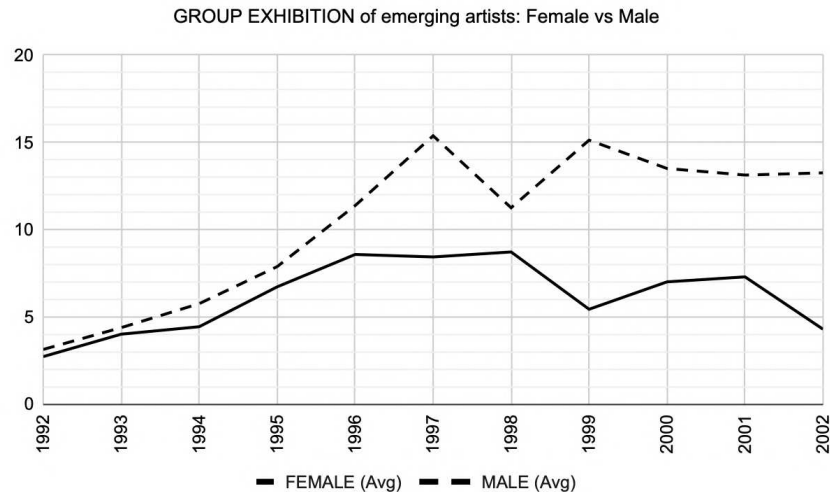


The exhibition activity of the established artist subgroup (Ill. 14) shows a high and stable baseline of participation throughout the 11-year timespan, with group exhibitions averaging approximately 350 events annually. In 1997, there was a peak

in group exhibitions with approximately 450 events, representing the highest volume for this subgroup within the observed timespan. A notable inverse correlation is observed in 1997: while group exhibitions reached a decadal peak, solo exhibition activity declined to its lowest recorded point of approximately 160 events. In the period 1998–2002, both group and solo exhibition volumes returned to levels consistent with the pre-1997 baseline, showing a stabilisation of activity.

3.3.1. Comparison of exhibition activity between female and male emerging artists of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)

Ill. 15. Comparison of group exhibition activity between female and male artists within emerging subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).

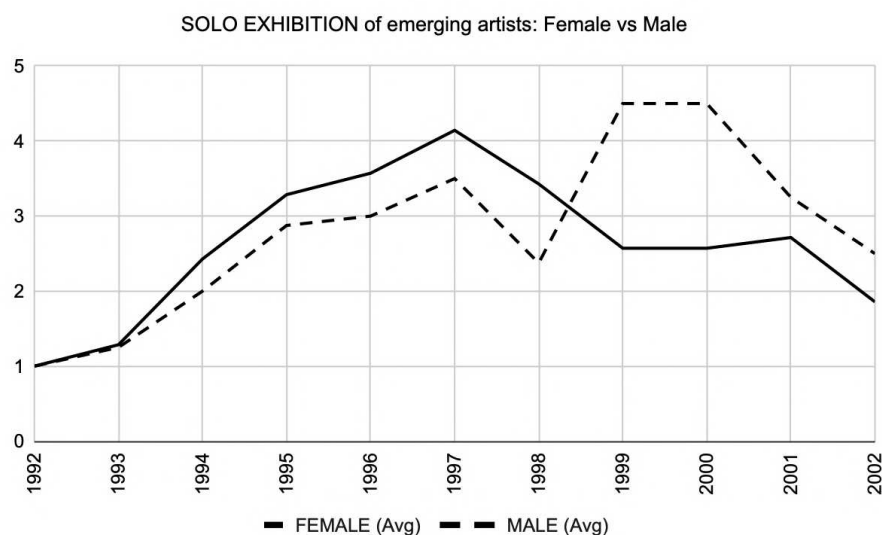


A comparison of the average group exhibition activity between emerging female and male artists (Ill. 15) shows that between 1992 and 1996, both subgroups followed a similar upward trend in exhibition participation. In 1997, a divergence occurred: the average number of group exhibitions for male artists reached a peak — 15 events, whereas the activity for female artists did not show a corresponding spike, remaining

at a level of the previous year. During the timespan 1998–2002, male artists maintained a higher average frequency of participation compared to their level before 1997. In contrast, the exhibition activity for emerging female artists for the same period demonstrated a downward trend, including a notable decline in 1999. By the end of the analysed period, the participation levels for female artists were lower than those recorded in 1997.

In terms of average solo exhibition activity for this subgroup (Ill. 16), female artists maintained a higher frequency of solo exhibitions compared to their male counterparts in the period leading up to and including 1997, reaching a peak of 4,2 events in 1997. After 1997, solo exhibition activity for male artists increased, reaching a peak of 4,5 exhibitions during the 1999–2000 period. Conversely, the activity for emerging female artists declined after 1997, subsequently stabilising at a lower baseline of approximately 2,6 solo exhibitions annually for the remaining part of the specified period.

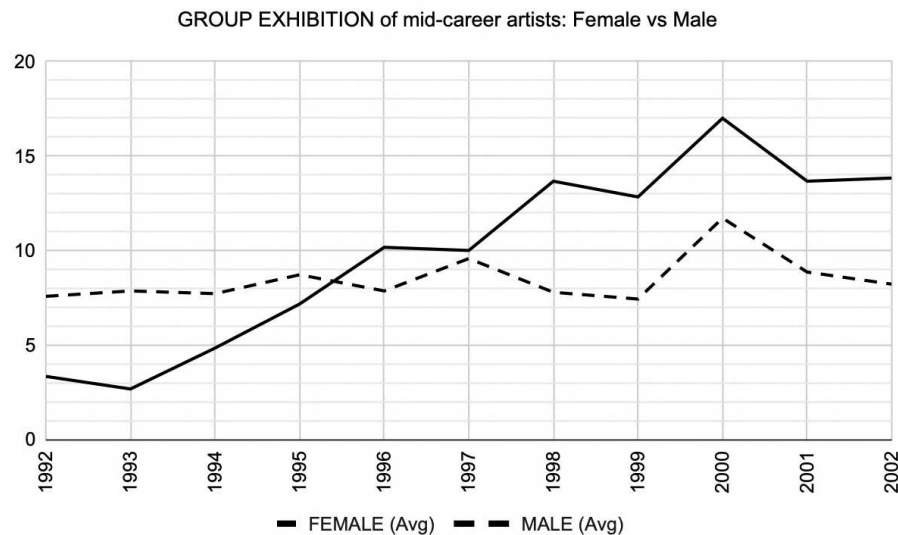
Ill. 16. Comparison of solo exhibition activity between female and male artists within emerging subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).



3.3.2. Comparison of exhibition activity between female and male emerging artists of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).

Comparing the average group exhibition activity for the mid-career female and male artist subgroups (Ill. 17), the early 1990s data indicate a higher level of participation of male artists. However, starting in 1994, the mid-career female subgroup followed a sustained upward trend, surpassing the male subgroup in 1996. Following the 1997 events, the exhibition frequency for female artists continued to increase, reaching a peak of 14,5 exhibitions in 2000. During the same period, the activity for mid-career male artists was characterised by greater annual fluctuations and lower overall growth compared to the female subgroup. The results show that for the mid-career tier, female artists maintained a higher volume of group exhibition participation throughout the latter half of the 1992-2002 period.

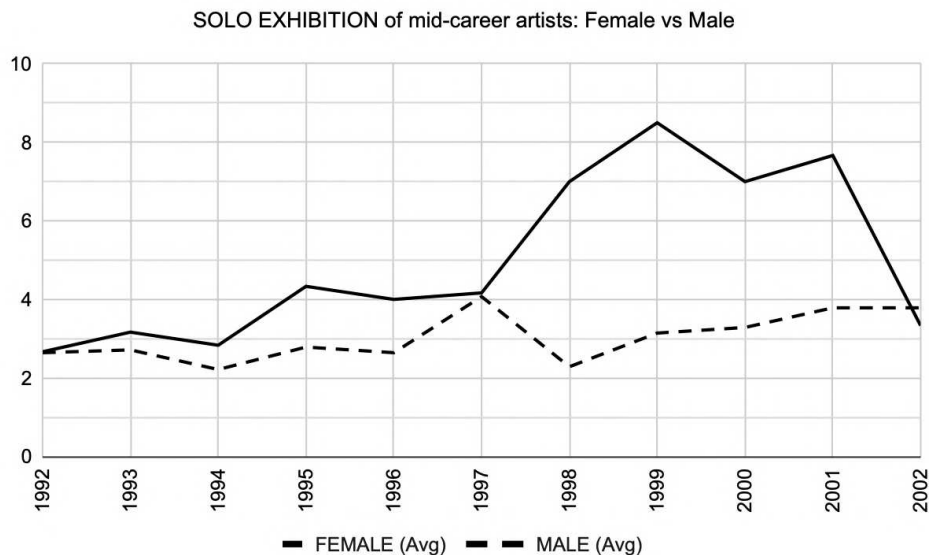
Ill. 17. Comparison of group exhibition activity between female and male artists within mid-career subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).



The average solo exhibition activity for the mid-career subgroup (Ill. 18) reveals a divergence in individual visibility after 1997. Starting from a consistent baseline in

the mid-1990s, the female subgroup recorded a substantial increase in solo exhibition frequency in 1999, reaching a peak of approximately 8 exhibitions per artist. In comparison, the average for mid-career male artists in the same year was at a level of approximately 3,1 exhibitions. During the post-1997 period, female artists maintained a higher volume of solo activity, while the male subgroup demonstrated lower frequency and more frequent annual fluctuations.

Ill. 18. Comparison of solo exhibition activity between female and male artists within mid-career subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).

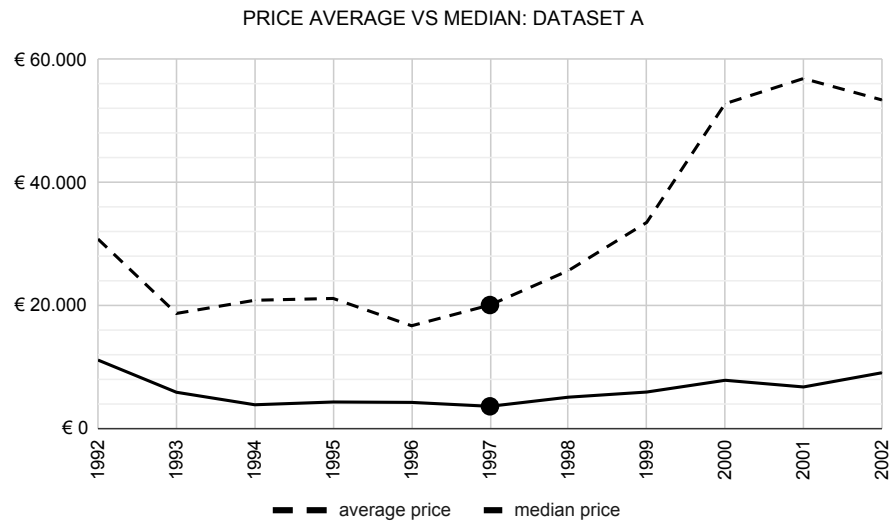


3.4.Data trends in the market performance within Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)

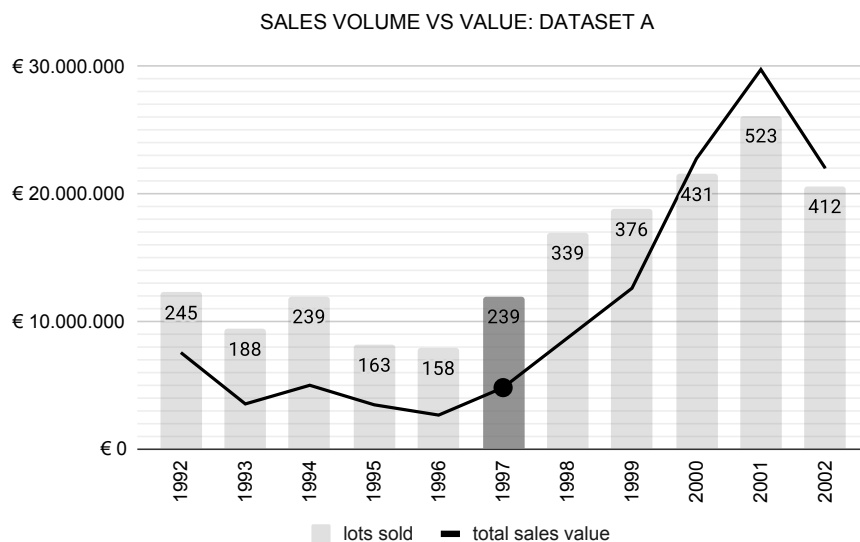
An analysis of the pricing trends for sold artworks (Ill. 19) reveals a progressive widening of the gap between average and median values following the 1997 period. The median price remained relatively constant, fluctuating near the €10,000 level throughout the observation period. Conversely, the average price demonstrated a significant upward trend, reaching a peak of approximately €58,000 by 2001. The

growing disparity indicates an increasingly skewed market, where a few top-tier sales inflated the mean while the median remained constant.

*Ill. 19. Comparison of average and median prices of the artworks of Dataset A
(the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).*

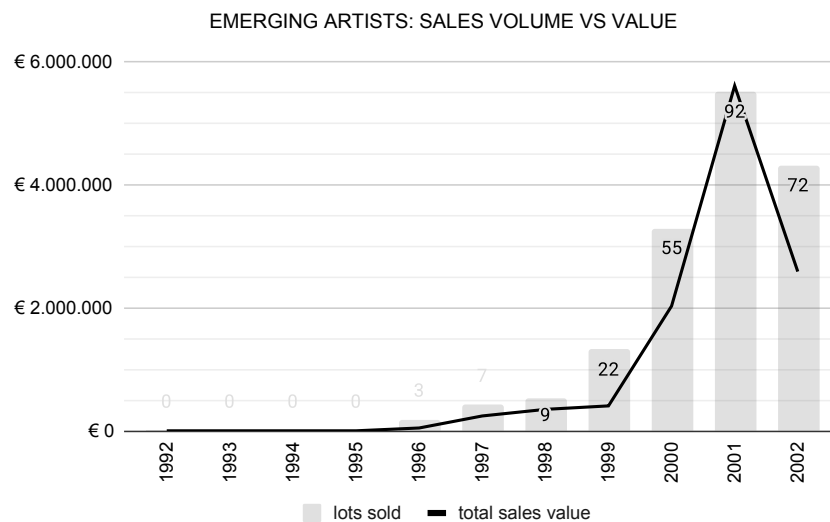


*Ill. 20. Comparison of total sales value of the artworks and sold lots of Dataset A
(the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).*



Comparing the total volume of lots sold to their cumulative sales value (Ill. 20), both metrics remained at low levels with minimal annual fluctuations prior to 1997. Beginning in 1997, a synchronous increase in both the number of lots sold and total revenue was recorded. However, the data shows that the growth rate of total sales value significantly exceeded the growth in sales volume. By 2001, the number of lots sold had increased by a factor of 2,5 relative to the pre-1997 baseline, while the total sales value increased nearly sixfold.

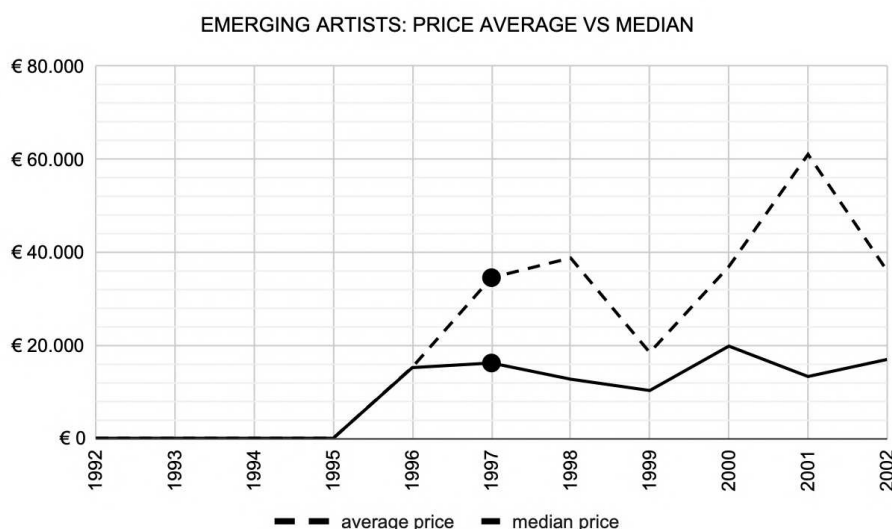
Ill. 21. Comparison of total sales value of the artworks and sold lots of the emerging subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).



The secondary market activity for the emerging artist subgroup (Ill. 21) indicates that prior to 1996, secondary market transactions for this cohort were minimal, with near-zero values recorded for both volume and total sales value. Following the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97, the data shows a sustained upward trend in both metrics, culminating in 2001. A notable divergence in growth rates is observed during this period: while the number of lots sold increased, the total sales value experienced a significantly higher rate of appreciation, reaching a peak of approximately €6 million in 2001. This indicates a substantial increase in the average price per lot within the four-year period following the events. In 2002, a decline in total sales value was recorded, marking a shift from the previous growth trend.

Average and median pricing trends for the emerging artist subgroup (Ill. 22) remained at near-zero levels with minimal differentiation prior to 1997. Following the 1997 Venice Biennale, the data reveals an increasing disparity between the two values. The median price followed a steady upward trajectory, reaching a range between €15,000 and €20,000 by the end of the analysed period. In contrast, the average price was characterised by higher volatility, recording a significant peak of over €60,000 in 2001, following a spike observed in 1998. The persistent divergence between the mean and median underscores a decoupled market, where a few premium sales inflated the average, leaving the broader cohort's valuation largely unaffected.

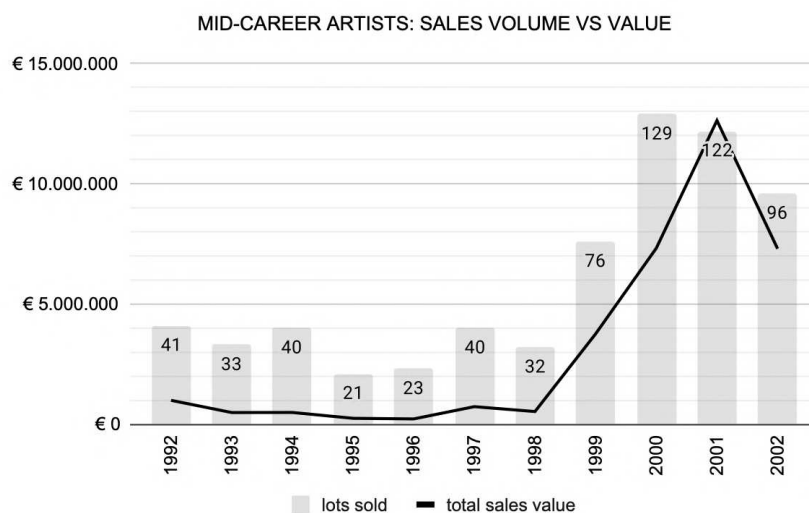
Ill. 22. Comparison of average and median prices of the artworks of the emerging subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).



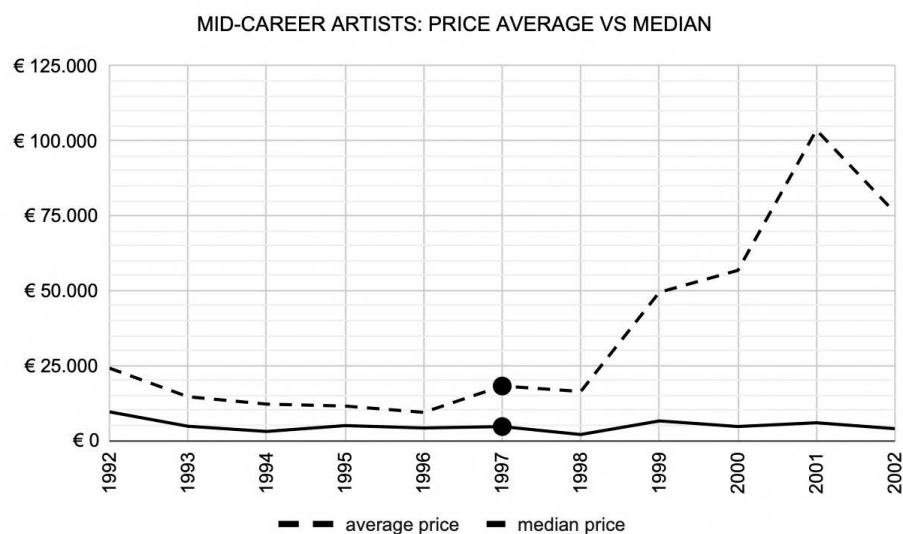
Regarding the secondary market activity for the mid-career artist subgroup (Ill. 23), the data shows a period of stable activity through 1998, with a significant upward trend commencing in 1999. The number of lots sold reached its peak in 2000 at approximately 130 units, while the total sales value recorded a maximum in 2001, reaching approximately €12,5 million. The results indicate that the primary expansion in market liquidity and cumulative valuation for this subgroup occurred with a two-year interval following the initial institutional event. By 2001, both sales

volume and total value had increased substantially compared to the levels recorded in the period immediately following the Biennale.

Ill. 23. Comparison of total sales value of the artworks and sold lots of the mid-career subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).

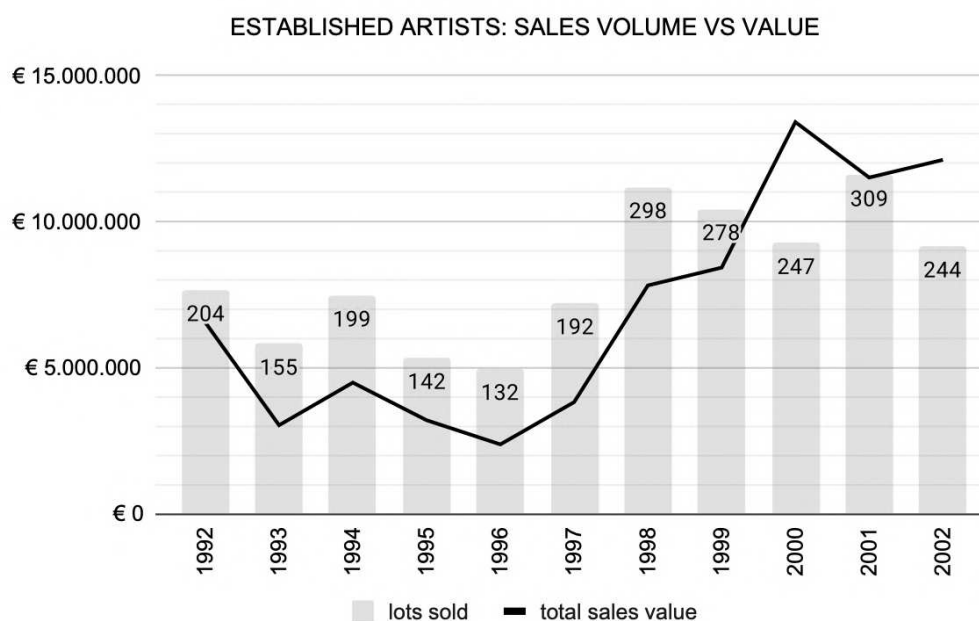


Ill. 24. Comparison of average and median prices of the artworks of the mid-career subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).



The relationship between the average and median prices for the mid-career subgroup (Ill. 24) remained closely aligned from 1992 to 1996, showing minimal differentiation in pricing levels. Following the 1997 Venice Biennale, a divergence between the values was recorded starting in 1999. While the median price remained below the €10,000 threshold throughout the analysed period, the average price followed a sharp upward trajectory, reaching a peak of over €100,000 in 2001. The results indicate a widening gap between the mean and the median, suggesting that the average value was increasingly influenced by high-value outliers within the mid-career artists sample, while the pricing for the majority of practitioners remained stable.

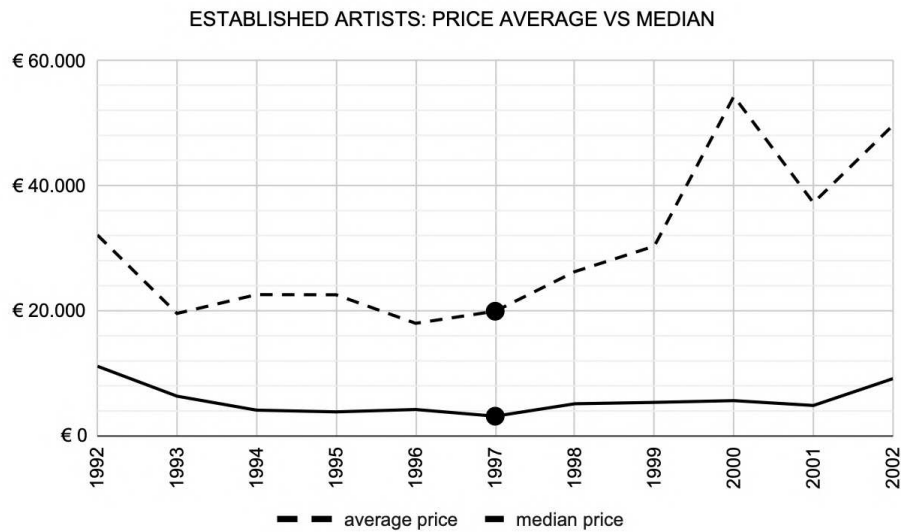
Ill. 25. Comparison of total sales value of the artworks and sold lots of the established subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).



Market dynamics for the established artist subgroup (Ill. 25) show that between 1992 and 1996, the volume of lots sold for this cohort fluctuated within a range of 150 to 200 units annually. Following the 1997 Venice Biennale, an increase in market activity was recorded, with the volume rising to a stable level of approximately 300 lots per year starting in 1998. The total sales value followed a corresponding upward

trajectory during the post-event period, reaching its highest level of over €13 million in 2000. The data indicates a simultaneous increase in both sales volume and cumulative valuation, with the market absorbing the increased volume of offerings while maintaining a sustained growth in total revenue.

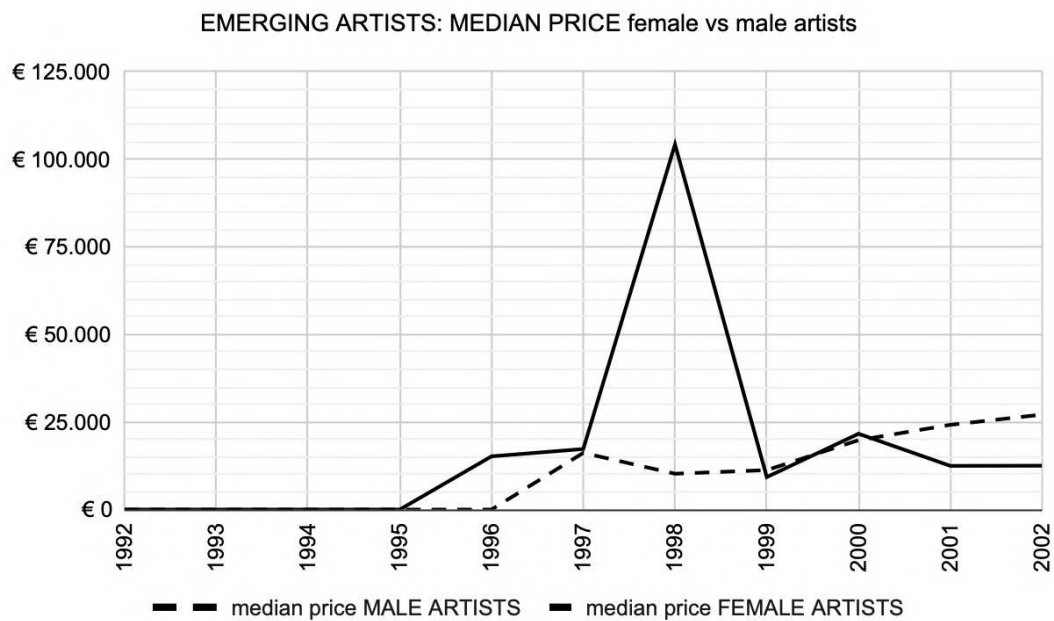
Ill. 26. Comparison of average and median prices of the artworks of the established subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).



The price distribution for the established artist subgroup (Ill. 26), with extreme outliers excluded, reveals a consistent disparity between average and median prices throughout the period of 1992-2002. While the median price remained stable and did not exceed the €10,000 threshold, the average price recorded a steady increase beginning in 1998, reaching a peak of approximately €55,000 in 2000. Following a slight decline in 2001, the average price showed a recovery in 2002. The results indicate that even with the removal of extreme outliers, the mean for the established subgroup more than doubled compared to the 1996 baseline, whereas the median price remained constant.

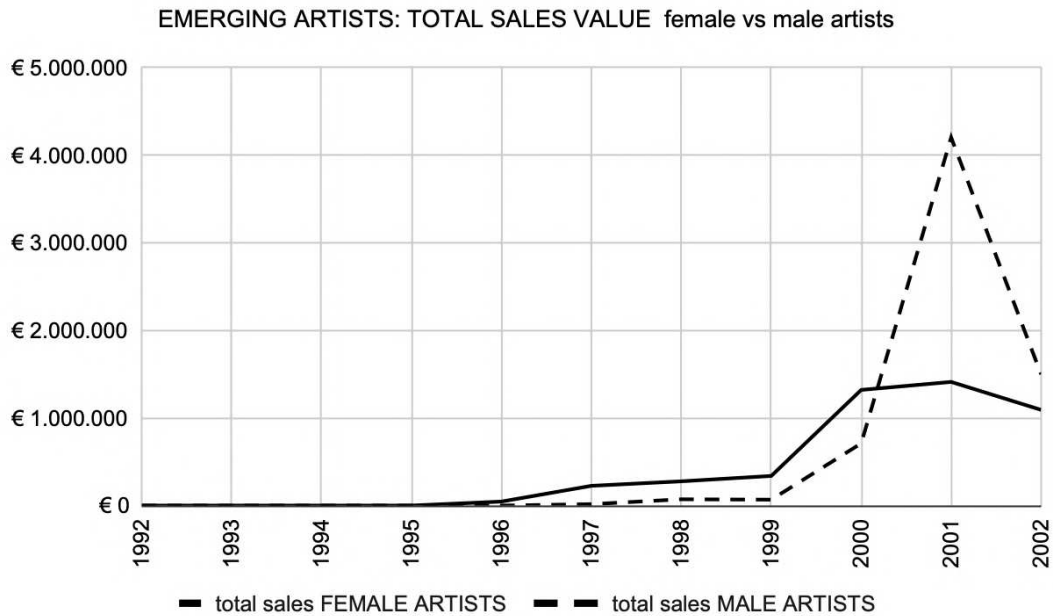
3.4.1. Comparison of market performance between female and male emerging artists within Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)

Ill. 27. Comparison of median prices of the artworks between female and male artists within emerging subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).



A comparison of median prices for emerging male and female artists (Ill. 27) reveals a significant divergence in pricing trends following the 1997 Venice Biennale. In 1998, the median price for female artists recorded a peak of approximately €105,000, which exceeded the male median of approximately €10,000 for the same year. In the subsequent period (1999–2002), the median price for the female subgroup declined, returning to the €10,000 level in 1999 and remaining stable for the remainder of the period. Conversely, the median price for emerging male artists followed a steady upward trajectory, reaching approximately €27,000 by 2002. By the end of the analysed timeframe, the median price for the male subgroup was higher than that of the female subgroup, despite the earlier peak recorded in 1998.

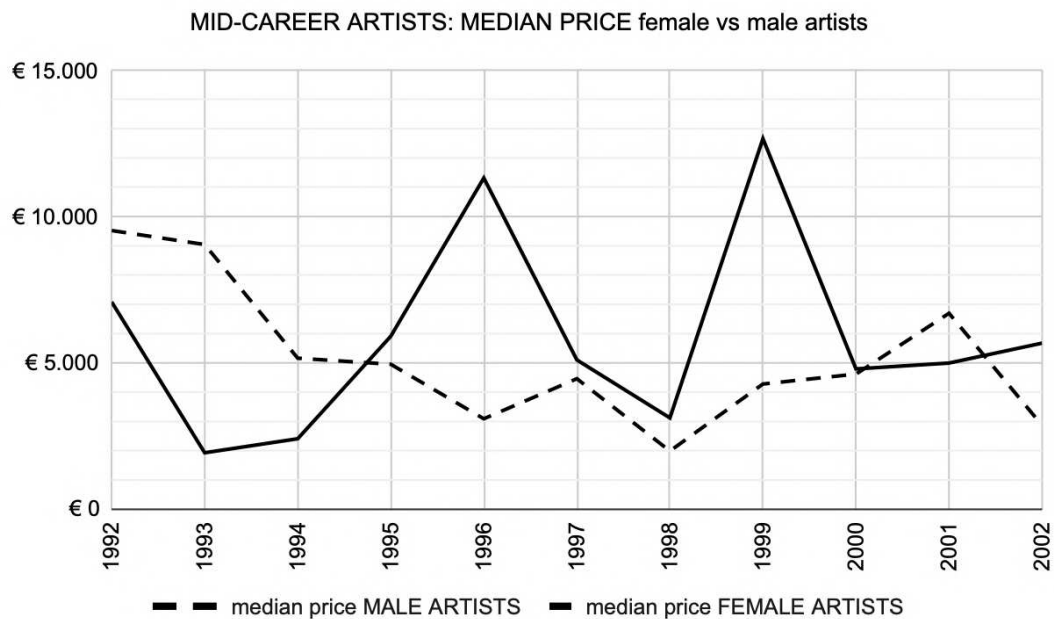
Ill. 28. Comparison of total sales value of the artworks between female and male artists within emerging subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).



The distribution of total sales value across genders for the emerging artist subgroup (Ill. 28) shows that in the immediate three-year period following the 1997 Venice Biennale (1997–1999), the cumulative sales value for female artists was higher than that of their male counterparts, although the total transaction volumes for both groups remained low. A divergence in capital accumulation is recorded starting in 2000. By 2001, the total sales value for emerging male artists increased to over €4 million, representing a volume approximately three times higher than the €1,4 million recorded for the female subgroup. When compared with the median price trends in Ill. 21, the data indicates that despite the higher median price peak recorded for female artists, the male subgroup captured a larger share of the total cumulative market investment. By the end of the analysed period, the total sales value directed toward emerging male artists significantly exceeded that of the female subgroup.

3.4.2. Comparison of market performance between female and male mid-career artists within Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common)

Ill. 29. Comparison of median prices of the artworks between female and male artists within mid-career subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).

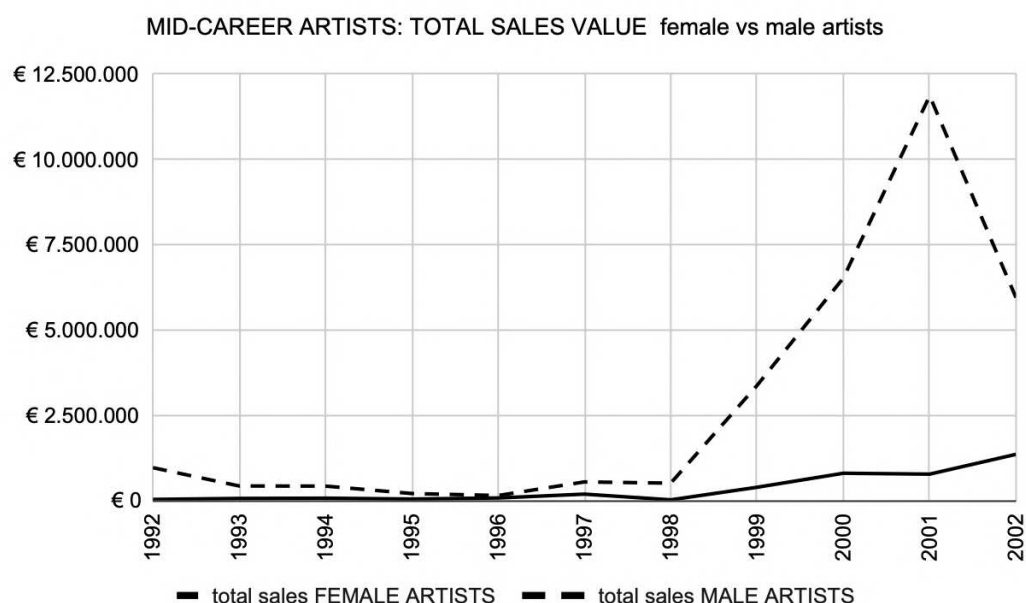


Median price trends for mid-career male and female artists (Ill. 29) demonstrate that throughout the 11-year period, the female subgroup consistently maintained a higher median price than the male subgroup. The median price for female artists recorded two distinct peaks: approximately €11,000 in 1996 and €12,500 in 1999. In contrast, the median price for mid-career male artists remained stable within a lower range, fluctuating between €3,000 and €6,000. The data indicates that the price baseline for the female subgroup remained higher than that of the male subgroup both before and after the 1997 Venice Biennale, with the gap between the two gender categories remaining relatively constant during the post-event.

A comparison of total sales value for the mid-career subgroup between genders (Ill. 30) reveals a divergence in total market valuation beginning in 1999. The cumulative sales value for mid-career male artists showed a sharp increase, reaching a peak of

over €11,5 million in 2001. During the same timeframe, the total sales value for the female subgroup remained at a lower baseline, staying below the €1,5 million threshold. When viewed in conjunction with the median price data in Ill. 29, the results indicate that although female practitioners recorded a higher median price, the total sales value directed toward the male subgroup was significantly higher. By 2001, the total capital accumulated by the male artists subgroup was more than seven times larger than that of the female subgroup.

Ill. 30. Comparison of total sales value of the artworks between female and male artists within mid-career subgroup of Dataset A (the 1997 Venice Biennale and Art 28'97 artists in common).



3.5. Intersectional Data Trends: Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common)

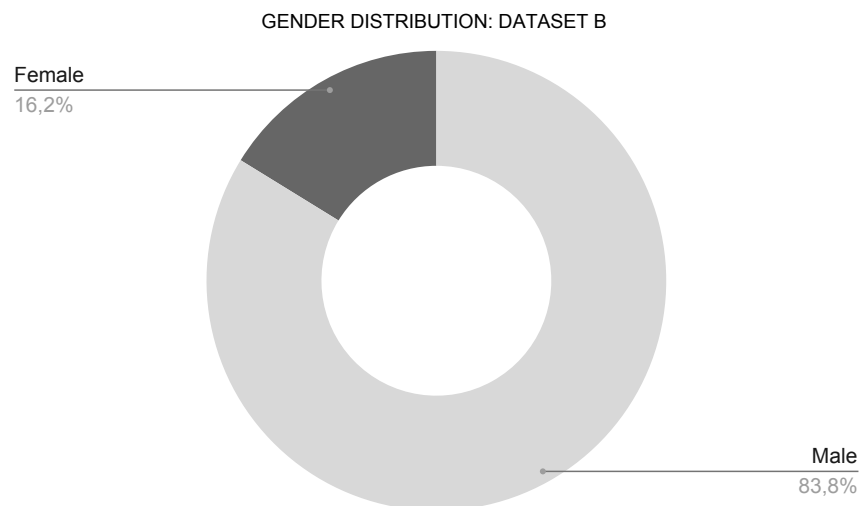
3.5.1. Demography description of Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common)

Following the structural framework applied to the Dataset A sample, this section evaluates the internal configuration of Dataset B within the descriptive trends. This specific intersectional sample isolates the trajectories of artists validated within the

documenta X who were simultaneous presented at Art 28'97. After data cleansing, the sample consists of 37 artists. documenta X, as analysed in Chapter I, was characterised by a distinctive conceptuality with a focus on social and political discourses. A description of the demographic characteristics of this group is vital in order to compare its commercial and career trajectory with the more market-oriented composition of Dataset A sample.

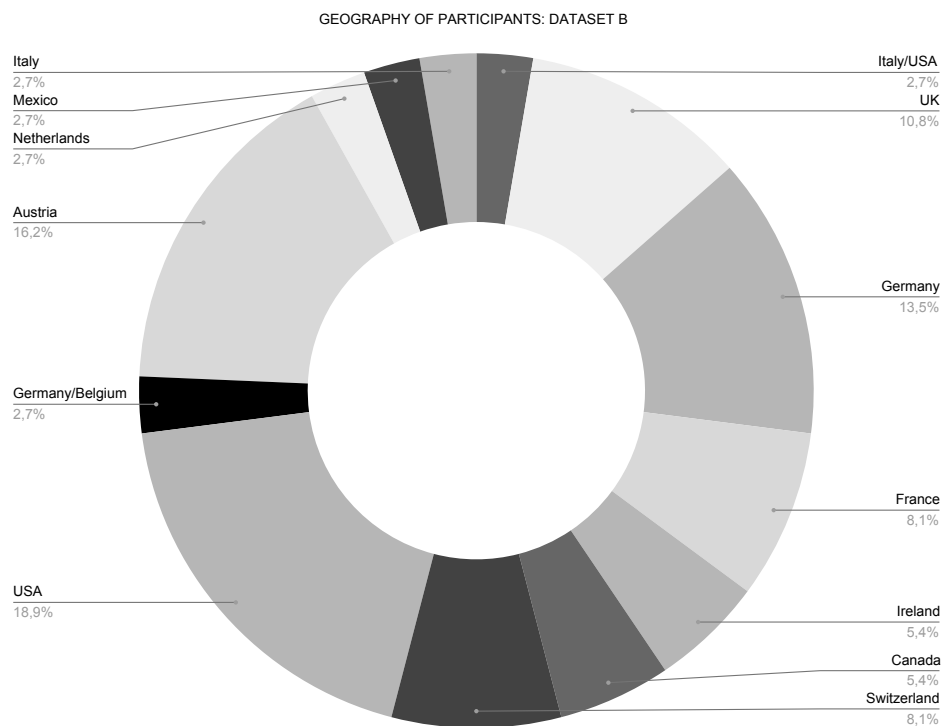
As illustrated by the gender composition (Ill. 31), the results show a distribution heavily weighted toward male participation, comprising 84,2% of the compiled cohort. Considering that women constitute 15,8% of the participants in this intersection, the ratio of male to female artists is approximately 5 to 1.

Ill. 31. Gender distribution within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).

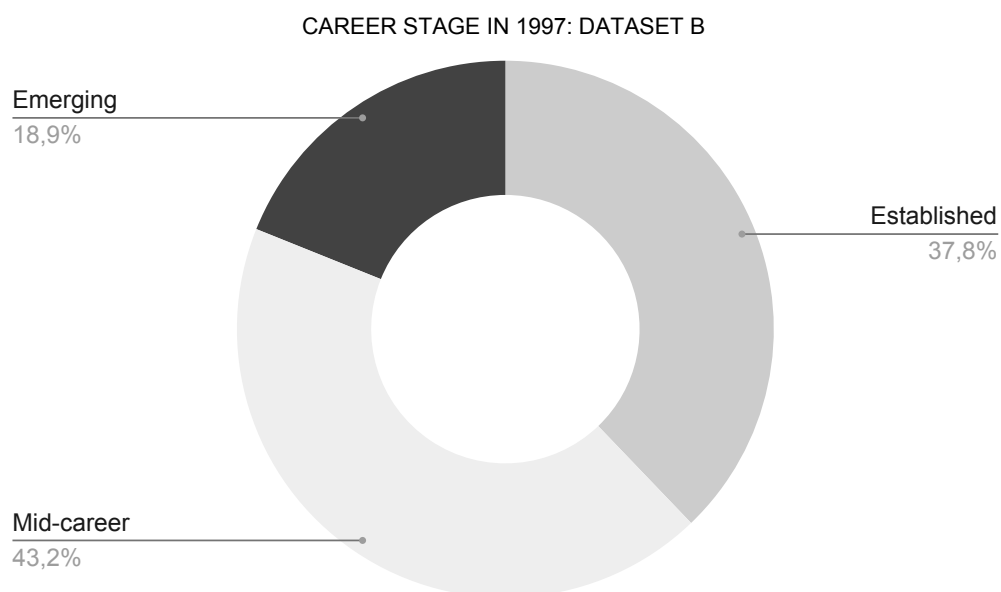


Geographically (Ill. 32), the data indicates a majority of participants from Western Europe and North America. Artists from the United States comprise 18,4% of the total sample, while practitioners from Germany and Austria each constitute 15,8%. Collectively, the DACH region (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland) accounts for approximately 40% of the cohort. While the distribution includes artists from non-Western countries, they represent a numerical minority compared to the predominant Western region.

Ill. 32. Geographical distribution within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



Ill. 33. Career stage distribution within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).

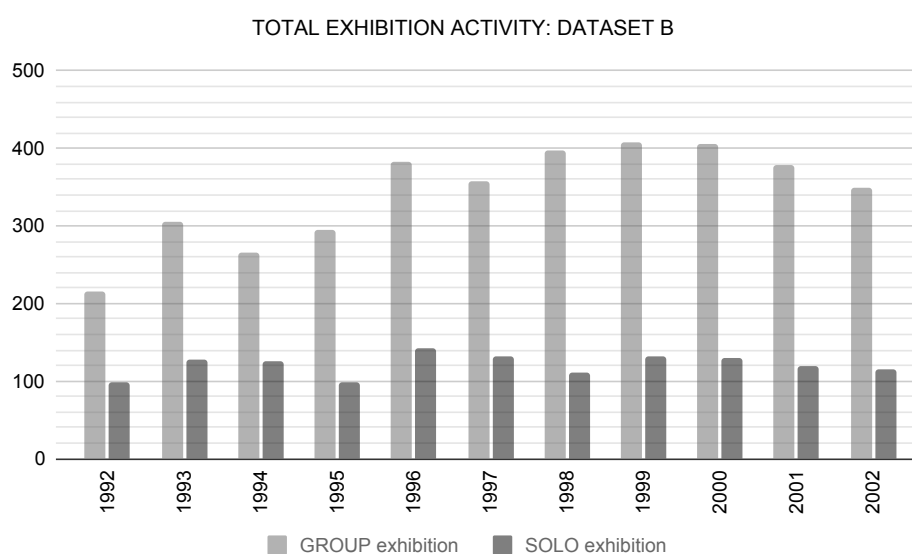


The professional seniority distribution illustrated in Ill. 33 indicates a high proportion of mid-career and established practitioners within the selected intersection. Mid-career artists represent the largest segment at 42,1%, followed closely by the established subgroup at 39,5%. Collectively, these two categories account for 81,6% of the total cohort. On the contrary, emerging artists comprise the smallest segment, representing 18,4% of the participants — less than one-fifth of the compiled sample. Thus, the data reveals a distribution oriented toward artists with extensive exhibition experience.

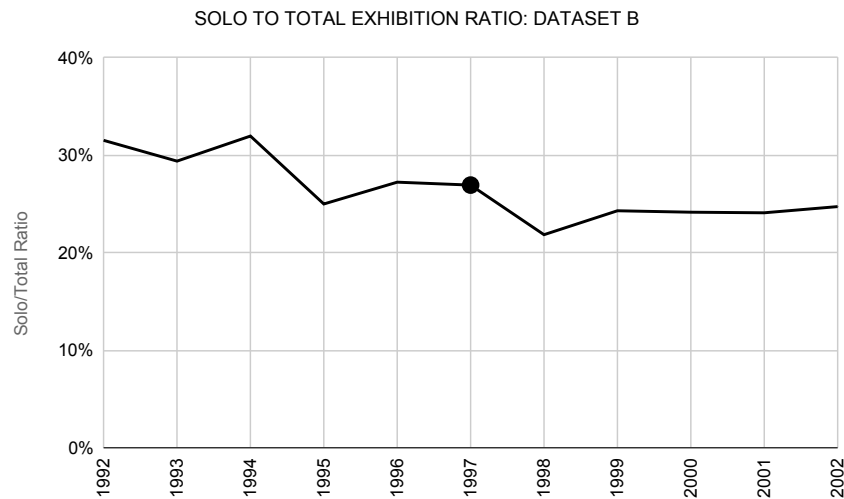
3.6. Data trends in the exhibition activity of Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common)

An analysis of the aggregate exhibition activity (Ill. 34) indicates that the numerical peak for group exhibitions occurred in 1999, two years following the exhibition in Kassel. This peak was preceded by a high level of activity in 1996, showing a significant institutional presence prior to the 1997 event. In contrast to the immediate response observed in the other cohort, the exhibition trajectory for the documenta X group is characterised by a sustained increase that culminated in the late 1990s and remained stable through the early 2000s.

Ill. 34. Total exhibition activity within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



Ill. 35. Solo to Total Exhibition Ratio within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).

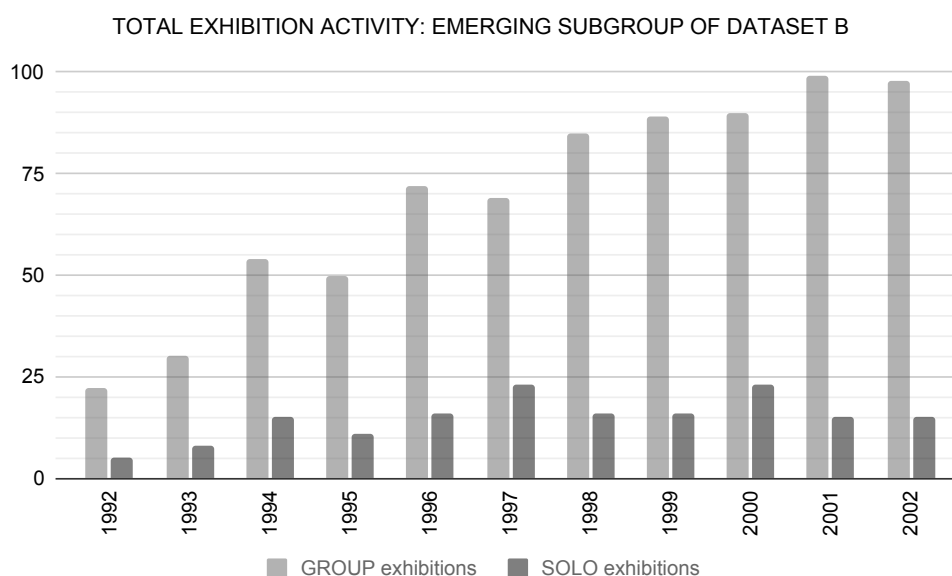


Turning to the ratio of solo to total exhibitions (Ill. 35), the metric demonstrated a high degree of stability during the 1992–2002 period, fluctuating within a narrow range of 22% to 25%. A minimum value was recorded in 1998, one year following the exhibition in Kassel. In contrast to the Venice Biennale sample, the solo-to-total ratio for the documenta X cohort remained consistently lower across the entire 11-year timespan. Furthermore, the data indicates the absence of a significant upward trend in the post-1999 period, with the ratio maintaining a stable horizontal trajectory.

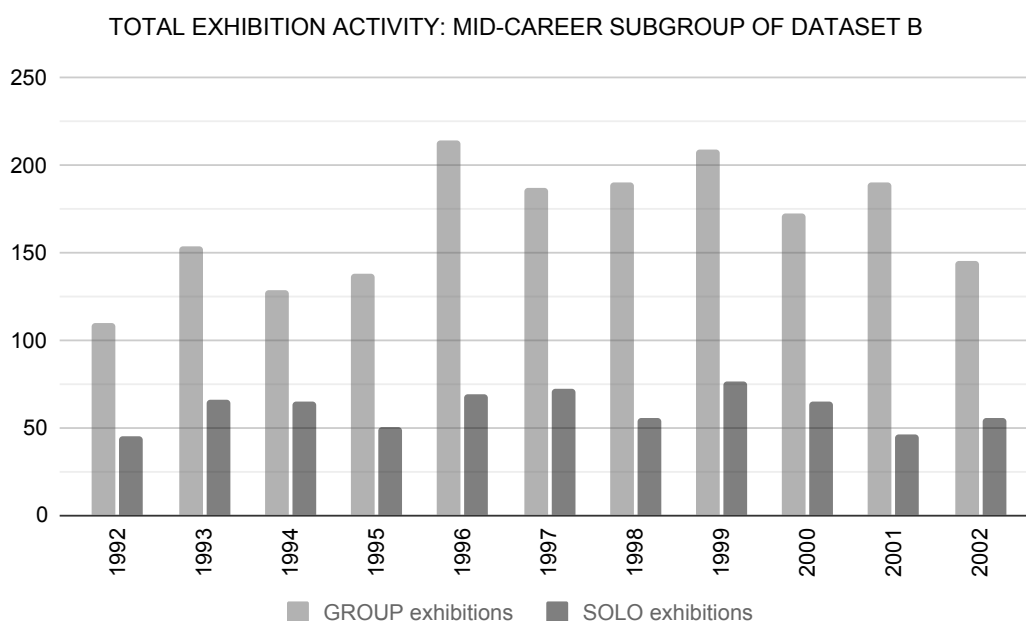
For the emerging subgroup (Ill. 36), the data shows a consistent upward trend in group exhibition participation following the 1997 events, reaching its highest level in 2001. A peak of solo exhibition activity was recorded in 1997, coinciding with the cohort's participation in documenta X and Art 28'97. In the subsequent 1998–2002 period, the trajectories of the two exhibition formats became increasingly disparate: while the volume of group exhibitions continued to rise, solo exhibition activity remained at a lower, stable baseline. By the end of the analysed period, group exhibition participation for this subgroup was significantly higher than the levels

prior to 1997, whereas solo exhibition frequency showed only marginal growth relative to the pre-event period.

Ill. 36. Exhibition activity of the emerging subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).

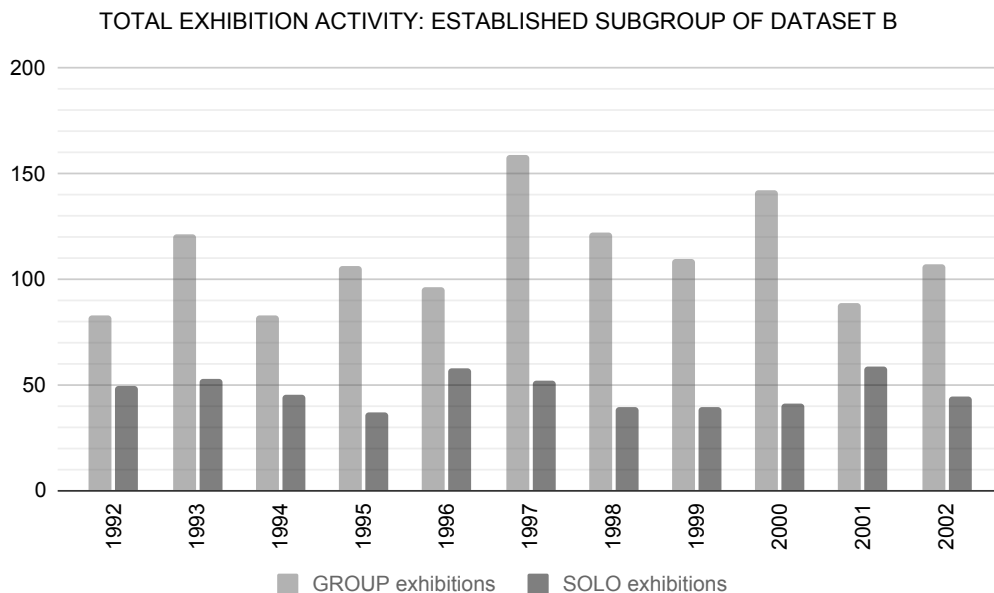


Ill. 37. Exhibition activity of the mid-career subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



Regarding the mid-career subgroup (Ill. 37), the data for group exhibitions is characterised by two distinct periods of high activity: a pre-event peak in 1996 and a subsequent secondary peak in 1999. Throughout the observed 11-year period, the volume of solo exhibitions remained relatively stable, fluctuating within a range of approximately 50 to 75 events annually. Following the secondary peak in 1999, group exhibition participation recorded a gradual decline through 2002, while solo exhibition activity also reached its lowest post-event level in the same year.

Ill. 38. Exhibition activity of the established subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



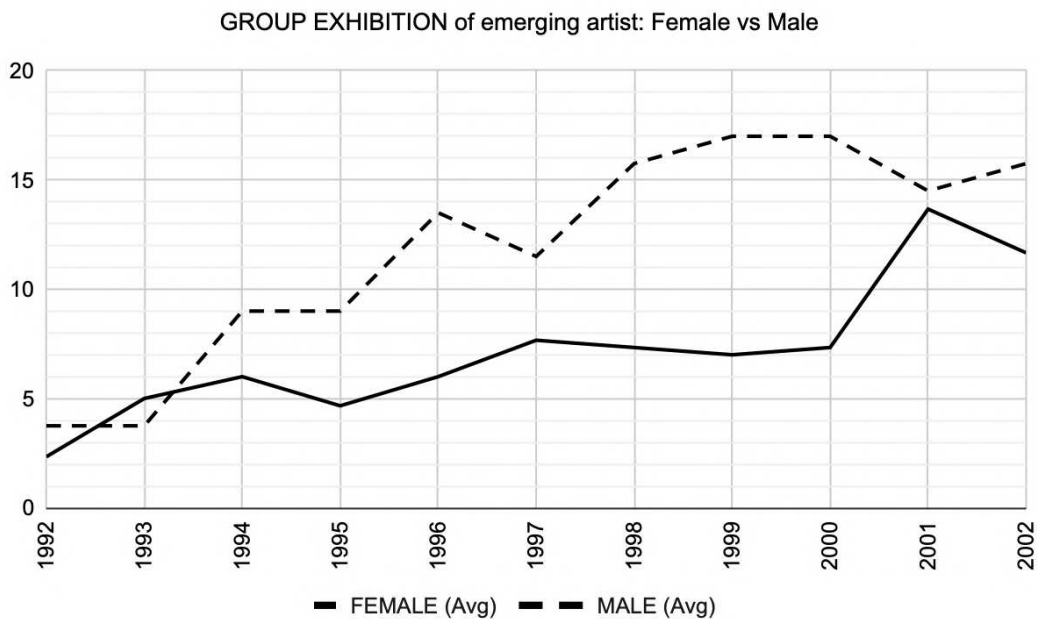
The established subgroup (Ill. 38) reflects a high degree of institutional consistency, with group exhibition participation reaching an early peak in 1993. In 1997, a decline in solo exhibition activity was recorded, coinciding with the group's participation in documenta X. Following the 1997 events, a secondary peak in group exhibitions occurred in 2000. During 1992-2002, the volume of solo exhibitions remained relatively constant, averaging approximately 50 events annually. The results indicate that for this subgroup, the levels of both group and solo exhibition activity in the

post-event period (1998–2002) remained consistent with the high baselines established prior to 1997.

3.6.1. Comparison of exhibition activity between female and male emerging artists of Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common)

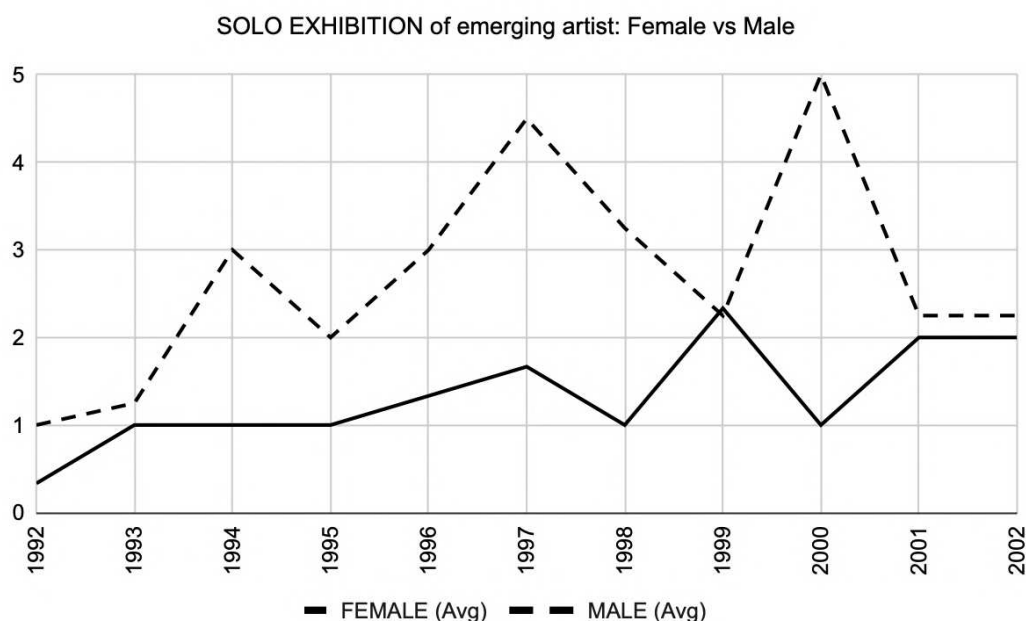
A comparison of the average group exhibition activity for emerging female and male artists (Ill. 39) reveals diverging post-1997 trajectories. Male artists recorded an increase in participation, reaching a peak of 17 exhibitions in 1999, which was sustained in the following year. In contrast, emerging female artists maintained a stable level of activity immediately following the exhibition. However, in 2001, the female subgroup recorded a significant increase in exhibition volume. This trend differs from the data observed in the Venice Biennale sample (Ill. 15), as the documenta X female cohort reached its highest participation levels four years after the initial event, reducing the gap in exhibition frequency between the two gender subgroups by the end of the selected period.

Ill. 39. Comparison of group exhibition activity between female and male artists within emerging subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



In terms of solo exhibition activity for emerging artists (Ill. 40), the data indicates a consistent difference in volume between the two subgroups, with male artists maintaining a higher average frequency. In 1997, the male subgroup reached an initial peak of 4,5 exhibitions, followed by a further increase to a record average of 5 exhibitions in 2000. In contrast, solo exhibition activity for emerging female artists remained at a lower baseline, averaging approximately 1 exhibition annually between 1992 and 1999. A slight increase in activity for the female subgroup was recorded in the period following 1999, though participation levels remained below those of their male counterparts for the duration of the analysed timeframe.

Ill. 40. Comparison of solo exhibition activity between female and male artists within emerging subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).

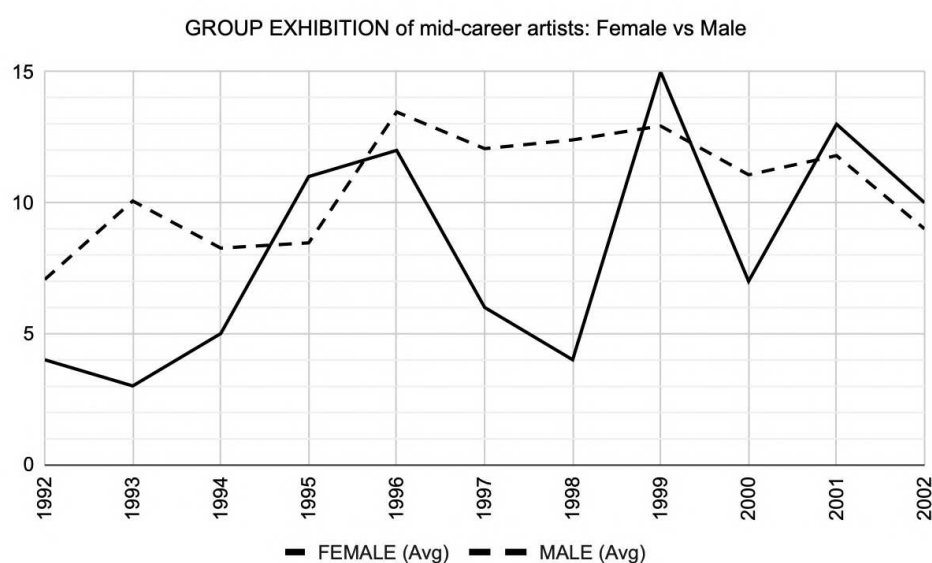


3.6.2. Comparison of exhibition activity between female and male mid-career artists of Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common)

For mid-career artists (Ill. 41), the 1997-1998 timespan marked a turning point where participation trends began to drift apart. While the volume of exhibitions for male artists remained relatively constant, the female subgroup recorded a notable decline

in participation during these years. Subsequently, a peak was recorded for female artists in 1999, with an average of 15 exhibitions per artist. At this point, the exhibition activity level for the female subgroup exceeded that of the male subgroup. Following the 1999 peak, the exhibition frequency for mid-career women remained higher than their pre-1997 baseline for the remainder of the studied period.

Ill. 41. Comparison of group exhibition activity between female and male artists within mid-career subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



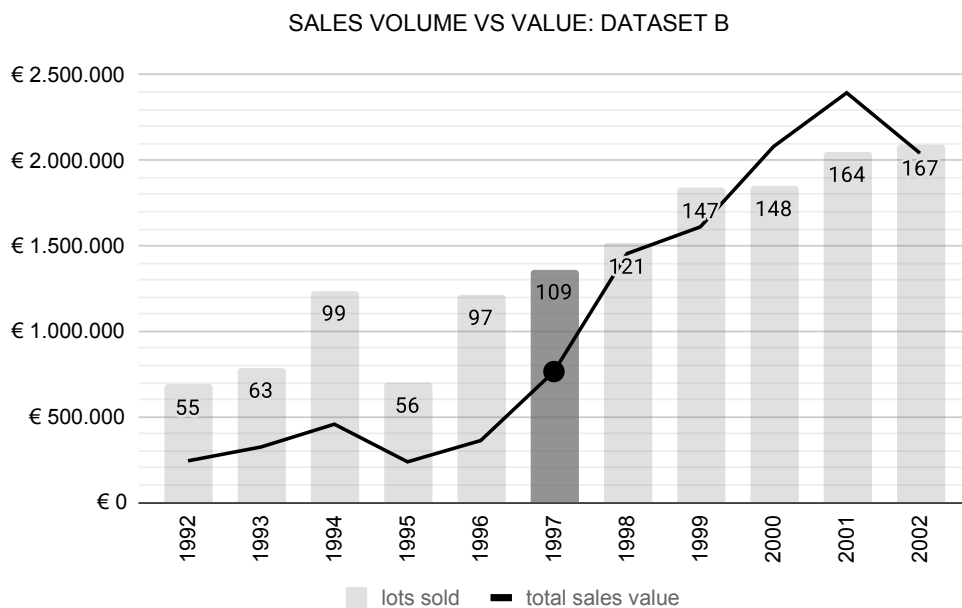
Focusing on solo exhibitions within this tier (Ill. 42), female practitioners consistently maintained a higher average volume compared to their male counterparts throughout the 1992–2002 period. In 1997, a significant decline in solo exhibition frequency was recorded for the female subgroup, with the average dropping from 8 to 3 exhibitions. Following this decline, a recovery was observed in the 1999–2000 period, when female solo activity returned to a peak of approximately 7 exhibitions. In contrast, the solo exhibition trajectory for mid-career male artists remained relatively stable at a lower baseline, showing no significant fluctuations or peaks in response to the 1997 event. By the end of the analysed period, the disparity in individual exhibition frequency between the two gender subgroups remained consistent with the levels observed in the early 1990s.

Ill. 42. Comparison of solo exhibition activity between female and male artists within mid-career subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



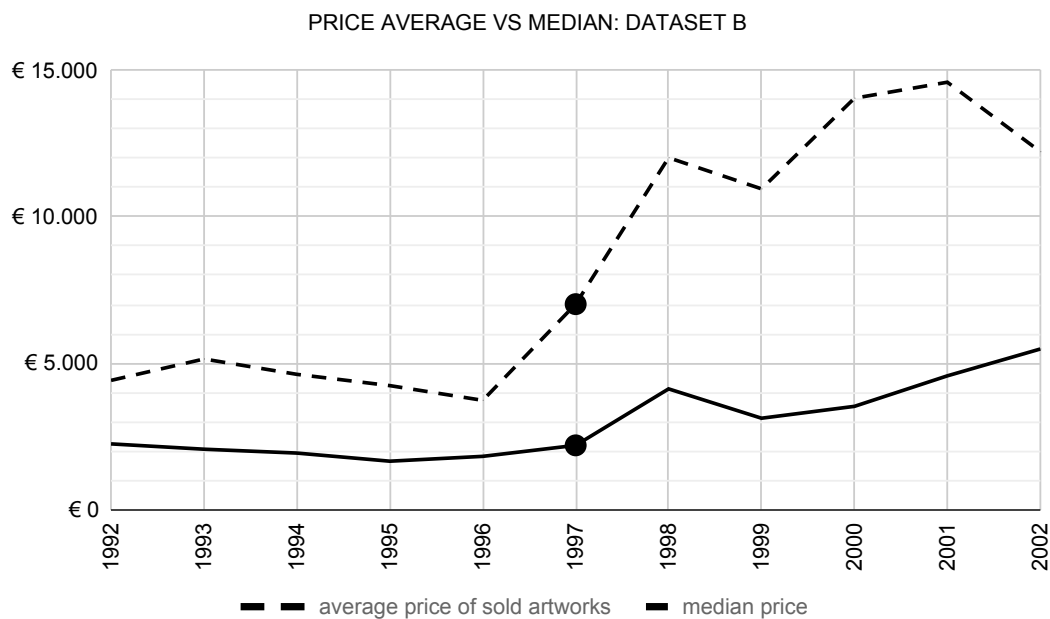
3.7. Data trends in the market performance of Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common)

Ill. 43. Comparison of total sales value of the artworks and sold lots within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



The secondary market trajectory for the cohort (Ill. 43) reveals a sustained and gradual increase in both sales volume and cumulative sales value following the 1997 events. Total sales value rose from approximately €500,000 in 1997 to a peak of €2,4 million in 2001. A defining characteristic of this cohort is the close synchronisation between the number of lots sold and the total sales value throughout the studied period. While the overall sales value of the documenta X and Art 28'97 sample is lower than that of the Venice 1997 cohort, the growth pattern is characterised by greater linearity. The results indicate that sales volume for these artists developed steadily over a four-year period, reaching its maximum four years after the 1997 institutional exposure.

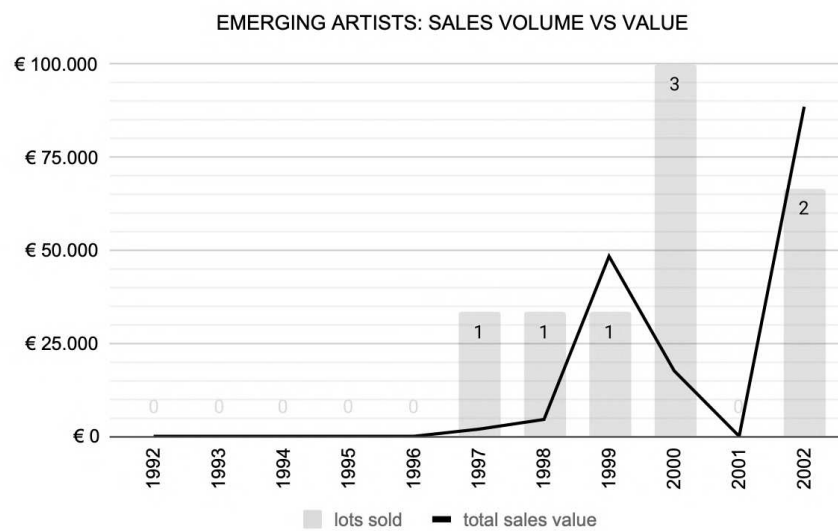
Ill. 44. Comparison of average and median prices of the artworks within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



Pricing trends (Ill. 44) demonstrate that following the 1997 event, both average and median metrics followed a synchronised upward trend. The average price recorded a peak of approximately €14,500 in 2001, while the median price increased to a maximum of approximately €5,500 in 2002. The data reveals a less pronounced divergence between the mean and the median compared to the Venice Biennale

sample. In documenta X sample, the average price was approximately 2,6 times higher than the median value. This is in contrast to the Venice cohort, where the average price exceeded the median by approximately 600%. The results indicate a more uniform distribution of price across the documenta X group, with a consistent upward movement in both indicators during the post-event period.

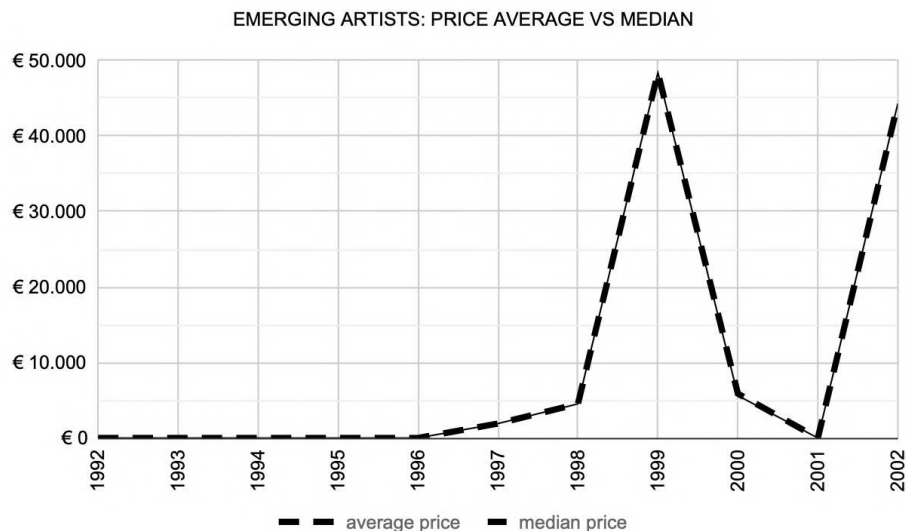
Ill. 45. Comparison of total sales value of the artworks and sold lots of the emerging subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



For the emerging subgroup (Ill. 45), the secondary market activity reveals a low level of liquidity throughout the 1992-2002 period. The volume of lots sold reached a maximum of 3 units in 2000, while several years recorded zero or near-zero transactions. Despite the minimal volume of lots, fluctuations in total sales value were observed, with spikes recorded in 1999 and 2002. The results indicate that the secondary market for this subgroup remained limited in scale, with a scarcity of auction transactions following the 1997 event, contrasted by the high institutional participation levels documented in previous sections.

The relationship between average and median prices for emerging artists (Ill. 46) is characterised by near-perfect synchronisation throughout the 1992–2002 period. Between 1992 and 1996, both average and median prices remained at near-zero levels. A significant upward movement began in 1997, leading to a sharp peak in 1999, where both values reached approximately €48,000–€49,000. This was followed by a substantial decline, with prices dropping to approximately €6,000 in 2000 and reaching near-zero levels again in 2001. In the final year of observation (2002), a second sharp increase was recorded, with both prices rising to approximately €44,000. The results indicate high price volatility with identical movements in both the mean and the median values.

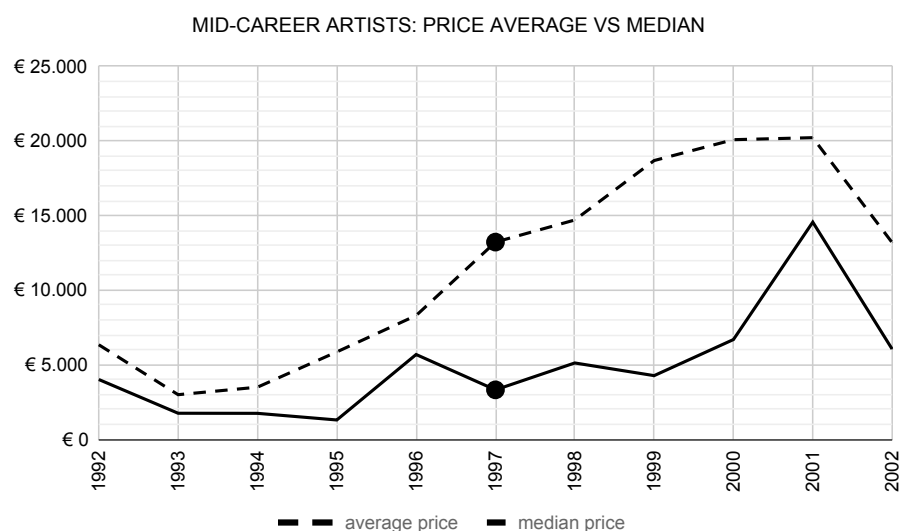
Ill. 46. Comparison of average and median prices of the artworks of the emerging subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



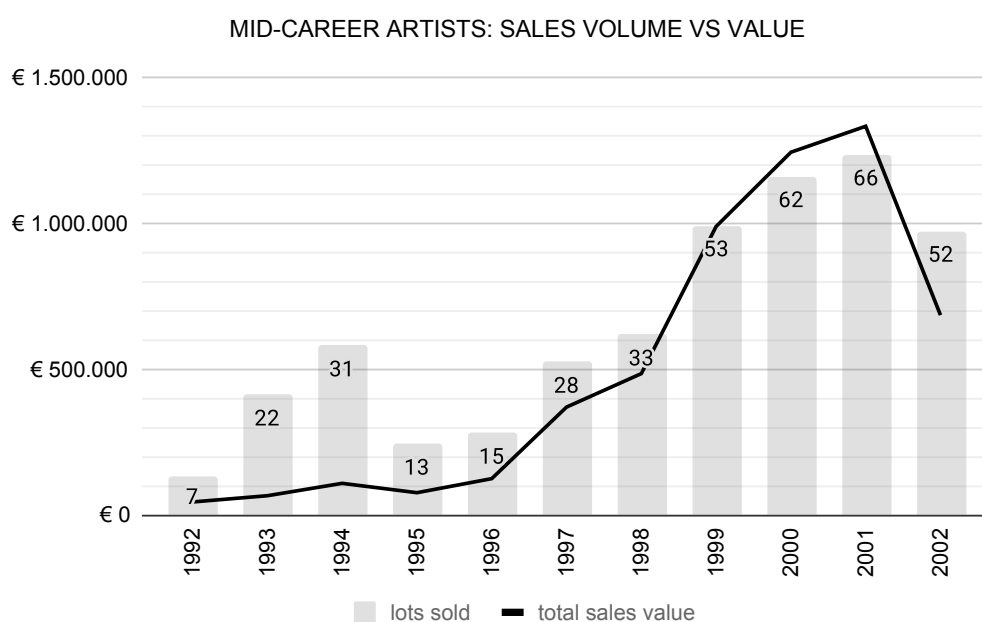
For mid-career artists (Ill. 47), both average and median pricing metrics recorded a sustained upward trajectory following the 1997 events. The average price rose from a pre-event level of approximately €8,000 in 1996 to a peak of approximately €20,000 during the 2000–2001 period. The data reveals a moderate divergence between the average and median prices, with both indicators following a similar trend. The median price reached its maximum in 2001 at approximately €14,500, representing

nearly a threefold increase compared to its 1997 level. The results indicate that the increase in prices for this subgroup was reflected in both the mean and the median, with the gap between the two metrics remaining relatively proportional during the post-event period.

Ill. 47. Comparison of average and median prices of the artworks of the mid-career subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).

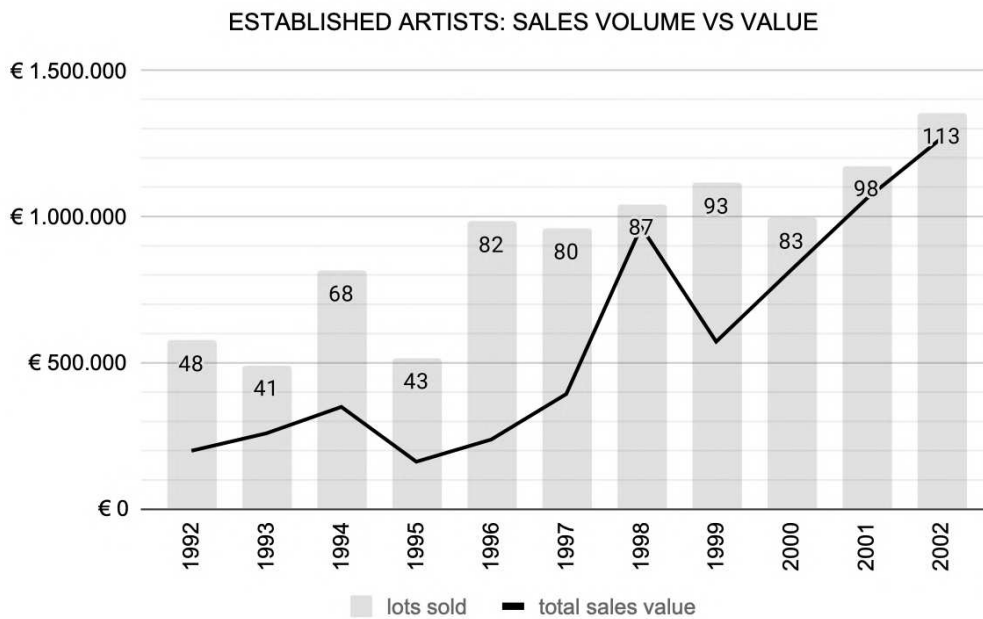


Ill. 48. Comparison of total sales value of the artworks and sold lots of the mid-career subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



The relationship between the number of lots sold and total sales value for the mid-career subgroup (Ill. 48) shows a steady and synchronous increase after the 1997 events. The number of lots sold grew from 33 in 1997 to a peak of 66 in 2001. Simultaneously, the total sales value increased from approximately €350,000 to over €1,3 million during the same period. The data indicates a high degree of correlation between the volume of transactions and the cumulative value, showing that the market for this subgroup expanded consistently over a four-year period.

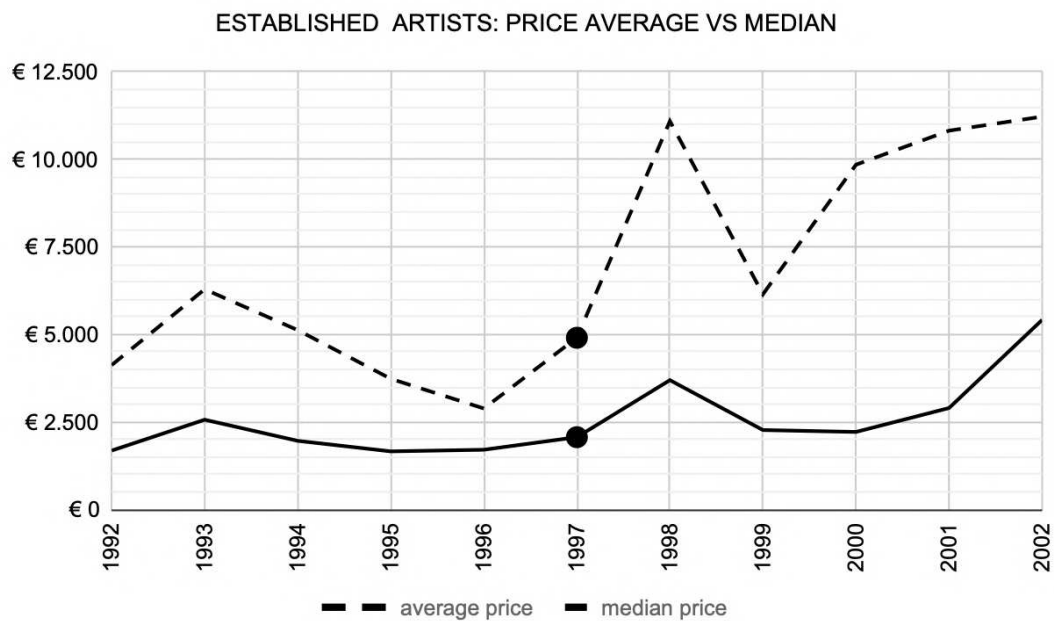
Ill. 49. Comparison of total sales value of the artworks and sold lots of the established subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



The established artist subgroup's secondary market trajectory (Ill. 49) indicates an increase in market activity following the 1997 events. Between 1992 and 1996, the number of lots sold showed significant annual fluctuations, followed by a period of steady growth post-1997, reaching a maximum of over 110 lots in 2002. The total sales value followed a similar upward trajectory, rising from a pre-event baseline of approximately €250,000 in 1996 to a peak of approximately €1,25 million in 2002.

The results show a high degree of synchronisation between sales volume and total revenue throughout the post-event period.

Ill. 50. Comparison of average and median prices of the artworks of the established subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).

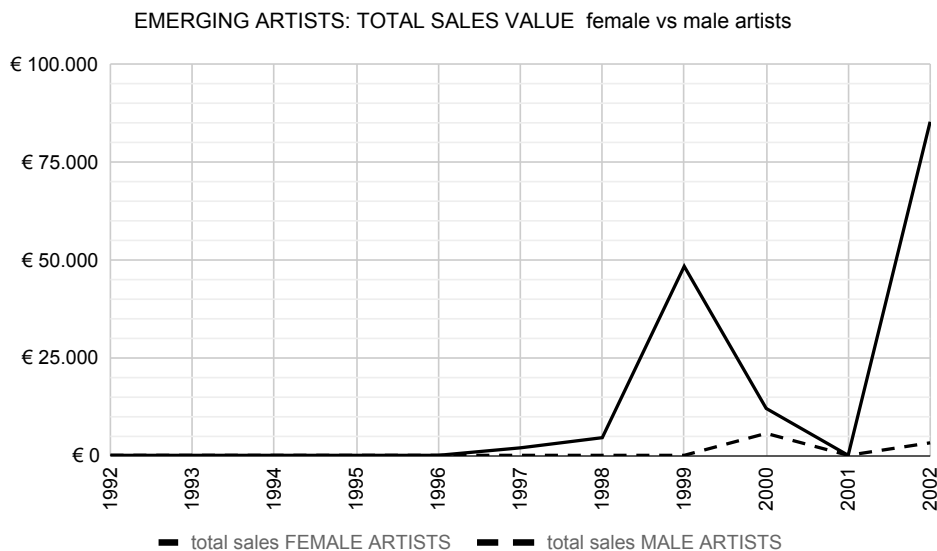


The average and median price distribution for established artists (Ill. 50) reveals a relatively narrow gap between the two metrics throughout the 1992–2002 period. Following an initial peak in 1998 (the average price was approximately €11,000, while the median — approximately €3,800), the market recorded a decline in 1999 before resuming a steady upward trend. By 2002, the median price reached its highest level at approximately €5,200, while the average price returned to approximately €11,000. The data shows that the median price for this subgroup followed the trajectory of the average price in a synchronised manner throughout the post-event period.

3.7.1. Comparison of market performance between female and male emerging artists of Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common)

A comparison of total sales value for emerging male and female artists (Ill. 51) shows that prior to the 1997 events, secondary market activity for both gender subgroups remained at near-zero levels. Following the exhibition, the data reveals a divergence in cumulative valuation, with the female subgroup accounting for the majority of the recorded sales value. For emerging female artists, two distinct peaks in sales value were recorded: approximately €50,000 in 1999 and a subsequent increase to approximately €85,000 in 2002. In contrast, the total sales value for emerging male artists remained low throughout the period, reaching a maximum of approximately €5,000 in 2000. The results indicate that the post-event secondary market for this specific subgroup was characterised by a concentration of sales value within the female artists category.

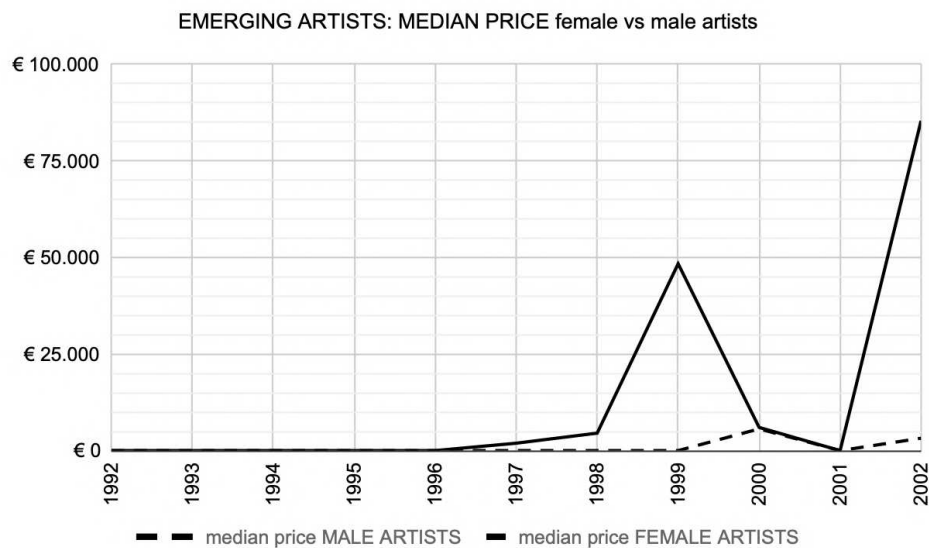
Ill. 51. Comparison of total sales value of the artworks between female and male artists within emerging subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



Median price trends for this subgroup (Ill. 52) are characterised by significant fluctuations for female artists, with the median price reaching €50,000 in 1999 and increasing to a maximum of approximately €85,000 in 2002. A comparison with total

sales indicates that in specific years (1999 and 2002), the median price for the female subgroup was identical to the total sales value recorded for the period. For emerging male artists, the median price remained constant at near-zero levels for the majority of the timeframe. The results indicate that the median valuation for female practitioners significantly exceeded that of their male counterparts in the years following the 1997 event.

Ill. 52. Comparison of median prices of the artworks between female and male artists within emerging subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).

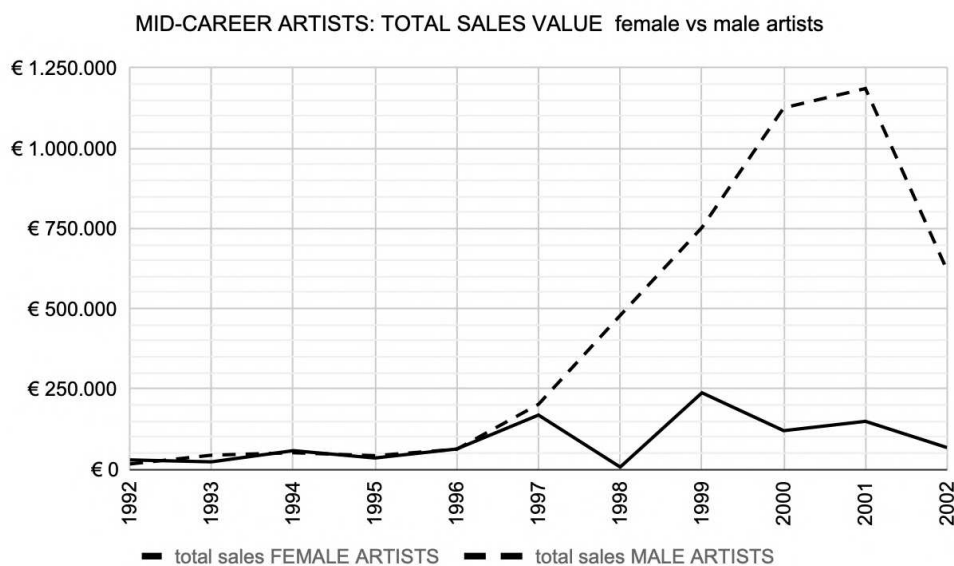


3.7.2. Comparison of market performance between female and male mid-career artists of the documenta X and Art 28'97 sample

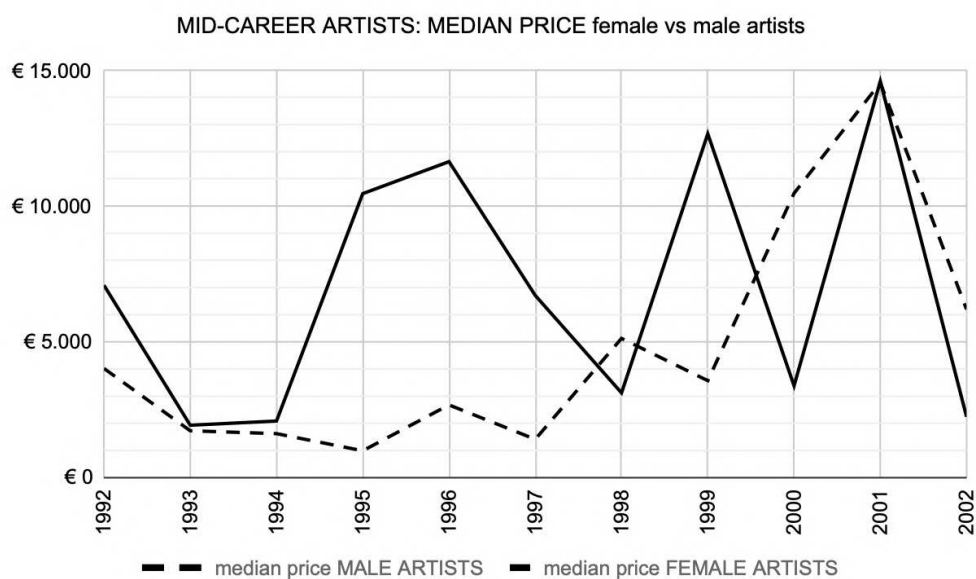
Regarding the mid-career subgroup's total sales value (Ill. 53), before 1997, both gender subgroups recorded minimal secondary market activity. After the events, a divergence in cumulative sales value was observed. For the female subgroup, a peak was recorded in 1999 at approximately €250,000, followed by a decline in the subsequent years. In contrast, the male subgroup experienced a significant and sustained increase in total sales value, reaching a maximum of over €1,1 million in 2001. The results indicate that during the post-event period, the cumulative sales

value for mid-career male artists significantly exceeded that of their female counterparts.

Ill. 53. Comparison of total sales value of the artworks between female and male artists within mid-career subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



Ill. 54. Comparison of median prices of the artworks between female and male artists within mid-career subgroup within Dataset B (documenta X and Art 28'97 artists in common).



Finally, the median price trends for mid-career artists (Ill. 54) show that throughout the 1990s, the female subgroup maintained a higher median price floor compared to the male subgroup. Two primary peaks were recorded for female artists: approximately €12,000 in 1996 and €13,000 in 1999. The data for the female subgroup is characterised by higher volatility, including a sharp decline in 2000 followed by a recovery in 2001. In contrast, the median price for mid-career male artists followed a more linear upward trajectory. When compared with the total sales value (Ill. 47), the results indicate that while the female subgroup maintained competitive or higher median prices per unit, their cumulative market valuation remained significantly lower than that of the male subgroup.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Empirical strategy and model specification

In order to test Velthuis's theoretical paradoxes regarding the "Venice Effect", I utilise a quantitative approach. Since my dataset covers the period from 1992 to 2002, the main empirical method I employ is based on Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions structured around a Difference-in-Differences (DiD) design.

I chose the DiD model as my primary estimation strategy because it allows me to effectively isolate the institutional shock that occurred in 1997. By comparing the career trajectories of the treatment group (artists who participated in the Venice Biennale and Art 28'97) with a control group (documenta X and Art 28'97) before and after 1997, I am able to reduce the impact of broader, unobserved market trends. To ensure the purity of this comparison and avoid selection bias, I excluded artists who participated in both exhibitions from the sample (Rosemarie Trockel and Franz West). Furthermore, considering the baseline demographic disparities observed in the descriptive data, I included *Gender* and *Career_stage* as control variables across all my regression specifications.

The empirical analysis is structured to consecutively test three core hypotheses:

1. The hierarchy hypothesis: does the Venice Biennale generate a quantitatively larger institutional boost (measured by the volume of subsequent solo and group exhibitions) compared to documenta X?
2. The generational hypothesis (Velthuis's second paradox): is the legitimising power of the Venice Effect disproportionately amplified for younger, emerging artists?
3. The capital conversion hypothesis (Velthuis's third paradox): does the accumulation of institutional symbolic capital (solo exhibitions) directly and immediately convert into economic capital (increased prices and liquidity) on the secondary art market?

To test the aforementioned hypotheses, I utilised three primary econometric specifications. The core Difference-in-Differences (DiD) model to test the hierarchy hypothesis (Model 1) is specified as follows:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Treatment_i) + \beta_2(Post_t) + \beta_3(Treatment_i \times Post_t) + \gamma X_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

Where Y_{it} represents the dependent variable measuring the exhibition volume (Total or Solo) for artist i in year t . The variable $Treatment_i$ is a dummy variable taking the value of 1 if the artist participated in the 1997 Venice Biennale, and 0 for documenta X, while $Post_t$ is a dummy variable equal to 1 for the year 1997 and later periods. Consequently, β_3 represents the DiD estimator capturing the specific "Venice Effect". Additionally, X_{it} represents a vector of control variables (*Gender*, *Year_Birth*, *Career_stage*), and ϵ_{it} accounts for the error term.

To test the generational hypothesis (Model 2), I introduced a Triple-Difference (DDD) interaction to my base equation:

$$Solo_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Treatment_i \times Post_t \times Year_Birth_i) + Controls + \epsilon_{it}$$

Finally, to test the capital Conversion Hypothesis (Model 3), I constructed the Nexus model which integrates the secondary market data:

$$Price_{it} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1(Solo_{it}) + \alpha_2(Art_Sold_{it}) + \alpha_3(Treatment_i) + \alpha_4(Post_t) + \alpha_5(Treatment_i \times Post_t) + \gamma X_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

Where $Price_{it}$ is the average auction price, and Art_Sold_{it} controls for secondary market.

4.2. Results: the test of hierarchy hypothesis

Ill. 55. Table 1: Difference-in-Differences Estimates for Total Institutional Visibility.

Table 1: DiD for Total Visibility	
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Total Exhibitions
Treatment	−0.938 (0.881)
Post	2.804*** (0.966)
Gender	0.170 (0.708)
Year_Birth	0.104*** (0.036)
as.factor(Career_stage)1	2.672*** (0.858)
as.factor(Career_stage)2	0.900 (1.161)
Treatment:Post	−0.285 (1.172)
Constant	−193.411*** (71.035)
Observations	1,199
R ²	0.053
Adjusted R ²	0.048
F Statistic	9.554*** (df = 7; 1191)
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

*Note: Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression results. The dependent variable is the total number of exhibitions (group and solo). Treatment equals 1 for the 1997 Venice Biennale group and 0 for the documenta X group. Post equals 1 for the year 1997 and onwards. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01.*

In the first step of my empirical analysis, I test the hierarchy hypothesis. Velthuis suggested that the Venice Biennale exerts a much stronger impact on an artist's career than other major events like Documenta. To verify this claim, my DiD model compares the exhibition history of the 1997 Venice group (Treatment) with the documenta X group (Control group) following the 1997 institutional shock.

For this purpose, I conducted two separate OLS regressions. The first model examines *Total_Exhibitions* (the sum of group and solo shows). As the results indicate, the DiD estimator (Treatment×Post) is negative and statistically non-significant ($\beta=-0.285$, $p=0.81$). This finding demonstrates that participating in the 1997 Venice Biennale did not generate a higher total number of exhibitions in comparison to documenta X.

Ill. 56. Table 2: Difference-in-Differences Estimates for Solo Exhibitions

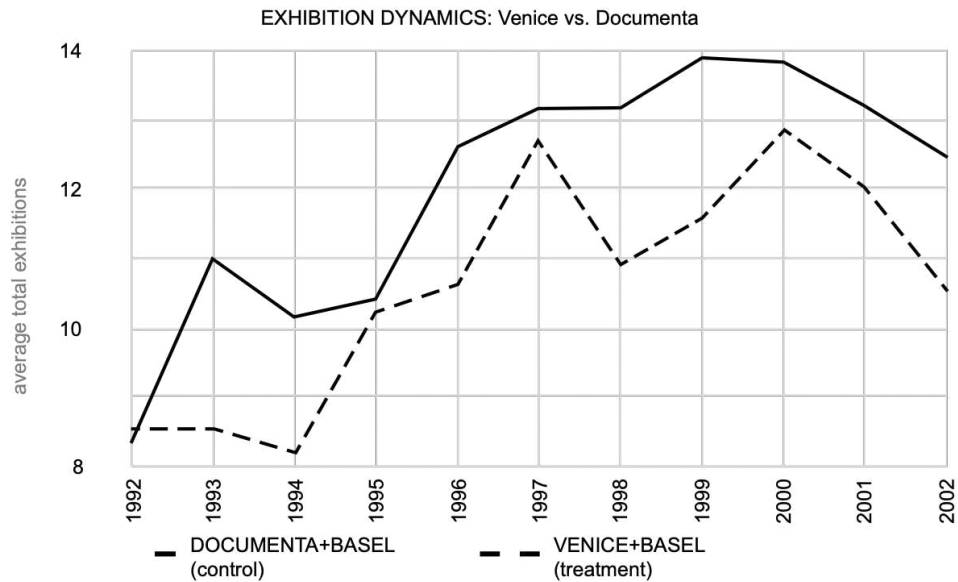
Table 2: DiD for Solo Exhibitions	
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Solo
Treatment	−0.080 (0.269)
Post	0.208 (0.295)
Gender	0.031 (0.216)
Year_Birth	0.046*** (0.011)
as.factor(Career_stage)1	1.394*** (0.262)
as.factor(Career_stage)2	1.588*** (0.354)
Treatment:Post	0.236 (0.357)
Constant	−87.628*** (21.661)
Observations	1,199
R ²	0.034
Adjusted R ²	0.029
F Statistic	6.079*** (df = 7; 1191)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

*Note: OLS regression results. The dependent variable is the number of prestigious solo exhibitions. The model tests the institutional hierarchy hypothesis while controlling for artist demographics. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01.*

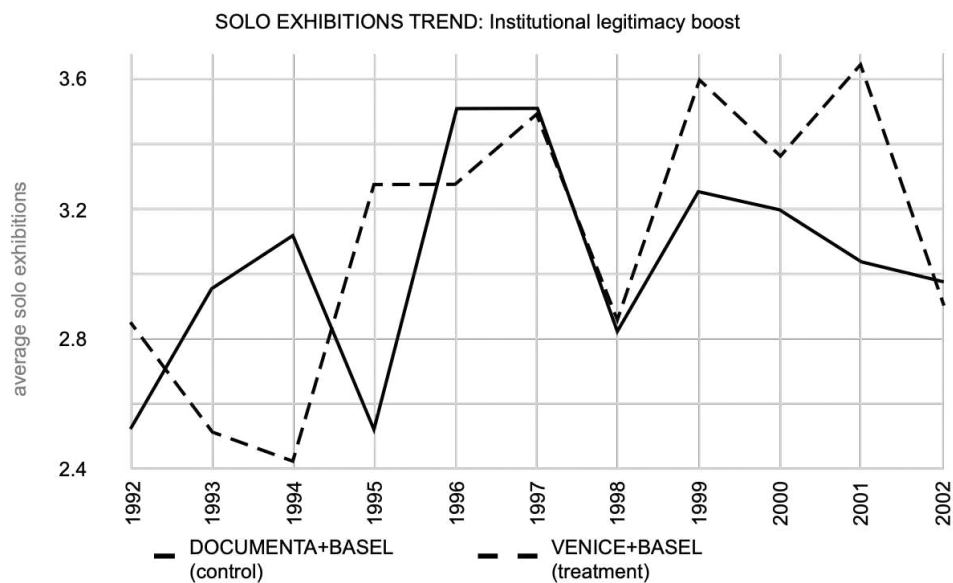
To investigate whether the Biennale specifically drives high-prestige visibility, I used

Solo exhibitions as the dependent variable in my second model. Once again, the resulting interaction term was not statistically significant ($\beta=0.236$, $p=0.51$).

Ill. 57. Comparison of the exhibition dynamics between Dataset A and Dataset B samples.



Ill. 58. Comparison of the solo exhibition dynamics between Dataset A and Dataset B samples.



Consequently, the hierarchy hypothesis is strongly rejected by the data. My empirical evidence from the 1992–2002 panel reveals no statistically significant divergence in the career paths between the two groups after the 1997 exhibitions. Rather than proving the absolute dominance of the Venice Biennale, my findings suggest that in the late 1990s, documenta X and the 1997 Venice Biennale functioned as equally powerful catalysts for artist visibility, providing comparable levels of symbolic capital to their participants.

4.3. Results: the generational paradox

Ill. 59. Table 3: Difference-in-Differences Estimates for Emerging Artists (Subsample Analysis).

Table 3: DiD for emerging artists	
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Solo
Treatment	0.622 (0.453)
Post	1.000** (0.505)
Gender	−0.556* (0.285)
Year_Birth	0.014 (0.030)
Treatment:Post	0.018 (0.612)
Constant	−25.768 (58.910)
Observations	242
R ²	0.080
Adjusted R ²	0.060
F Statistic	4.084*** (df = 5; 236)
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

*Note: OLS regression results restricted to the subsample of emerging artists (Career_stage = 0). The dependent variable is the number of solo exhibitions. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01.*

The second paradox outlined by Velthuis claims that the Biennale mainly boosts the careers of younger, emerging artists as curators attempt to avoid commercialisation. To test this generational hypothesis, I utilised a triple-difference (DDD) specification

by adding the artist's birth year to the main DiD equation (Treatment×Post×Year_Birth).

Ill. 60. Table 4: Triple-Differences (DDD) Estimates for Generational Paradox.

Table 4: Triple Interaction (Age)	
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Solo
Treatment	58.957 (40.708)
Post	−67.898 (44.641)
Year_Birth	0.035* (0.019)
Gender	0.057 (0.216)
as.factor(Career_stage)1	1.401*** (0.260)
as.factor(Career_stage)2	1.585*** (0.351)
Treatment:Post	−63.833 (54.828)
Treatment:Year_Birth	−0.030 (0.021)
Post:Year_Birth	0.035 (0.023)
Treatment:Post:Year_Birth	0.033 (0.028)
Constant	−65.858* (36.962)
Observations	1,199
R ²	0.051
Adjusted R ²	0.043
F Statistic	6.351*** (df = 10; 1188)
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

*Note: OLS regression results testing the heterogeneous treatment effect based on artist age. The model introduces a triple interaction term (Treatment × Post × Year_Birth) to test whether younger artists receive a disproportionate institutional boost. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01.*

Looking at the OLS regression results (see Ill. 59), we see that this triple interaction term is not statistically significant ($\beta=0.033$, $p=0.243$). Therefore, the empirical data does not support the notion that the Venice Biennale provides a uniquely amplified career advantage specifically to younger artists when compared to documenta X.

Naturally, an artist's career stage dictates their baseline volume of exhibitions, with mid-career and established artists securing significantly more solo shows ($p < 0.001$) simply by virtue of their seniority. However, the institutional shock of participating in the 1997 Venice Biennale versus documenta X does not fundamentally alter these career trajectories based on age. Ultimately, the legitimising power of both mega-exhibitions appears to be age-agnostic, distributing subsequent symbolic capital (solo exhibitions) evenly across the different generational cohorts.

4.4. Results: the nexus — capital conversion on the secondary market

A core premise of Velthuis's framework is the conversion of symbolic capital into economic capital. Within the art world, institutional validation—such as prestigious solo exhibitions — functions as a critical “signal of quality” for collectors. To examine whether this curatorial prestige translates directly into financial value, I constructed a Nexus Model (Model 3). For this model, I combined the artists' exhibition records with their secondary market performance, utilising transparent auction data sourced from Artprice.com.

In this OLS regression, I tested the impact of solo exhibitions (*Solo*) on average auction prices, while controlling for market liquidity (*Art_Sold*), demographic variables, and the 1997 events ($\text{Treatment} \times \text{Post}$). The results provide a striking counter-narrative: the accumulation of solo exhibitions yielded a statistically non-significant immediate effect on average secondary market prices ($\beta = -663.6$, $p = 0.261$). Similarly, institutional prestige showed no significant causal link to the total generated auction revenue ($p = 0.656$).

Instead, my regression overwhelmingly identifies market liquidity — measured by the volume of artworks successfully sold at auction (*Art_Sold*) — as the primary and highly significant driver of auction prices ($\beta = 1476.1$, $p < 0.001$).

Rather than entirely disproving the “Venice Effect”, these findings highlight a complex time lag on the secondary art market. Unlike primary market prices, which art dealers can inflate immediately following a Biennale appearance, auction prices represent public consensus and take time to adjust. The empirical data suggests that

within the analysed 1992–2002 timeframe, secondary market prices were dictated primarily by sales volume and trading momentum rather than reacting instantaneously to non-commercial institutional signals.

Ill. 61. Table 5: The Nexus Model: Converting Institutional Prestige to Secondary Market Price.

Table 5: Nexus model: converting prestige to price	
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Price
Solo	−663.596 (590.550)
Art_Sold	1,476.084*** (285.723)
Treatment	14,513.460** (6,784.038)
Post	9,853.441 (7,102.808)
Gender	5,866.219 (5,027.625)
Year_Birth	−576.307*** (213.375)
as.factor(Career_stage)1	−5,345.642 (8,031.213)
as.factor(Career_stage)2	−18,785.240** (9,064.712)
Treatment:Post	−2,210.910 (8,292.585)
Constant	1,131,657.000*** (418,377.800)
Observations	659
R ²	0.090
Adjusted R ²	0.077
F Statistic	7.099*** (df = 9; 649)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

*Note: OLS regression results merging exhibition histories with Artprice secondary market data. The dependent variable is the average annual auction price. Art_Sold controls for secondary market liquidity. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01.*

Ill. 62. Table 6: The Nexus Model: Converting Institutional Prestige to Total Auction Revenue.

Table 6: Nexus Model: Converting prestige to revenue	
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Total Revenue
Solo	3,971.014 (8,928.710)
Treatment	146,615.600 (103,823.200)
Post	65,356.130 (108,518.600)
Gender	−83,836.400 (76,468.520)
Year_Birth	−7,708.832** (3,206.123)
as.factor(Career_stage)1	20,852.180 (122,754.900)
as.factor(Career_stage)2	−148,209.500 (138,654.400)
Treatment:Post	154,688.300 (126,951.300)
Constant	15,067,025.000** (6,284,186.000)
Observations	659
R ²	0.042
Adjusted R ²	0.030
F Statistic	3.531*** (df = 8; 650)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

*Note: OLS regression results. The dependent variable is the total annual auction revenue (Total Revenue). The model tests the immediate financial capitalisation of curatorial validation. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01.*

Chapter III. Galleries of the “Grand Tour 1997”

1. Qualitative research design: methodology and framework of gallerist interviews

While artists were the primary drivers of the cultural discourse at the Venice Biennale and documenta X, their presence in these exhibitions — as well as at art fair in Basel — was facilitated in the majority of cases by another crucial agency: the galleries. As Olav Velthuis noted in the aforementioned article *The Venice Effect*, the commercial sector remains one of the dominant force even within non-commercial art events:

[...] money may not be changing hands in the Arsenale or the Giardini, the market is never asleep. During the biennale’s opening days, dealers [...] will be gauging how deep the interest is in specific works on display, calculating the best way to ‘place’ pieces in the hands of trusted collectors or schmoozing with museum curators. To exploit the Venice Effect, numerous others exhibiting at the biennale [...] will have works for sale at Art Basel [...]. Their dealers’ credo: ‘See it in Venice, buy it in Basel’³⁷³.

Although the Difference-in-Differences analysis, presented in Chapter II, did not yield statistically significant influence of the participation at the 1997 Venice Biennale or documenta X on artists’ secondary market prices, it remains important to explore the primary market’s perspective. Understanding whether art dealers themselves observed this effect and how they evaluated its impact forms the core of the qualitative research presented in this chapter.

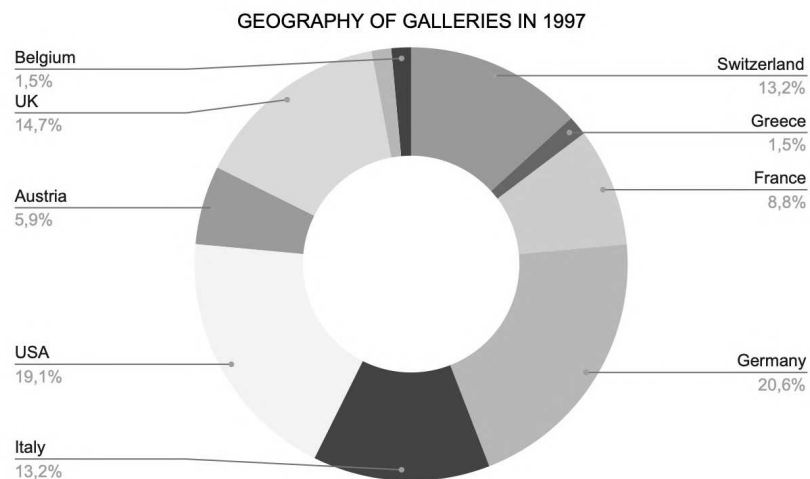
Consistent with the methodology in Chapter II, the focus of the research was on galleries representing, among others, emerging and mid-career artists who participated both at the VB97 and dx, and in Basel at the Art 28’97. In order to determine which galleries represented artists at both the Venice Biennale and Art 28’97, I cross-referenced the list of lenders from the official Biennale catalogue with the list of galleries that exhibited the artworks by the same artists in the Art 28’97 catalogue.

To double-check the lenders information, this process was supplemented by archival research into the personal folders of the participating artists at the Venice Biennale

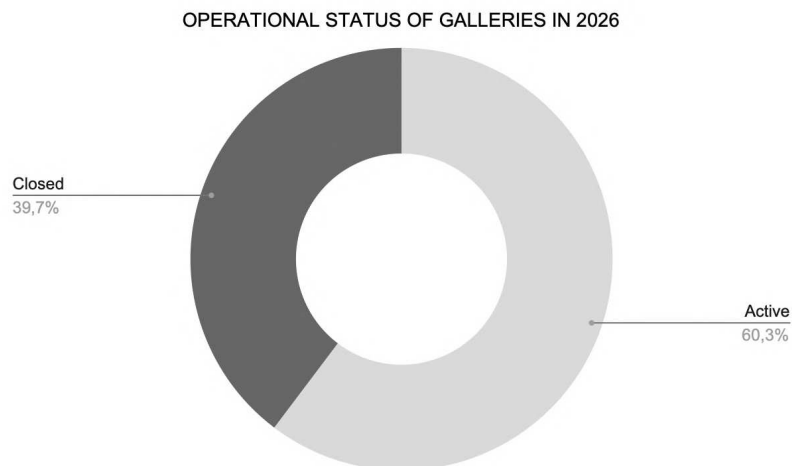
³⁷³ O. Velthuis, “The Venice Effect”, cit., p. 22

archives. However, records were occasionally incomplete. Moreover, as noted in Chapter I, Germano Celant specifically requested that artists provide the recent works for the Venice Biennale in 1997. Consequently, to ensure accuracy, the initial survey question explicitly asked galleries to confirm their provision of specific artworks to the Biennale.

Ill. 63. Geography of the galleries presented the artists in 1997.



Ill. 64. Operational status of the galleries in 2026 (at the time of survey).



A similar cross-referencing process was applied to artists participating in documenta X and Art 28'97. However, physical archival verification at the Documenta Archiv was not possible, as the files related to documenta X were undergoing a cataloguing process during the research period (Autumn 2025 – Spring 2026).

Ultimately, a consolidated Dataset C of 68 galleries was compiled (see Appendix B). This sample comprised exhibitors at Art 28'97 who showcased artists concurrently featured in the 1997 Venice Biennale or documenta X³⁷⁴. The majority of the galleries were Western-based, as it shown in Ill. 63. It is important to note that over the past three decades, several of these galleries have closed or significantly shifted their core activities (see Ill. 64).

In order to establish a consistent interview framework, a standardised questionnaire was developed for the email correspondence, structured around the following core questions:

1. According to the catalogue, [gallery name] lent the artwork or supported the participation of [artist(s) name] in [the 1997 Venice Biennale or documenta X]. In what ways, if any, did the gallery support the artist(s) during the exhibition?
2. Did the gallery know in advance that [artist name] would be participating in [the 1997 Venice Biennale or documenta X]?³⁷⁵
3. Do you recall whether the artists' participation in the [the 1997 Venice Biennale or documenta X] and Art 28'97 had any noticeable impact on their career, for example, in terms of exhibitions, visibility, or market attention?
4. From the gallery's perspective, was there a particular strategy in presenting [artist(s) name] at Art 28'97, considering their participation in [the 1997 Venice Biennale or documenta X]?
5. More generally, did the gallery observe any benefits from presenting artists who were simultaneously participating in [the 1997 Venice Biennale or documenta X]?

The design of this questionnaire took into account methodological constraints highlighted by sociologist Alain Quemin, who observed that gallerists rarely answer interview questions openly — especially when it involves the disclosure of financial

³⁷⁴ A comprehensive list detailing the 68 cross-referenced galleries and the respective artists they represented can be found in Appendix A.

³⁷⁵ Crucially, the galleries' direct involvement with these institutional exhibitions varied. While some galleries actively facilitated or lent works to the Biennale or Documenta, others presented the relevant artists exclusively at Art 28'97 in Basel. To account for this distinction and evaluate the broader market awareness, this specific question was posed exclusively to the latter group.

specifics or sales data³⁷⁶. Consequently, in order to encourage participation and candour, the survey deliberately omitted direct questions regarding sales figures, shifting the focus instead on strategic and qualitative evaluations of the art events' impact.

A further significant limitation of this qualitative research was the nearly 30-year time span since the 1997 exhibitions. In addition to gallery closures, many surviving entities have either lost or have not yet digitised their archival records from that period.

Of the 68 identified galleries, 62 were successfully contacted (contact information for six entities could no longer be located). Following the initial outreach, 11 galleries responded, with an additional 12 replies obtained through follow-up communications, bringing the total number of responses to 23. Among these, five galleries stated they were unable to provide substantive answers due to the retirement of relevant staff or a lack of archival records, while certain blue-chip galleries — such as White Cube and Lisson Gallery — declined to participate.

Nevertheless, 18 galleries — representing 29% of the contacted sample — provided informative responses, although the depth of detail varied across the sample. These responses reflect diverse evaluations of the institutional impact on artists' careers, market performance, and gallery operations. Therefore, the subsequent qualitative analysis is structured thematically, categorising the galleries' insights based on the extent to which they perceived participation in the 1997 Venice Biennale or documenta X as a catalyst for commercial success and enhanced artists' visibility.

It is important to highlight that the artists from the Venice sample discussed in this chapter participated primarily in the *Future, Present, Past*, curated by Germano Celant and presented in the Giardini and the Arsenale, rather than in the national pavilions, which operate through an entirely different selection logic (delegated to the countries) and whose dynamics fall outside the scope of this research. However, the sample contains several cases that complicate this picture. First, Enzo Cucchi

³⁷⁶ A.Quemin, *The Social World of Galleries: Contemporary Art, the Market and Internationalization (Contextualizing Art Markets)*, London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2024, pp.16-17.

participated not in the main curatorial programme but in *Dall'Italia*, the Italian national pavilion; yet this case occupies an ambiguous position, as *Dall'Italia* was itself curated by Celant, who deliberately limited the Italian contribution to three artists as part of his broader vision to transcend national categories, making Cucchi's participation structurally distinct from the typical national pavilion logic.

Second, Walter Niedermayr, represented by Galerie Nordenhake, participated not in the main curatorial programme but in the collateral exhibition *Venezia Contemporanea Marghera*; as discussed below, the data from this case suggest that collateral events occupy a significantly lower position in the hierarchy of institutional visibility, rarely generating the immediate market effects observed among artists shown in the Giardini or Arsenale.

Finally, it is worth noting that at least two artists from the main exhibition subsequently went on to represent their respective countries at the Venice Biennale — Luc Tuymans for Belgium in 2001 and Tracey Moffatt for Australia in 2017. This pattern suggests that participation in the main exhibition may function as a precursor to national representation.

2. Proactive synchronisation: strategic synergy between institutional exhibitions and Art 28'97

The analysis of the gathered gallery responses reveals that the anticipated market boost resulting from institutional participation, the so-called Venice Effect, was not merely a phenomenon, passively observed by the art entities. For many prominent galleries, the chronological proximity of the 1997 Venice Biennale, documenta X, and Art 28'97 served as a foundation for deliberate strategic planning. However, the extent to which this synergy was proactively managed varied, ranging from meticulously organised campaigns to support of essential logistical and social infrastructure.

A primary example of intentional, highly coordinated synergy is observed in the activities of Galerie Bruno Bischofberger, located in Zurich, Switzerland. Having represented such figures as Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol, in 1997 the

gallery presented the works by Enzo Cucchi at both the Venice Biennale and Art 28'97. Silvia Sokalski, the gallery manager, explicitly confirmed that the gallery consciously benefitted from the geographical concentration of the global elite of the art sphere: "Of course the gallery took advantage of this 'Venice effect' having the people in Europe for all shows. Showing more works of the series at the gallery and publishing a catalogue of the entire series was a logical consequence"³⁷⁷.

Galerie Bruno Bischofberger implemented a multifaceted strategy for Cucchi's *Eneide* series. The gallery not only presented the selected works at the Venice Biennale, but also exhibited the rest of the series simultaneously in the gallery in Zurich (July 19 – October 4, 1997), accompanied by the catalogue published at the same time. As Sokalski clarified, this approach was inescapably connected to the artist's productivity: "However, this was done because Enzo executed an amount of works which allowed the strategy. An artist was never pushed to create a certain amount of work and the gallery has always strived to fulfil the artists' wishes and visions"³⁷⁸.

This strategy served to consolidate his already existed status, rather than launch a new career (according to the classification, described in the Chapter II, Enzo Cucchi was on the mid-career stage of his artistic career). Even for an artist who had already achieved major museum exhibitions in the 1980s, the Venice Biennale remained a crucial tool for "further promoting the artist's name"³⁷⁹.

A similar, yet distinct, approach was adopted by the New York-based Marian Goodman Gallery. At Art 28'97, the gallery exhibited the works of four artists who were concurrently participating in documenta X: Gabriel Orozco, Steve McQueen, James Coleman, and Thomas Schütte. However, the gallery's support for these artists was uneven. According to the documenta X short guide, the gallery supported the

³⁷⁷ Email sent by Silvia Sokalski (e-mail: silviasokalski@brunobischofberger.com) to the author, 20 April 2026.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

participation of Orozco and McQueen in the quinquennial exhibition³⁸⁰. In contrast, although Coleman and Schütte were also documenta X participants, the gallery promoted their works solely at Art 28'97.

Following the passing of Marian Goodman on January 22, 2026³⁸¹, it is no longer possible to obtain her direct evaluation of the 1997 events. During a telephone interview, gallery director Ed Lopez noted that the staff from that time period have since retired and that no archival records related to these specific events have been preserved. Nevertheless, Lopez shared his broader perspective on the influence of institutional validation on artists' visibility and market performance. He affirmed that, in general, such events have a profound impact, noting that Goodman herself was always highly supportive of institutional exhibitions. Lopez explained that the gallery strategically used the fair booth as a venue for market discursivity, leveraging the critical conversations and networking opportunities generated by the concurrent documenta X. Rather than treating the fair and the institutional exhibitions as separate events, the gallery actively "tied the works [at the booth] to the exhibitions"³⁸². An artist's presence in Kassel, Venice, or concurrent international museum shows served as a primary talking point. Lopez observed that institutional participation functions as a magnet for private collectors, acting as a "wonderful help for the market"³⁸³, whether that conversion into sales is immediate or requires more time.

For several respondents, "strategy" was inherently synonymous with providing the logistical, financial, and communicational infrastructure necessary for large-scale institutional projects to be realised. The galleries functioned as the indispensable pillar of the exhibitions.

³⁸⁰ P. Sztulman, *Documenta X: The Short Guide*, cit., pp. 304-307.

³⁸¹ "In Memoriam: Marian Goodman (1928–2026)", in "Marian Goodman Gallery", 25 January 2026; <https://www.mariangoodman.com/news/1227-in-memoriam-marian-goodman-19282026/> [last access on 15 May 2026].

³⁸² Phone call with Ed Lopez, 22 April 2026.

³⁸³ Ibid.

Galerie Bob van Orsouw, located in Zurich, Switzerland, supported the participation of Rineke Dijkstra at the Venice Biennale and showed her alongside Julian Opie and Jean-Marc Bustamante, the participants of documenta X, at Art 28'97. Bob van Orsouw emphasised that while curators dictated the selection of the artists, the gallery facilitated the realisation of the exhibition. Despite the loss of the archival records from that period, he confirmed the gallery's role in "lending and producing the works"³⁸⁴, as well as handling shipping and files, noting that such institutional presence benefitted both "business and further exhibitions"³⁸⁵.

Ill. 65, Luc Tuymans, Illegitimate I, 1997, Oil paint on canvas, © Luc Tuymans.

Photo: © Tate. Reproduced by permission of Tate.



³⁸⁴ Email sent by Bob van Orsouw (e-mail: bvo@bobvanorsouw.ch) to the author, 16 March 2026.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

Zeno X Gallery, located in Antwerp, Belgium, highlighted the importance of cultivating social capital around institutional exhibitions. The gallery not only lent the series *Illegitimate I - V* by Luc Tuymans (see Ill. 65) to the Venice Biennale, but also supported the artist by hosting a dinner in his honour together with the German art dealer David Zwirner during that period. Such dinners are organised by the galleries to attract attention of new collectors and other art professionals to artists. As Alain Quemin explained in his book *Social World of the Galleries*,

These occasions [openings, dinners and cocktail receptions] create and support links with both confirmed and potential clients. [...] In addition, on the gallery side, this type of event accounts for a significant financial and organizational investment. In all serious galleries, the guests are not there by chance³⁸⁶.

Although Zeno X admitted to not having prior knowledge of invitations for artists like Fabrice Hybert, who participated in the Venice Biennale, or Stan Douglas, the participant in documenta X, they acknowledged the structural importance of Art Basel. Being included in these major events, they noted, “heightens the visibility of the artist, hence also the conversations and dynamics surrounding the artist and their work, benefitting both the artists and the gallery”³⁸⁷.

It is also interesting to note that the primary source data also reveals that the “Venice Effect” possessed enough inherent momentum to function even in the absence of a rigid, pre-defined strategy. Barbara Polla, founder of Analix Forever, located in Geneva, Switzerland, provided openly a retrospective evaluation of her work with Vanessa Beecroft (Ill. 66). Admitting that she was “not a good strategist”³⁸⁸ at the time, Polla nevertheless observed a clear commercial transfer between the events: “It was great to do Art Basel with [Vanessa Beecroft], and most probably the sales that occurred were also by people who had seen her work in Venice”³⁸⁹.

³⁸⁶ A.Quemin, *The Social World of Galleries: Contemporary Art, the Market and Internationalization (Contextualizing Art Markets)*, cit., p. 185

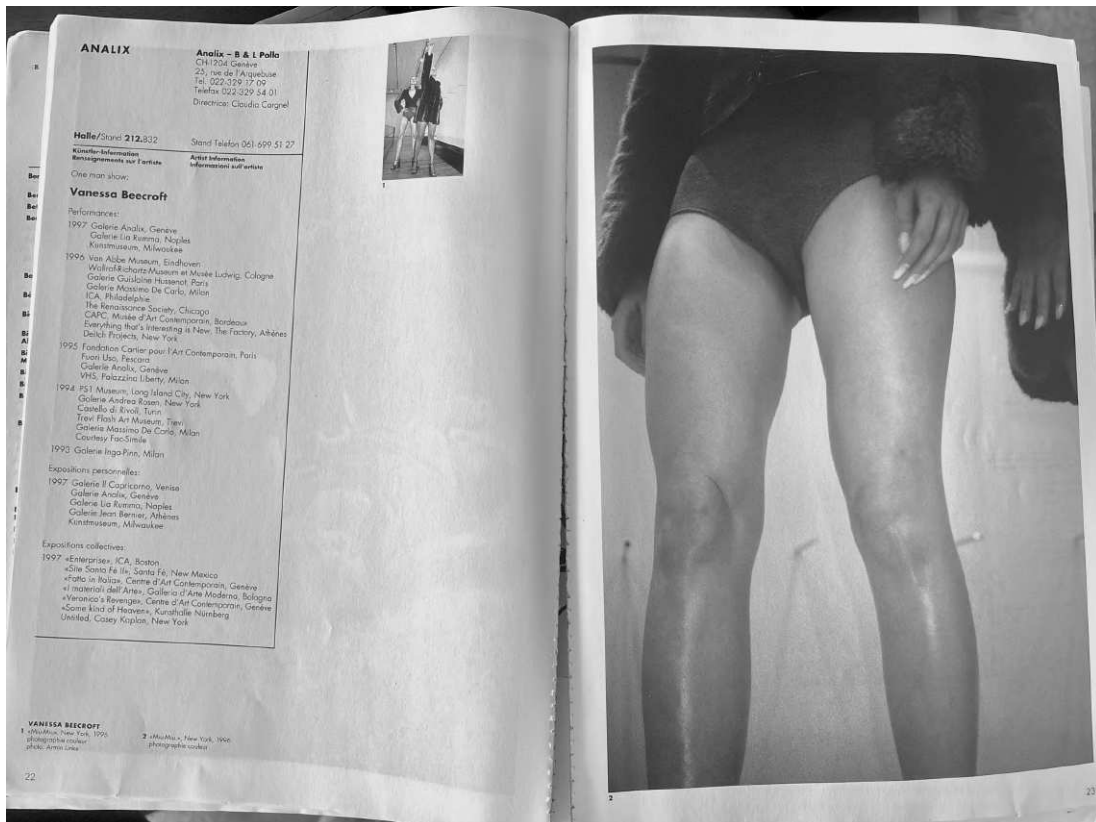
³⁸⁷ Email sent by Astrid Holsters (e-mail: info@zeno-x.com) to the author, 19 March 2026.

³⁸⁸ Email sent by Barbara Polla (e-mail: barbara.s.polla@gmail.com) to the author, 24 April 2026.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

The simultaneity of the events in 1997 multiplied visibility due to the overlapping of the audiences. As Barbara Polla noted, she eventually learnt from this early experience, becoming “better gallery”³⁹⁰ over time and using the commercial potential generated by institutional validation at the Venice Biennale for other artists.

Ill. 66, Photo of a page from the official Art 28'97 exhibition catalogue, 1997, illustrating Analix — B & L Polla gallery representation and artwork layout for Vanessa Beecroft. Source: Captured by the author from the catalogue.



3. Beyond pre-planned strategy: Art 28'97 as vitrine and visibility booster

While the previous section highlighted galleries that proactively synchronised their commercial activities with the “Venice Effect”, another significant cohort of respondents experienced a more occasional or partial benefits. For these galleries, Art 28'97 served primarily as the commercial platform, where institutional validation

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

functioned as a welcome booster of visibility rather than the central part of a pre-planned strategy.

For several mid-sized and established galleries, Art Basel was already perceived as the mechanism for internationalising their artists, largely independent of the institutional exhibitions. For instance, Milan-based Galleria Monica De Cardenas representing Julian Opie and Gabriel Orozco admitted to having no prior knowledge of their artists' participation in the 1997 Venice Biennale or documenta X. Consequently, there was no pre-planned strategy. However, the gallery noted that Art 28'97 functioned as a "good vitrine to promote their careers"³⁹¹. The simultaneity of the events undeniably resulted in artists becoming "more known" who "received more interest from collectors"³⁹², confirming that the institutional validation influenced the market performance.

Similarly, Alfonso Artiaco, located in Naples, Italy, viewed the overlap of the art events as a factor that enhances attention to the artists. While communication in 1997 "did not move as quickly as it does today"³⁹³, Alfonso Artiaco was fully aware that Roni Horn and Gerhard Merz were invited to take part at the Venice Biennale. Rather than building the strategy around it, the gallery simply recognised Art Basel as the "best opportunity to present them to an international audience"³⁹⁴. Giorgio Salzano, the gallery manager, noted that because Venice is a major stage and Basel was already critically important, "the coincidence of the two events certainly helped increase the artists' visibility"³⁹⁵. The gallery's archival records enabled a detailed reconstruction of the specific works brought to the fair, including Roni Horn's *Key and Cue no.1060* (1994) and a suite of six china ink works by Gerhard Merz (e.g., *Granchester, Tilburg, Kassel*, 1993-1994). The gallery kindly provided the images of

³⁹¹ Email sent by Monica De Cardenas (e-mail: monica@monicadecardenas.com) to the author, 12 March 2026.

³⁹² Ibid.

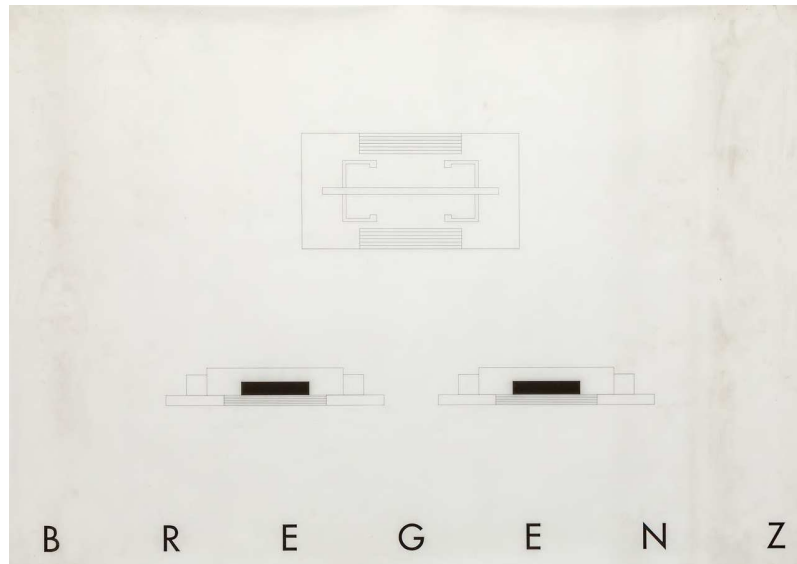
³⁹³ Email sent by Giorgio Salzano (e-mail: giorgio@alfonsoartiaco.com) to the author, 19 March 2026.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

two drawings from Merz's series, exhibited at Art 28'97: *Bregenz* (1994; see Ill. 67) and *Frankfurt* (1994; see Ill. 68).

Ill. 67. Gerhard Merz, Bregenz, 1994, china ink on polyester, 84 x 118.2 cm. Courtesy of the artists and Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Napoli; photo by Danilo Donzelli Photography.



Ill. 68. Gerhard Merz, Frankfurt, 1994, china ink on polyester, 84 x 118.2 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Napoli; photo by Danilo Donzelli Photography.



One of the most illustrative examples of how the Venice effect manifested itself even in the absence of a commercial strategy is the case of L.A. Galerie, based in

Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany. At Art 28'97, this gallery represented Tracey Moffatt, who was simultaneously participating in the Venice Biennale (see Ill. 69).

Ill. 69, Tracey Moffatt, Birth Certificate, 1962 from the series Scarred for Life, 1994.

Lithograph on paper. © Tracey Moffatt. Photo: © Tate. Reproduced by permission of Tate.



The founder, Lothar Albrecht, emphasised that L.A. Galerie was not a mere commercial venture for him, but rather a medium to express his passion for art, which was instilled during his childhood in Kassel, where he had attended every documenta exhibition since 1955³⁹⁶. Despite acknowledging his background as a

³⁹⁶ Email sent by Lothar Albrecht (e-mail: lagaleriefrankfurt@hotmail.com) to the author, 11 March 2026.

“successful businessman”³⁹⁷ with expertise in strategy, he explicitly rejected applying such frameworks to his gallery operations, recalling: “For my gallery I was not thinking in that kind of terms. I showed and worked for artists when I loved their artworks”³⁹⁸.

Although Albrecht Lothar was aware of Moffatt’s Venice participation and had intended to allocate her “a great wall anyhow” at Art 28’97, the gallery was ultimately “surprised by the ‘run’ for the work of the artist”³⁹⁹. This case demonstrates that the effect could be uncontrollable. Moffatt’s critical acclaim in Venice triggered a wave of spontaneous market interest in Basel that bypassed the gallery’s expectations, proving that institutional hype can independently drive on both market performance and visibility.

4. The ambiguous and limited impact of institutional validation

Not all of the respondents observed the clear positive effect of the participation of the artists simultaneously in the Venice Biennale and documenta X. A notable exception to the pattern of the immediate commercial synergy is provided by Galerie Artelier Contemporary, located in Graz, Austria. At Art 28’97, the gallery presented the artworks by such artists as Tobias Rehberger, who participated in Venice Biennale 1997, and Peter Kogler, Christian Philipp Müller, Martin Walde, Heimo Zobernig, the participants of documenta X. Moreover, Artelier specialised in producing multiples and silk screen editions, giving opportunity to the artists to experiment with this technique. It is notable that the gallery collaborated with Peter Kogler, whose documenta X wallpaper was printed in their studio⁴⁰⁰.

Despite the artists’ high-profile institutional participation, Artelier reported having no specific strategy for Art 28’97 and observing no direct benefits for the gallery from the simultaneity of the events. This disconnect can be attributed to the fact that as a

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Email sent by Simon Knass (e-mail: office@artelier-contemporary.at) to the author, 10 April 2026.

publisher and workshop rather than a primary representative, Artelier was “never the sole representative of the artists”⁴⁰¹.

Therefore, while Artelier Contemporary acknowledged that the institutional exhibitions positively impacted the artists’ broader careers⁴⁰², the immediate commercial boost did not extend to the market for prints and multiples. This case highlights a crucial structural limitation of institutional validation, demonstrating that its financial impact is strongly connected to a gallery’s specific business model.

While Olav Velthius stated that the convergence of the Venice Biennale and Art 28’97 allowed art professionals and collectors with limited time to see “the globally consecrated supply of art under one roof”⁴⁰³, the primary source data reveals significant logistical frictions for the gallerists. The case of Galerie Thomas Schulte⁴⁰⁴, located in Berlin, Germany, provides a crucial corrective to the concept of the “Venice Effect”.

Ill. 70. Pipilotti Rist, Ever is Over All, 1997. Image via Wikimedia Commons, available under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0) licence.



⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ O. Velthius, “The Venice Effect”, cit., p. 22.

⁴⁰⁴ Formerly known as Galerie Franck+Schulte.

Representing Pipilotti Rist⁴⁰⁵, who participated in the Venice Biennale with video installation *Ever is Over All* (Ill. 70), the gallery experienced the 1997 timeline not as a strategic advantage, but as a severe operational challenge. Thomas Schulte highlighted the issue of delayed communication, noting that institutional participants and exact dates were “confirmed late”⁴⁰⁶. Furthermore, he pointed out a critical flaw in the timeline: “The opening of Basel was on Tuesday and Venice opened on Wednesday/Thursday. So, time-wise there was a very counterproductive overlap that very much hurt the fair and made things extremely difficult for us”⁴⁰⁷.

Consequently, Thomas Schulte argued that “there was no real possibility of a strategy at the fair, as this was overwhelming for everybody”⁴⁰⁸. Even regarding the career trajectory of Pipilotti Rist, whose Biennale participation was received with enthusiasm, Schulte emphasised that Venice was just “a big puzzle stone in the development that her career had seen in this time”⁴⁰⁹, which included a solo booth in Berlin in 1996 and representation by Hauser & Wirth. While acknowledging that the Biennale “probably helped sell her in Basel”⁴¹⁰ and evaluating the overall benefit as “more yes than no”⁴¹¹, this case demonstrates that extreme concentration of institutional and commercial events can cannibalise attention and hinder proactive strategic planning.

The collected data also reveals the limitations of the “Venice Effect” when applied to artists presented outside the main venues of Biennale, Arsenale or Giardini. A case in point is the Stockholm-based Galerie Nordenhake, which represented Walter

⁴⁰⁵ The gallery also represented Katharina Sieverding, whose artworks were exhibited in German Pavilion the same year.

⁴⁰⁶ Email sent by Thomas Schulte (e-mail: thomashschulte@me.com) to the author, 14 April 2026. Note: technically, Art 28’97 opened to the public on June 11, 1997, while the 47th Venice Biennale opened just four days later, on June 15, 1997. This close proximity visually confirms the logistical compression and overlapping schedules noted by the respondents.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

Niedermayr at Art 28'97 during his participation in the collateral exhibition *Venezia-Marghera. Fotografia e trasformazione nella città contemporanea*. Reflecting on the event, the gallery indicated that while prestigious institutional invitations “normally have a noticeable impact”⁴¹², they could not recall any extraordinary or heightened attention directed toward the artist specifically due to this collateral inclusion. This demonstrates a strong hierarchy of visibility between the primary curatorial programme and parallel events, a dynamic further compounded in this instance by the exhibition’s location in Marghera, Via dell’Industria 46⁴¹³. Situated in an industrial mainland area beyond the traditional exhibition circuit of the Giardini and the Arsenale, the venue occupied a markedly peripheral position within the spatial logic of the Biennale, which may have reduced its accessibility to key market actors and consequently limited its broader institutional impact.

Nevertheless, the gallery’s baseline strategy involved trying to leverage the invitation by actively attempting to sell works not only at Art Basel, but already at the Venice Biennale, operating on the general assumption that institutional presence “would usually help sales”⁴¹⁴. Ultimately, this case underscores that while galleries consistently attempt to commercialise institutional validation, collateral events in 1997 rarely generated the immediate, explosive market boost seen with the artists presented in Giardini and Arsenale.

5. Cases of negligible and absent institutional effects

The final cohort of galleries challenges the core premise of the “Venice Effect”, reporting negligible, delayed, or non-existent commercial benefits from the convergence of the events. This skepticism is rooted in two primary factors: the pre-existing trajectory of the artist and the specific medium of the artwork.

⁴¹² Email sent by Ben Loveless (e-mail: stockholm@nordenhake.com) to the author, 11 March 2026.

⁴¹³ G. Celant (ed.), *La Biennale di Venezia XLVII: The 47th International Art Exhibition*, Milan: Electa, 1997, n.p. (front matter).

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

For galleries with deep, long-standing relationships with their artists, the Biennale was viewed as a natural progression rather than a prominent market catalyst. Frankfurt-based Galerie Bärbel Grässlin noted that the 1997 institutional participation of Tobias Rehberger and Reinhard Mucha did not alter their gallery dynamic, as their first solo exhibitions with these artists had taken place years earlier (in 1994 and 1985, respectively)⁴¹⁵. This observation provides a compelling contrast to another of Rehberger's exhibiting galleries at Art 28'97, Galerie Artelier Contemporary. As described before, Artelier also did not experience an immediate commercial spike, but for entirely different structural reasons — namely, its business model as a publisher of editions rather than a primary representative. Together, these two cases illustrate how institutional hype can be neutralised either by the maturity of a gallery-artist relationship or by the specific commercial segment in which a gallery operates.

Similarly, Laure Genillard Gallery, located in London, the UK, presented Giuseppe Gabellone and Maurizio Cattelan at Art 28'97 simply because “they were my gallery artists”⁴¹⁶, not as a reaction to their Biennale inclusion. While Cattelan was “‘hot’ but still fairly unknown outside Italy”⁴¹⁷, Genillard noted that Venice had “maybe a small influence”⁴¹⁸, observing that the Biennale impacts careers, “but not always significantly”⁴¹⁹.

The most definitive refutation of the effect came from Noire Gallery, located in Turin, Italy, which produced a multiple by Jessica Stockholder. Mirroring the experience of Galerie Artelier Contemporary, Noire Gallery's production of the edition predated the official announcement of the Biennale exhibitors. Consequently,

⁴¹⁵ Email sent by Katharina Baumecker (e-mail: mail@galerie-graesslin.de) to the author, 12 March 2026.

⁴¹⁶ Email sent by Laure Genillard (e-mail: lglondoninfo@gmail.com) to the author, 12 April 2026.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

the gallery had “no specific strategy”⁴²⁰ at Art Basel based on Stockholder’s participation. Crucially, the gallery stated: “We cannot say that we observed direct benefits resulting from the coincidence. This may seem surprising, but participation in the Venice Biennale does not always directly contribute to the development of an artist’s market”⁴²¹.

Because Noire Gallery was operating in the editions market, they observed “no particularly evident or immediate effects”⁴²² on either visibility or market performance. This observation is particularly significant given the commercial context in which Noire Gallery operated: the editions market functions according to a distinct logic from the primary gallery market, characterised by lower price points, broader accessibility, and a client base less directly governed by the symbolic hierarchies that institutional validation produces. As such, the mechanism through which visibility converts into commercial returns is considerably attenuated in this segment. This case therefore illustrates that the transfer of symbolic capital into market gain is not uniform across all sectors of the art market, but is dependent on the commercial framework within which a gallery operates.

6. The “Venice Effect” and galleries not presented at the fair

One of the stand-out cases in the collected data is the case of New-York art dealer Jay Gorney. Unlike many of his Western European counterparts, Gorney’s gallery did not participate in Art 28’97 at all. This absence shifts the understanding of how institutional validation was managed outside the immediate European fair nexus.

Jay Gorney confirmed that the gallery lent Jessica Stockholder’s installation *1997* to the Arsenale part of the Venice Biennale. He recalled travelling to Venice to join the artist, noting that the gallery provided “personal, administrative, and financial support”⁴²³. Commenting on his operational involvement, Gorney highlighted a

⁴²⁰ Email sent by Noire Gallery Team (e-mail: info@noiregallery.com) to the author, 21 April 2026.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Email sent by Jay Gorney (e-mail: jay@jaygorney.com) to the author, 13 March 2026.

crucial legal distinction, noting that he technically provided the artwork to the institutional exhibition via a loan form, as opposed to a commercial consignment agreement⁴²⁴. Because the gallery lacked a physical presence at Art 28'97 to immediately capitalise on the institutional hype, its role remained strictly confined to the non-commercial support of the artist's museum-tier presentation. This case demonstrates that for non-participating galleries, the "Venice Effect" could not be leveraged as an immediate commercial tool at the fair, highlighting a significant fragmentation in how art dealers experienced the events of 1997.

Ultimately, it is also important to note that Jay Gorney viewed the Biennale not through the lens of an isolated sales strategy, but as a long-term investment, acknowledging that "all of these high-profile exhibitions added to the artist's (and to the gallery's) visibility and acclaim"⁴²⁵.

Thus, the qualitative analysis of gallerists' recollections demonstrates that the "Venice Effect" in 1997 was not a monolithic, guaranteed profit catalyst. Instead, its impact on the primary market was profoundly fragmented and fundamentally contingent upon a gallery's positioning and business model. While well-resourced entities could proactively arrange immediate commercial synergy at Art 28'97, many mid-sized dealers experienced the convergence of events as either a serendipitous visibility boost or a severe logistical challenge. Furthermore, the distinct market logic of specific mediums, such as editions, alongside the geographical limitations of non-participating galleries, significantly mitigated opportunity of immediate financial benefit. Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates that institutional validation rarely operates as an automatic sales mechanism, but rather functions as a complex, segment-dependent variable within the broader, long-term trajectory of an artist's career.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

Conclusion

The convergence of the 47th Venice Biennale, documenta X, and Art 28'97 in the summer of 1997 created a singular historical episode: a moment when the institutional and commercial spheres of the global art world occupied the exact same geographical and temporal coordinates. The central question driving this thesis — to what extent did institutional validation at these events translate into measurable commercial success on the primary and secondary art markets — cannot be reduced to a simplistic, uniform conclusion. The research conducted across three chapters demonstrates that the relationship between institutional prestige and commercial outcome in 1997 was neither automatic nor uniform. The “Venice Effect”, in the broad sense of a mechanism whereby curatorial validation generates market value, does exist; but it operates as a highly differentiated, segment-dependent variable.

The first chapter established the historical and structural conditions that made 1997 an exceptionally productive case study.

First, Germano Celant's Venice Biennale, operating under severe temporal and financial constraints, embraced a trans-generational and trans-historical model that relied heavily on established gallery relationships and requested recent works to mitigate loan costs. Despite a polarised reception from art critics regarding its curatorial depth, it remained deeply intertwined with the art market.

Conversely, Catherine David's documenta X operated within an entirely different institutional framework. Benefiting from five years of preparation, her approach was explicitly political, discursive, and anti-spectacular, deliberately resisting contemporary art trends.

Finally, Art 28'97 — transformed structurally throughout the 1990s under the directorship of Lorenzo Rudolf — functioned as the primary commercial destination for the international elite that the institutional events had drawn to Western Europe, consolidating the fair's position at the apex of the global art market.

This structural tripartition—the Venice Biennale conferring curatorial authority, documenta X enacting a critique of spectacularisation and commodification, and Art

28'97 executing commercial consolidation—established the necessary coordinates for the empirical testing of the “Venice Effect”.

The second chapter constituted the empirical core of the thesis, deploying a mixed quantitative methodology to test three specific hypotheses. The data revealed significant demographic disproportion, with male artists outnumbering females by approximately three to one in the Venice cohort, and dominating cumulative sales values across both exhibitions. The career-stage distribution was equally skewed: established artists constituted the largest segment in both cohorts, accounting for 57.4% of the Venice sample, suggesting that the institutional visibility of 1997 was disproportionately concentrated among already-recognised artists rather than emerging talent. However, the most profound revelations emerged from the econometric testing, which systematically challenged the prevailing assumptions surrounding the “Venice Effect”.

The hierarchy hypothesis, positing that the Venice Biennale generates a quantifiably larger institutional boost than documenta X, was decisively rejected. The Difference-in-Differences (DiD) regression on total exhibitions produced a non-significant estimator ($\beta = -0.285$, $p = 0.81$), as did the model for solo exhibitions ($\beta = 0.236$, $p = 0.51$). The data suggests that despite their opposing curatorial frameworks, both mega-exhibitions functioned as equivalent generators of symbolic capital. The generational hypothesis was similarly unsupported; the introduction of the artist's birth year as an interaction term yielded no statistical significance ($\beta = 0.033$, $p = 0.243$), indicating that the legitimising power of these events was age-independent. Finally, the capital conversion hypothesis, assuming that symbolic capital immediately converts into higher secondary market prices, was rejected. The nexus model found no statistically significant relationship between solo exhibition frequency and average auction prices ($\beta = -663.6$, $p = 0.261$). Instead, the single dominant predictor of secondary market prices was market liquidity, measured by the volume of artworks sold ($\beta = 1476.1$, $p < 0.001$).

Crucially, these non-significant estimators must be interpreted with methodological caution. In econometric terms, the lack of statistical significance represents an

absence of evidence for the Venice Effect within this specific specification, rather than definitive evidence of absence. Because the DiD model relies on aggregated annual auction data, it inherently absorbs significant statistical noise and cannot control for hedonic variables at the individual artwork level, such as physical dimensions, specific medium, condition, or provenance. Therefore, while the quantitative model fails to capture a universal, immediate financial multiplier, this null result suggests that the Venice Effect is too structurally fragmented to be measured purely through aggregated secondary market averages without comprehensive hedonic controls at the individual artwork level.

Furthermore, the quantitative analysis revealed a profound structural paradox regarding gender that falls outside the boundaries of Velthuis's original theoretical framework. As the gender-disaggregated analysis in Chapter II demonstrates, female artists across both the Venice Biennale and documenta X cohorts maintained higher median auction prices than their male counterparts throughout the 1992–2002 period, yet captured a dramatically smaller share of total cumulative market volume. In the mid-career Venice cohort, for instance, the total sales value directed towards male artists exceeded that of the female subgroup by a factor of more than seven by 2001, despite female practitioners holding a higher per-unit price floor. An analogous pattern was observed within the documenta X cohort, where the male majority of 84,2% captured a disproportionate share of total cumulative market value despite comparable per-unit valuations among female practitioners. This divergence between individual artwork valuation and aggregate market investment suggests that while the late-1990s art market recognised the quality of works by female artists at the level of individual transactions, it systematically withheld the volume of commercial attention necessary to generate comparable career-level financial returns.

If the secondary market proved resistant to immediate impact, the qualitative analysis in Chapter III demonstrated that the primary market's experience was profoundly fragmented and reliant on structural positioning. The semi-structured surveys conducted with 18 galleries out of 62 successfully contacted revealed that

institutional hype functions as a potential energy that must be actively managed rather than passively received.

The most systematic exploitation of the 1997 convergence occurred within well-resourced entities. Galerie Bruno Bischofberger successfully orchestrated meticulous market synchronisation for Enzo Cucchi, converting institutional presence into immediate commercial gain by leveraging the geographical concentration of collectors at Art 28'97. Yet the qualitative data also captured a distinct category of unplanned capitalisation: galleries such as L.A. Galerie in Frankfurt observed spontaneous surges in collector interest generated by their artists' institutional appearances, without any prior strategic coordination, suggesting that the "Venice Effect" can generate spontaneous commercial demand that exceeds gallery expectations.

Conversely, the testimonies exposed severe structural barriers. For mid-sized dealers such as Galerie Thomas Schulte, the extreme concentration of events, with openings separated by mere days, resulted in logistical friction that precluded coherent strategic planning. Crucially, the financial impact of institutional validation proved deeply segment-dependent. Galleries operating in the editions and multiples market, such as Galerie Artelier Contemporary and Noire Gallery, reported negligible commercial benefits, confirming that institutional hype surrounds the aura of the unique, museum-tier object and does not automatically extend to the editions sector. Similarly, physical absence from the fair nexus, as seen with Jay Gorney, confined a gallery's role strictly to non-commercial institutional support.

The overarching conclusion of this thesis is one of qualified complexity. The Grand Tour of 1997 demonstrates that institutional prestige is not universally or immediately fungible. The "Venice Effect" requires sophisticated logistical infrastructure, appropriate artistic mediums, and proactive gallery strategy to be activated on the primary market. On the secondary market, its impact is heavily diluted by the structural rigidity of auction mechanics. Ultimately, while curators like Celant and David provided the discursive material, it was the galleries that translated that discourse into commercial outcomes.

The limitations and findings of this study open several productive avenues for future research. Firstly, future quantitative research must incorporate comprehensive hedonic regression frameworks. By controlling for artwork dimensions, execution dates, and specific mediums, researchers can isolate exactly which types of artwork benefit most from institutional inclusion.

Secondly, a systematic comparative study between the Grand Tour of 1997 and its formalised successor in 2007 (or 2017) would illuminate the evolution of synchronisation between the mega exhibitions and the art market. Investigating how the digitalisation of the art world and the proliferation of art advisors have accelerated the speed at which institutional hype translates into sales would provide a historically grounded account of how market mechanisms have evolved across successive iterations of the Grand Tour.

Thirdly, a related avenue concerns the deliberate exclusion of *Skulptur Projekte Münster* from the present study. As the fourth major institutional event of the 1997 constellation, its theoretical and anti-commercial character, arguably even more radical than that of *documenta X*, raises the question of whether its participants experienced comparable or distinct market dynamics at Art 28'97. Incorporating Münster into the analytical framework would complete the institutional picture of the 1997 Grand Tour and allow for a more comprehensive testing of the hierarchy hypothesis across all four events.

Fourthly, the distinct commercial logic of the editions and multiples market, identified here as largely immune to immediate institutional hype, requires dedicated research. Understanding how the print market interacts with curatorial validation would provide a more nuanced account of the internal differentiations of the global art market.

Finally, the gendered structural paradox identified in this thesis — the decoupling of median price from aggregate market volume following institutional validation — warrants dedicated longitudinal study. While existing scholarship has documented persistent price differentials and underrepresentation of female artists at auction, the specific mechanism identified here — volume-withholding despite a high per-unit

valuation floor — remains largely underexplored. A focused investigation into the relationship between institutional participation, gender, and this divergence in market share across a longer panel would constitute a significant contribution to the fields of cultural economics and art market studies alike.

Appendix A: Dataset C — Cross-Referenced Galleries and Artists (1997)

This appendix presents the complete dataset of the 68 identified galleries that represented artists simultaneously participating in the 47th Venice Biennale (VB), documenta X (DX), and Art 28'97(AB). The table details the geographical location of each entity, its current operational status as of 2026, and the specific artist mappings reconstructed through archival catalogues and primary survey responses.

Note: (?) indicates archival ambiguity regarding the exact exhibition participation.

Gallery	Gallery Location (Country)	Operational Status	VB	AB	DX	Artist
Analix (Analix Forever)	Switzerland	Active	X	X	-	Vanessa Beecroft
Bernier	Greece	Active	- - -	X X X	- X X	Vanessa Beecroft Tony Oursler Thomas Schütte
Hussenot	France	Active	- - - - -	X X X X X	- - X X X	Vanessa Beecroft Roni Horn Jean-Marc Bustamante Mike Kelley Tony Oursler
Schipper & Krome	Germany	Active	- - - -	X X - X	- X X X	Vanessa Beecroft Liam Gillick Rosemarie Trockel Carsten Höller
Galleria Massimo De Carlo	Italy	Active	X X -	X X X	- - X	Mario Airo Maurizio Cattelan Carsten Höller
Grunert&Gasser New York	USA	Closed	- -	X X	- -	Mario Airo Maurizio Mochetti
Galerie Christine König & Franziska Lettner, Wien	Austria	Active	- - - -	X X X X	- X x (?) -	Mario Airo Anne-Marie Schneider Lois Weinberger Gerhard Rühm
Minini	Italy	Active	- -	X X	- -	Mario Airo Maurizio Cattelan
Victoria Miro Gallery	UK	Active	X	X	-	Dinos and Jake Chapman
Gagosian	USA	Active	-	X	-	Dinos and Jake Chapman
Bob van Orsouw Gallery Zurich	Switzerland	Closed	X - -	X X X	- - X	Rineke Dijkstra Julian Opie Jean-Marc Bustamante
Galerie Paul Andriess Amsterdam	Netherlands	Active	X	-	-	Rineke Dijkstra
Genillard	UK	Closed	- -	X X	- -	Giuseppe Gabellone Maurizio Cattelan
Studio Guenzani Milano	Italy	Closed	X	-	-	Giuseppe Gabellone
Lisson	UK	Active	X - - -	X X X X	- - X X	Douglas Gordon Julian Opie James Coleman Tony Oursler
Galerie Chantal Crousel Paris	France	Active	X -	X X	- X	Marie-Ange Guilleminot Gabriel Orozco
Jablonka Galerie Köln	Germany	Closed	X X - -	X X X x (?)	- - X X	Roni Horn Andreas Slominski Mike Kelley Tony Oursler
Artiaco	Italy	Active	- -	X X	- -	Roni Horn Gerhard Merz
Marks	USA	Active	- -	X X	- X	Roni Horn Jean-Marc Bustamante
Verna	Switzerland	Active	- -	X X	- -	Roni Horn Richard Tuttle
Anthony d'Offay Gallery London	UK	Closed	X X - -	X X X X	- - X X	Jeff Koons Rachel Whiteread Reinhard Mucha Gabriel Orozco
Deitch Project New York	USA	Closed	X	-	-	Jeff Koons
Galerie Max Hetzler Berlin	Germany	Active	X	-	-	Jeff Koons
Pailhas	France	Closed	- -	X X	- -	Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell Pierre Huyghe
Paragon Press	UK	Active	- -	X X	- -	Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell Rachel Whiteread

Gallery	Gallery Location (Country)	Operational Status	VB	AB	DX	Artist
Max Protetch Gallery New York	USA	Closed	x -	x x	- x	Glenn Ligon Rem Koolhaas
L.A.	Germany	Closed	-	x	-	Tracey Moffatt
Oxley 9	Austria	Active	x	x	-	Tracey Moffatt
Weiss	Germany	Closed	-	x	-	Tracey Moffatt
Art&Public	Switzerland	Closed	- - - -	x x x x	- - - x	Mariko Mori Richard Tuttle Cindy Sherman Peter Fischli & David Weiss
Galleria Gio Marconi Milano	Italy	Active	x	-	-	Tobias Rehberger
Artelier	Austria	Active	- - - - -	x x x x x	- x x x x	Tobias Rehberger Peter Kogler Christian Philipp Müller Martin Walde Heimo Zobernig
Grässlin	Germany	Active	- -	x x	- x	Tobias Rehberger Reinhard Mucha
neugerriemschneider	Germany	Active	-	x	-	Tobias Rehberger
Franck+Schulte	Germany	Active	-	x	-	Pipilotti Rist
Weber Jamileh	Switzerland	Closed	-	x	-	Pipilotti Rist
Jay Gorney Modern Art New York	USA	Closed	x	-	-	Jessica Stockholder
Noire	Italy	Active	-	x	-	Jessica Stockholder
Ricke	Germany	Closed	- -	x x	- -	Jessica Stockholder Urs Frei
White Cube London	UK	Active	x	-	-	Sam Taylor-Wood
Jopling	UK	Closed	- -	x x	- -	Sam Taylor-Wood Clay Ketter
Lambert	France	Closed	-	x	-	Richard Tuttle
Blum	USA	Closed	-	x	-	Luc Tuymans
Friedrich E.+O.	Switzerland	Closed	- -	x x	- -	Luc Tuymans Rosemarie Trockel
Zeno X Gallery Antwerpen	Belgium	Closed	x - -	x x x	- - x	Luc Tuymans Fabrice Hybert Stan Douglas
Galerie Bruno Bischofberger Zurich	Switzerland	Active	x	x	-	Enzo Cucchi
Frith Street Gallery London	UK	Active	x -	x x	- x	Jaki Irvine Thomas Schütte
Galerie des Archives Paris	France	Closed	-	x	-	Mark Dion
Nagel	Germany	Active	- - -	x x x	- x x	Mark Dion Christian Philipp Müller Heimo Zobernig
Mayer	Germany	Active	-	x	-	Gia Edzgeradze
De Cardenas	Italy	Active	- -	x x	- x	Julian Opie Gabriel Orozco
Trisorio	Italy	Active	-	x	-	Remo Salvadori

Gallery	Gallery Location (Country)	Operational Status	VB	AB	DX	Artist
Gian Ferrari	Italy	Closed	- -	x x	- -	Cindy Sherman Rosemarie Trockel
Horan	USA	Closed	-	x	-	Cindy Sherman
Varenne	USA	Closed	-	x	-	Cindy Sherman
Nolan/Eckman	USA	Active	-	x	-	Rosemarie Trockel
Nordenhake	Switzerland	Active	-	x	-	Walter Niedermayr
Lebon	France	Closed	-	x	x	Jean-Marc Bustamante
Munro	Germany	Active	-	x	x	Jean-Marc Bustamante
Marian Goodman Gallery New York	USA	Active	- - - -	x x x x	x x x x	James Coleman Steve McQueen Gabriel Orozco Thomas Schütte
Bärtschi	Switzerland	Active	-	x	x	Hervé Graumann
Entwistle	UK	Active	-	x	x	Siobhán Hapaska
Metro Pictures New York	USA	Closed	- -	- -	x x	Mike Kelley Tony Oursler
Krinzinger	Austria	Active	- - -	x x x	x x x	Peter Kogler Martin Walde Lois Weinberger
Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London	UK	Active	-	x	x	Steve McQueen
Fischer	Germany	Active	-	x	x	Thomas Schütte
Gebauer	Germany	Active	-	x	x	Thomas Schütte
Andrea Rosen New York	USA	Closed	- -	x x	x x	Andrea Zittel Heimo Zobernig

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