

Field Manoeuvres

Bourdieu and the Young British Artists

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This article offers an empirical study of the field of contemporary British art in the 1990s. It considers the nature of this field as an artistic avant-garde and discusses Bourdieu's theory of art production. The Young British Artists are studied through three distinct levels of analyse derived from Bourdieu's methodology and theory of practice. Issues of habitus and field structure are highlighted in order to examine the processes and operations of the artistic avant-garde. The article also briefly addresses the products of this field through issues of style and technique and offers some reflections on this sociological approach to art.

Keywords: field theory; artistic avant-garde; contemporary British art; Bourdieu

British Art and the Avant-Garde

"British art is booming," so declares the art critic Louisa Buck (1998) in her "user's guide to art now" (p. 7) in the late 1990s. It certainly considered itself to be booming in the 1990s. Arguably, half of a century has passed since the last time British art attracted the attention of the international art markets to the same extent. Recognition

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of its significance is evidenced by the media coverage given to the *Sensation* exhibition, which was held at the Royal Academy of Arts (the home of the British art establishment), London, in late 1997. *Sensation* (see Rosenthal, 1997) exhibited work of the leading Young British Artists (yBas): Hirst, Whiteread, Hume, Gormley, Wearing, and 38 others. Its claims to be a movement of international significance further supported by the notoriety and interest it attracted across the world as it toured Berlin, Sydney, and Tokyo. In New York, the mayor threatened financial sanctions if the exhibition took place.

The traditional role of the avant-garde is to challenge established hierarchies and the bourgeois values of the status quo. British contemporary art in the 1990s did just that. Critiques and theorists have discussed extensively the nature of the avant-garde (cf. Williams, 1989). For example, it is now almost a cliché to use the term *avant-garde* to designate the rapid succession of artistic groups or schools in turn of the century Paris—the Impressionists and post-Impressionists, the Nabis, the Fauve, Cubism, Orphism, amongst others. Change in art in some ways necessitates a vanguard movement, which sweeps away the old and ushers in the new. Greenberg, writing in the late 1930s, expressed a view that might be seen to have continued contemporary relevance: that “the most important function of the avant-garde is not to experiment but to keep culture moving in the midst of ideological confusion and violence” (Greenberg, 1939/1986, p. 8). Yet if we analyse a range of leading British art reviews and journals from the 1990s (*Art Review*, *Artists Newsletter*, *Untitled*, *FlashArt*, *Contemporary Visual Culture*, *Modern Painters*, *Art Newspaper* and *Time Out*), we find that the term *avant-garde* rarely occurs. It is as if avant-garde indicates a modernist view of change: collective in character, with artists assumed to be autonomous and able to adopt common subversive strategies to established art practices. Most journals cited above prefer to use in place terms such as *cutting edge* or *edgy* (themselves emotive terms) to denote an innovative but subversive generation, pointing to a postmodernist view of culture: individualistic practice with a view of change as fragmentation and discontinuity.

These perspectives raise questions concerning the relations between tradition, modernism, postmodernism, and the mechanisms of change in artistic movements. Furthermore, there is the issue of the role and status of the avant-garde. Their self-proclaimed *raison d'être* is to be an independent voice and to challenge. However, this mission is not to be confused with heroic altruism. Weiss (1994), for example, argued that artists' self-aware deployment of what we would call avant-garde strategies is merely a deliberate mechanism for establishing public recognition: “The avant-garde is perceived as an on-going publicity stunt, and innovation in pictorial style is a promotional strategy” (Weiss, 1994, p. 90). In other words, although artistic practice may well be overtly aimed at artistic recognition and judgments made by cultural peers, it also has clear economic bases in self-advertisement and marketing.

Bourdieu and Art

Bourdieu's (1965) interest in what might loosely be termed the “social construction of art” goes back to his earliest writings or at least to his study of the social uses of photography. Curiously, however, his subsequent publications on cultural practices concentrated more on the art consumer than the art producer, culminating in his social critique of aesthetics, *La distinction*, in 1979. It was not until 1987 that he turned his attention to an analysis of the social conditions of production of a particular artist:

Manet. Bourdieu's focus on Manet stemmed from his interest in the period in which the artist lived, which saw the establishment of an autonomous art world separate from aristocratic patronage. Bourdieu dedicated the whole 10-session programme of his *leçon* at the *Collège de France*, Paris, in 2000 to this subject, but unfortunately, his major book-length work on Manet remained an unfinished manuscript at the time of his death in January 2002. Nevertheless, it is possible to use Bourdieu's generic theory of practice (which has become highly developed with several applications) to analyse the field of yBas in the 1990s.

The complicity between artistic practice and economic aspiration referred to in the last section fits neatly with Bourdieu's delineation of field positioning, where "social structures and cognitive structures are recursively and structurally linked, and the correspondence that obtains between them provides one of the most solid props of social domination" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 14). Avant-garde groupings occupy a dominated position within the dominating class, and in this sense, their autonomy can only ever be relative. It is the relationship between oppositional (both within and without) attitudes of a generation of artists and their artistic and social positioning that gives rise to the structures of the field. Change in attitude, change in artistic practice, and the consequent change in positioning and field structuring are all mutually constituting phenomena, coincidental with the struggles for position within any specific field. The structure of the artistic field and the way it changes is graphically illustrated by Bourdieu (1996) in *The Rules of Art*, where he sets out the "temporality of the field of artistic production" (p. 159). His subject here is the literary field. Figure 1 is an adaptation of this representation for fine art and illustrated with specific examples from successive generations of painters.

Modern Painters is an established British review journal, which often favours a modernist and progressive view of artistic development. A summary sheet from the journal (November 1999) lists key artists and authors featured in back copies over the previous 10 years. An analysis of this data for the 1990s shows the artists falling into successive generations:

Tradition: Poussin, Donatello, Michaelangelo, Giotto, Frans Hal, Velazquez, Titian, Vermeer, Tiepolo, Gericault, and Goya.

European avant-garde: Monet, Van Gogh, Guaguin, Bonnard, Cezanne, Picasso, Braque, Morandi, Matisse, Mondrian, Brancusi, Derian, Masson, Duchamp, Magritte, and Chagall.

American avant-garde: Hooper, Pollock, Rothko, Rauschenberg, Jasper John, Twombly, Motherwell, Stella, De Kooning, Ellsworth Kelly, Jeff Koons, and Basquiat.

British art: Sickert, Henry Tonks, Epstein, Stanley Spencer, John Piper, Barabara Hepworth, Victor Passmore, Henry Moore, Elizabeth Frink, Lucien Freud, Carel Weight, Eduardo Paolozzi, Howard Hogkins, David Hockney, Prunella Clough, Patrick Heron, Julian Schnabel, Tony Cragg, Gilbert and George, Anish Kapoor, Damian Hirst, Ron Muek, and Richard Billington.

Figure 1 expresses this information in terms of a series of artistic generations. European avant-garde of the late 19th to early 20th century defined themselves in oppositional relation to traditional painting practices. American avant-garde came to the fore after the Second World War with the rise of abstract expressionism, minimalism, and so forth. British art in the 1990s claimed to be at the forefront of artistic developments, superseding earlier American innovative practice, although some artists are more closely related to the modernist practices on the European continent. These four

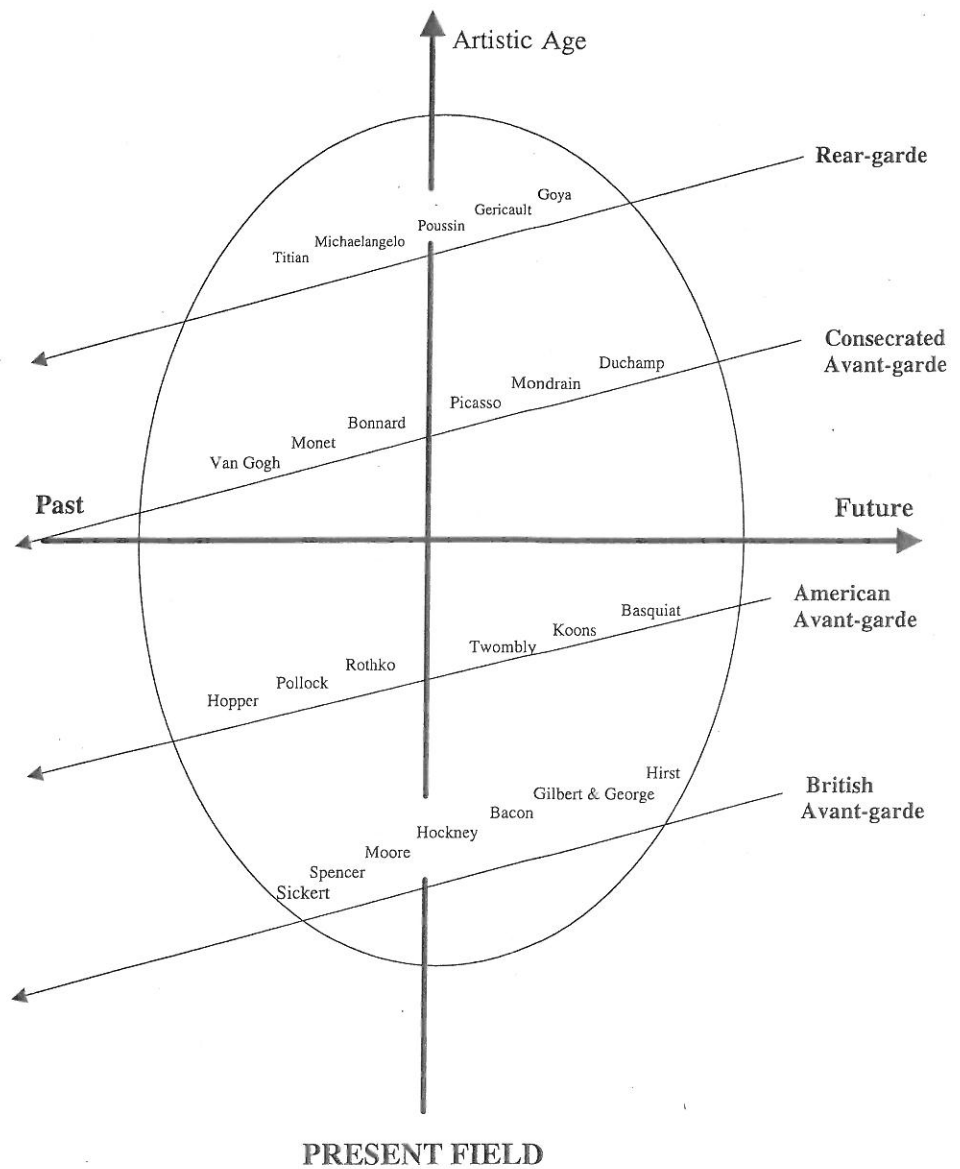


Figure 1. The Present Field of Artistic Production

groups of artists could, of course, be subdivided into more tightly defined groups in terms of time-specific practices. For example, Edward Hopper sits uncomfortably in the same artistic generations as Pollack, Rothko, and Rauschenberg, nor do the latter share artistic practice with Jeff Koons or Basquiat. In other words, the time scale used here for each generation is a broad one. Nevertheless, Figure 1 does draw attention to significant characteristics of artistic generations. First, it shows that artists and artistic generations define themselves in terms of what Bourdieu called a *prise de distance* between each other. Second, artistic movements do have boundaries, and these may be hard or softly defined. Third, an individual artist or grouping is rarely recognised as "of note" without legitimisation within the field. In other words, artistic consecration

can only be bestowed with the mobilisation of an entire network of artists, critics, curators, dealers, and gallery owners. As Bourdieu (1996) wrote,

To impose a new producer, a new product and a new system of taste on the market at a given moment means to relegate to the past a whole set of producers, products and systems of taste, all hierarchized in relation to their degree of legitimacy. (p. 160)

Furthermore, Figure 1 draws attention to at least five dimensions of time, or temporality: first, real physical time—future, present, and past; second, socially defined time, including months, weeks, years, and epochs; third, an individual artist's lifetime, in that they are born, grow up, age, and die in time; fourth, the period a particular artistic generation lasts; and fifth, the time an individual artist remains recognised within a particular artistic generation. Each of these is defined in relation to each other. There are fields within fields and individuals within these fields within fields. The diagram offers a static presentation of a dynamic process. An individual artist ages in physical and social time, but his or her passage through the field of his or her generation may be fast or slow according to the degree of recognised legitimacy bestowed on him or her. And his or her generation itself may establish a consecrated position, or simply pass out of the current field, which contains the rear-guard tradition as well as successive generations of avant-garde defined in opposition to it and each other.

This discussion begins to present Bourdieu's theory when applied to the field of art. Clearly, the illustration uses a broad brush and is pitched at a large international level. However, this type of diagram offers an analytic tool, which could certainly take any one local context and identify generations as rearguard, consecrated avant-garde and potential future avant-garde. In the rest of the article, an empirical case is offered in more detail. It focuses exclusively on the example of the yBas of the 1990s. The research represents the sort of methodological experiment Bourdieu advocated on various occasions. It applies his field theory to artistic fields and to a particular context and illustrates further the dynamic of artistic practice.

Methodological Considerations

Bourdieu always took theory and practice to be two sides of the same coin. Often, therefore, his methodological procedures and tools of analysis are buried amongst his findings and discussion. However, there are explicit methodological statements, most notably Bourdieu (1977, 1968, 1990, 2001) and Bourdieu (1989, 1992). We must take his basic analytical instruments—habitus, field, capital, legitimacy, structure, and so forth—to be axiomatic to the present discussion. There is not space in such a brief article to go into detail of these terms. However, I would add the following preliminary remarks.

The above begins to set out how we might regard the field of artistic production. In what follows, we shall see the part habitus, both individual and group, plays in relation to the field. The crux of any individual's position (and his or her subsequent choices about position taking) within a particular field is the quantity and form of any capital (social, economic, and cultural) accrued by that individual. All capital is symbolic, although, clearly, its forms operate in different ways. Thus, for example, economic capital is symbolically powerful to hold in that it implies purchasing power in a direct, immediate, and explicit sense, whereas cultural and social capital have to op-

Rear-garde

Consecrated
Avant-garde

Future
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erate through legitimated valuing systems. Because all capital is symbolic, its action within any particular field is dependent on the participants' understanding of the social, economic, and cultural parameters of that field. Bourdieu commented on how to understand these field parameters:

There is thus a sort of hermeneutic circle: in order to construct the field, one must identify forms of specific capital that operate within it, and to construct the forms of specific capital one must know the specific logic of the field. There is an endless to and fro movement in the research process. (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 108)

The "logic of the field" is the subject of this article. However, we wish to draw attention to two further methodological aspects of the present study.

First, a methodology of three stages. When asked by Wacquant to give his approach to analysing a field, Bourdieu (1992) referred to "three necessary and internally connected steps" (p. 104):

[First,] one must analyse the position of the field vis-à-vis the field of power.

[Second,] one must map out the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents of institutions who compete for the legitimate form of specific authority of which the field is a site.

[Third,] one must analyse the habitus of agents, the different systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalising a determinate type of social and economic conditions, and which find a definite trajectory within the field under consideration a more or less favourable opportunity to become actualised. (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 104)

This study is presented in terms of three distinct levels in order to focus on operations across the field and within it. The levels range from the formal sociopolitical relations in society to field structure and individual habitus.

The second methodological aspect concerns insider accounts. What matters in establishing the structure of any geographical or temporal field and an artist's position within it is not how, with hindsight, we make objective judgments to establish relative values for social, cultural, and economic capital but what functional value each configuration of capital has contemporaneously within the practical logic of the field. Genet Delacroix (1986) used data about particular French artists to illustrate or test some general classifications of types of 19th-century art. She insisted on using only historically contemporary insider accounts, such as reviews, letters, and diaries. As artefacts produced within the field, they contain structural homologies inherent in it. By using them, it is possible to uncover elements of the field structure: the configurations of capital, relations, and its logic as referred to above. Similarly, in collecting data for the present study, a range of contemporary insider accounts was used: reviews, magazines (*Flashart*, *Art Review*, *Modern Painters*), collections of commentaries (e.g., Buck, 1998; Kent, 1994). None of these offer data that is objective; rather, they contain commentary where aesthetic judgements are made. However, it is the writers' very subjectivity that is useful for this study, because it reflects their own artistic habitus gained as active (themselves cutting-edge) participant observers in the field. Every account contains within it the perceived sociocultural structures and their valuing bases in the field of contemporary art in Britain. They represent both a position taking within the field and a personal construction of the relative positions of others within the same field.

Level 1: The Field of British Art Within the Field of Power

Figure 2 is based on insider accounts referred to above. It demonstrates the way that the field of contemporary art connects with other media fields and, ultimately, the field of politics and audiences for all of these. It is indicative of this level of analysis.

Bourdieu (1996) defined the field of power as "the set of relations of force between agents or institutions having in common the possession of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields (notably economic or cultural)" (p. 25). Any cultural field occupies a dominated position within the field of power because, despite the ambiguity of their relationship to the bourgeois, ultimately cultural producers are dependent on their patrons, be they wealthy art buyers or fine art institutions.

Furthermore, Bourdieu (1996) wrote,

The relationship of homology established between the field of cultural production and the field of power (or the social field in its entirety) means that works which are produced with reference to purely "internal" ends are always predisposed to fulfil external functions as an added bonus. (p. 166)

We can see this dual function in practice. A commentator such as Buck writes of artists' shared "desire to use whatever means are at their disposal . . . to make work that speaks of what it is to be human and live in this world" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 7). Such ends are internal to the art world and the functioning of the field of artistic production. Simultaneously, however, these internal ends have external consequences. For example, the international lawyer Stuart Evans is identified by Buck as an important art patron. He buys work by Matt Collishaw and Rachel Whiteread to enliven his company's headquarters. The art works therefore fulfill an external function of art within the social field: to support a corporate image and to position the company in a more general field of power. The dynamic nature of these field interactions is further demonstrated when Stuart Evans buys art from Tracey Emin. She then uses him as lawyer for property leasing and donates further work to the firm as payment—a mutual exchange of cultural and economic capital and an instance of structured structuring within both fields. Those within a field need to establish hierarchies of classification. In this case, it is possible to see how the valorisation of economic capital and cultural capital are inextricably intertwined. Along the way, there are appeals to art for art sake as a legitimisation of process, co-existing with a maximisation of exposure to other fields in order to accrue forms of capital.

Bourdieu (1996) further wrote,

It is a very general property of fields that the competition for what is at stake conceals the collusion regarding the very principles of the game. The struggle for the monopoly of legitimacy helps to reinforce the legitimacy in the name of which it is waged. (p. 167)

For example, the leading yBa Damien Hirst overtly challenges the hegemony of orthodox artistic hierarchies—"when he mixes up disparate elements from TV series, children toys . . . with such art historical influences . . . as the pristine Minimalism of Donald Judd" (Buck, 1998, p. 47). However, the result is that his own practice is further legitimated by assimilation, and henceforth, he joins the fine art hierarchy that he appears to challenge. Many contemporary artists challenge fine art practices with their hybridisation of traditional forms, by their foregrounding of commodification and

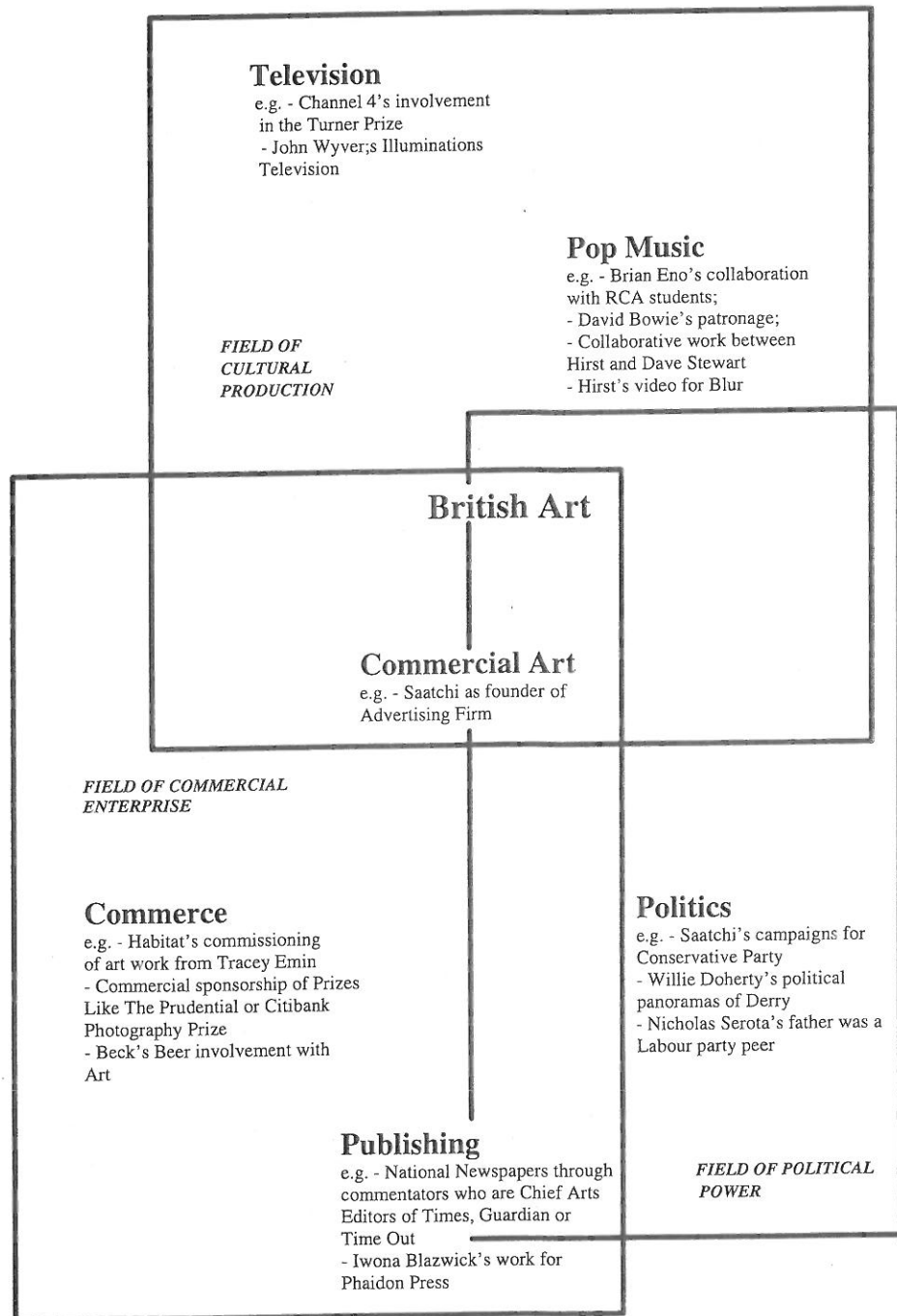


Figure 2. The Fields of Culture, Commerce, and Politics

popular culture, and by their oppositional stance to bourgeois values in prioritising novelty, shock, and taboo breaking. However, they still hold a dominated positioning in their markets and audiences, which is itself homologous to that of fine art practices and positioning in the past. These struggles between field participants for stylistic

domination of the field disguise, therefore, their accumulation of economic and cultural capital. In the longer term, although the same struggles may well result in oppositional cultural producers altering the structures of their own field of production and of their relations to the established field of power, some successful avant-garde artists will probably become establishment figures—and certainly rich.

Other factors in positioning the field of art within the field of power include the following:

- Wide circulation of products from the various fields as fashion objects or popular ideas; for example, Monet's *Waterlilies* was used as a design for Royal Academy carrier bags. Hirst's *Shark* and Emin's *Bed* are used in a range of pop art and culture.
- Connections with party politics, for example, in the connections to the political establishment of key players such as Saatchi (gallery owner and principal purchaser) and Serota (Director of the Tate).
- Political and social position taking associated with key individual field participants, for example, the photographer Willie Doherty's views on Northern Ireland or art critic Sarah Kent's changing relationship to feminism.
- Commercial partnerships, for example, the association between publicity for Beck's Beer and contemporary art or Habitat commissioning work from artists.
- Connections with the fields of publishing and pop music, for example, art editors for major newspapers, and collaborations between artists and musicians such as David Bowie and Brian Eno.

The key factors here are coverage in the popular media, rather than the traditional elite appeal of fine art: personal politics rather than national politics and individual commercial enterprise rather than the stereotypical view of an unrecognised artist struggling in poverty. Such an analysis also suggests that a historic reading of the coupling between a field within the field of power is necessary to show how contemporary imperatives lead to both conflict and collaborations. For example, for a time in the 1990s, both young artists and the incoming New Labour government in Britain associated themselves with the Cool Britannia sobriquet and then quickly dropped it (see Cohen, 1999; and Smith, 1998). It also underlines that the autonomy of the field can only ever be relative.

Level 2: The Field of Contemporary British Art

The next level of analysis looks at a mapping of the field of contemporary British art itself. Such a map is to show the structural connections between those involved, for example, artists, critics, teachers, curators, museums and institutions of art, gallery owners, and buyers. Such relations therefore occur at the personal and institutional level and the formal and informal. The medium for these relations can be understood in terms of economic, cultural, and social capital.

Rather than offering a depersonalised map of the field, Figure 3 uses the artist Damien Hirst as an anchor. Hirst is described by Buck (1998) as an artist with "ubiquitous star status" (p. 1999) and has been seen very much as leader of the pack of the yBas. Figure 3 starts with Hirst and moves out to show his connections with other active participants in the field. By doing so, it demonstrates the interrelations referred to in the last paragraph.

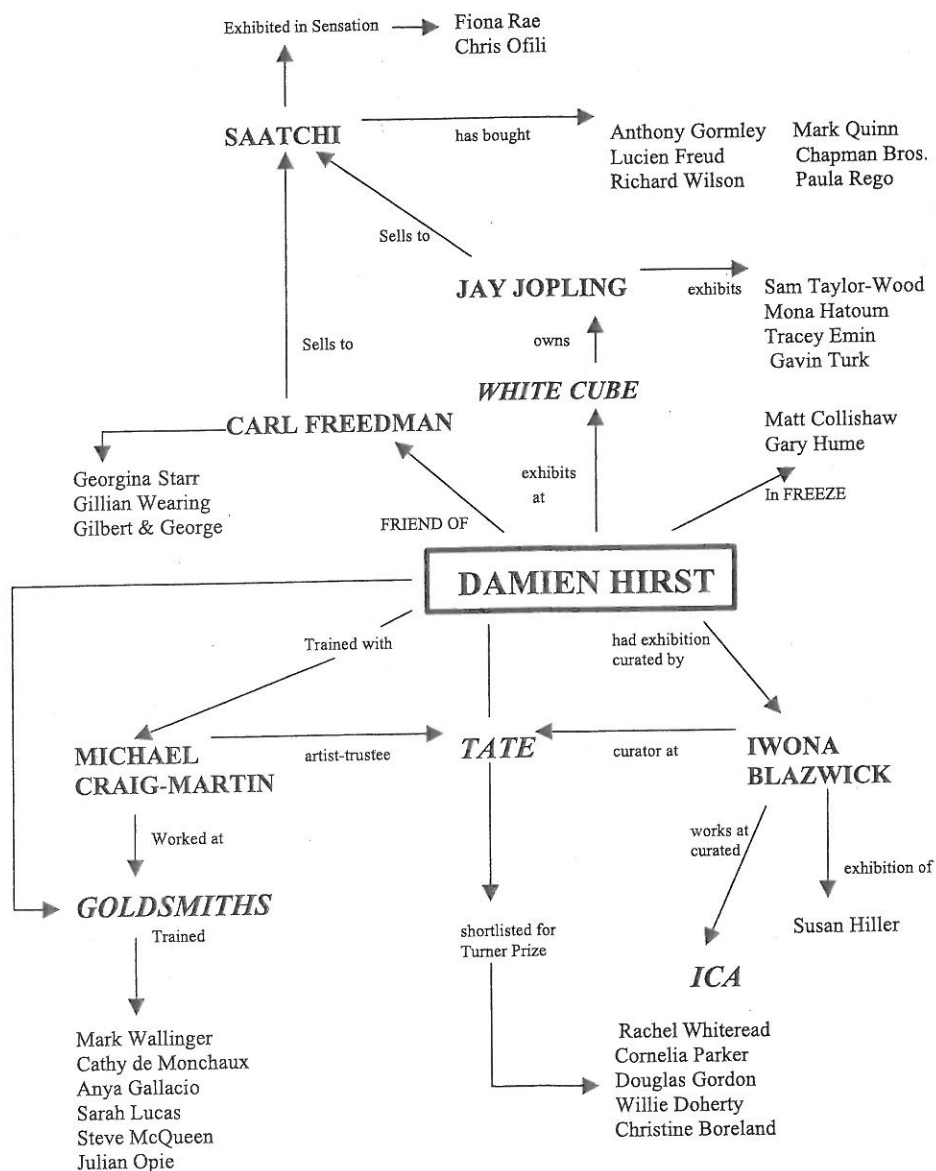


Figure 3. Damien Hirst Within the Field of Contemporary British Art

One can conclude that Damien Hirst is well placed within the field. He has connections to three key institutions: Goldsmiths, the Tate, and the Saatchi Gallery. Goldsmiths is a leading art school in London. Hirst trained here under the mentorship of the influential teacher Michael Craig-Martin. His relations with Goldsmiths, with other Goldsmiths students (the *Freeze* exhibition), with Carl Freedman (the *Modern Medicine* exhibition), and with Jay Jopling (owner of the White Cube gallery and fund-raiser for Hirst) are important for his subsequent positioning in the field, as is his success for the positioning of these individuals—a mutually beneficial and self-constituting relation. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, success begets success, and aspiring artists might well aim to establish similar field networks. Where they succeed, cultural

consecration is conferred on them. To return to Buck's (1998) commentary, more than 80% of the artists she listed as rising stars are associated with the same key institutions and individuals as Hirst. At this point, it is worth emphasising how these institutional links are actually expressed at the level of individual or personal connection. Bourdieu wrote of the effect of social capital as an enhancer (see Accardo & Corcuff, 1986, p. 94). Social capital lubricates the process and enables legitimisation.

The habitus of those involved is also an extremely important element in social capital and in the institutional power they yield. Let us take the three key individuals associated with Hirst: Iwona Blazwick, Michael Craig-Martin, and Jay Joplin.

Iwona Blazwick curated Hirst's first solo exhibition. She exemplifies habitus that is particularly strong in terms of institutional cultural capital, with connections to The Institute of Contemporary Art, Phaidon Press, the National Trust, the Henry Moore Sculpture Trust, Tate Gallery Liverpool, and most recently, Tate Gallery Modern.

Michael Craig-Martin demonstrates an equally strong pattern of capital, but this time mostly derived from cultural capital gained by association with educational institutions of art. He is a professor in art at Goldsmiths but also taught at Canterbury and Bath. Such experience not only provides institutional consecration but places him in a powerful position to offer institutional consecration to others. His own education at Yale offers further educationally based cultural capital—from the institution itself but also from more content-specific artistic capital. He was taught by the American avant-gardist Frank Stella, amongst others, and had experience of teaching based on Bauhaus principles. His own previously successful experience as a conceptual artist bestows cultural capital on him, as has his subsequent involvement as a Tate artist-trustee.

Jay Jopling has accrued a very differently constituted habitus. He was educated at the English public school—Eton—before going on to graduate in art history from an establishment university. This background indicates a high level of social capital arising from his social origins. Bourdieu referred to this type of capital as “embodied” in the personality and character of an individual. This image of a well-connected young man is further evidenced by his active involvement with Band Aid and Save the Children in 1986. Jopling also visited New York in the 1980s, making contact with key artists such as Julian Schnabel and Jean-Michel Basquiat. He also established the White Cube gallery, which quickly became a leading site for exhibiting young British art.

The habitus of each member of this trio is essentially distinct, but taken together, they offer a powerful configuration of social, cultural, and economic capital that could be used on behalf of Hirst to accelerate his trajectory through the field. In other words, this trio of artistic field players offered Hirst a “royal flush” in terms of structural positioning—a sound choice of collaborators on Hirst's part, with capital he could assimilate and that could be used to achieve successively more powerful field positions.

Level 3: Artists' Habitus

Clearly, fields change, and with them, individuals activate configurations of capital within them. The last section showed how vastly different capital backgrounds can come together to establish a new legitimate configuration, thus establishing a new form according to an old process. The section also illustrated the effect of key players' habitus in a field. In this section, how artists' habitus maps onto field configurations identified in the last section is examined.

Mark Quinn
Chapman Bros.
Paula Rego

Taylor-Wood
a Hatoum
ey Emin
in Turk

Collishaw
Hume

BEZE

NA
TWICK

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Returning to the review by Buck (1998), she categorised more than 100 artists under three rubrics: presiding forces, current contenders, and rising stars. This categorisation is clearly an individual's judgement, but as discussed above, such an insider account can be seen as a personal expression (*habitus*) of a collective state (*field*). It can therefore be considered more than subjective and idiosyncratic, especially if analysis of it yields objective patterns in configurations of *habitus* (structural homologues). Table 1 offers an analysis of the artists listed under each heading in terms of their backgrounds and scope of activity.

Basic signifiers of *habitus* are taken to be age, geographical, social origins, artistic education, and commercial connections. What are the patterns of *habitus* according to successive generations of artists?

AGE

The rear-garde grouping, presiding forces, contains artists, all older than 50. In 1997, all the other artists were in their 30s.

ORIGINS AND CENTRE OF ACTIVITY

The group as a whole is predominantly English, White, and London based but, as the artists' age decreases, there is a strong trend towards centralisation in London. Presiding forces artists live mainly in London but have varied international origins. Current contenders are largely British born and living in London, whilst over half of rising stars are born in or around London and continue to live in London. Almost all of this youngest group live in London.

GENDER AND ETHNIC ORIGINS

There has been a steady, if somewhat unspectacular, increase in the participation of women across the groups. Ethnic minority groups are dramatically under-represented in all groupings—10% at most.

EDUCATION

Patterns of educational cultural capital vary little with age. Over time, a small increase to the already high proportion of art school-trained artists has occurred. Training in art has continued to be almost exclusively London based. Variations are on individual basis rather than overall pattern. Within the presiding forces, mavericks exist; for example, Francis Bacon had no formal art school training, whilst Susan Hillier trained abroad, initially as an anthropologist. In the other two groupings, rising stars and current contenders, there is a provincial subpattern of education, with a small minority of successful artists training in Ireland, Scotland, or Wales, for example, Willie Doherty, Douglas Gordon, Christine Borland, and Melanie Counsell.

ART SCHOOLS

The SLADE (School of Art in London) recruited the most stable proportion of artists. St Martins (again, London based) recruited 30% of presiding forces but none of the current contenders. Comparisons are difficult here, since St Martins, Chelsea, and Camberwell amalgamated in 1986, but 30% of the rising stars trained within this

Table 1. Generations of Avant-gardes
in Contemporary British Art (Buck 1997)

	Presiding Forces	Current Contender	Rising Stars
Age	All of the presiding forces artists were over 50	The current contenders' average age is 39, but the youngest was 31	The rising stars are generally younger (average age of 33 in 1997); the oldest rising star was 39
Origins	90% live in Britain; 80% in London	All live in Great Britain; 80% live in London	Almost 95% live in London; one in Glasgow
Gender/ethnicity	70% were not born in England: 50% abroad	Approximately 70% were born in England just over 10% were born abroad	All were born in Britain: one in Scotland
Education	30% are female	40% are female; one with Arabic roots	46% are female; 10% Black and male
Art schools	80% are art school trained. 30% at St Martins; 20% each at the Slade and Royal College of Arts; 10% at Goldsmiths	All are art school trained: almost 90% in London: more than 50% at Goldsmiths, 20% at the Slade; only one, the oldest artist in this group, at the RCA and none at St Martins	All are art school trained: almost 90% in London: 13% at Slade; 33% at Goldsmiths; 40% at RCA and St. Martins 5%
Art galleries	40% are associated with Anthony d'Offray's Gallery: 20% with Marlborough I. and 20% galleries abroad	Over 20% are associated with White Cube Gallery; 20% with Matt's, only one artist international galleries	20% are associated with White Cube; 20% with Victoria Miro; 13% with Lisson and 13% with Anthony Reynolds
Artistic output	50% work in more than one artistic medium, 30% are painters	Over half of this group uses mixed or hybridised media; 13% are painters and about the same proportion work mainly with film or photography	Almost 90% of artists use some form of mixed media; about 10% are painters; about 30% use film or photographic techniques

new grouping. The Royal College of Arts in London trained few of the presiding forces or current contenders but offered postgraduate training to 40% of the rising stars. Goldsmiths trained more than 50% of the current contenders and 30% of rising stars. This suggests that in the late 20th century, Goldsmiths may have been losing its field position as the incubator of the avant-garde.

Still, a field contender who is White; in his or her 30s; art school trained, preferably at Goldsmiths College; and who is London based is well positioned in the field and is likely to be successful.

Artworks

Bourdieu (1982) wrote of an "ontologic complicity" (p. 47) between habitus and field, and the above analysis briefly shows how this might be so for an art field. It demonstrates how field patterns and habitus configurations mutually collude to sustain processes of capital accumulation for all concerned and how symbolic capital can have very real economic consequences.

In *La distinction*, Bourdieu made what he called a "deliberate refusal" to appeal to the tradition of aesthetics. However, having offered a social analysis of aesthetics, he wrote, "We must now allow the return of the repressed [aesthetics], in order to prevent the absence of direct confrontation from allowing the two discourse to coexist peacefully as parallel alternative" (p. 486). Bourdieu posited a double structure between the social and the aesthetic. Here, it would be possible to follow up with an analysis, which shows how these habitus and field structures are identifiable in the product of art—in other words, the artists' work itself (see Grenfell, 2001).

If we consider the yBas of the 1990s, we recognise an avant-garde, to a lesser of greater extent. It is a highly structured and hierarchical group, with its own cutting edge. We can identify this edge by taking all artists covered in this discussion and analysing them in terms of three principal factors of prestige or distinction: First, those artists whose work has been bought by Saatchi, the leading London-based buyer of the yBas; second, those artists who had won the Turner Prize (the most prestigious consecration of modern art in England); and third, those artists who feature in comprehensive reviews such as Buck's. In fact, only four artists appear in this group: Gillian Wearing, Damien Hirst, Chris Offili, and Rachel Whiteread. What is their approach to artwork? All of them use film, photography, painting, and sculpture in their art. Where paintings are produced, they might include collage, popular icons, plastic, pins, and natural substances. Art objects are not necessarily crafted by the artists themselves, so that issues of uniqueness of artwork and authorship are blurred (e.g., Hirst). Whiteread literally turns inside-out one of sculpture's fundamental assumptions about the relationship between surface and volume. Wearing uses video and photographs in a format derived from documentaries but blurs distinctions between reality and fiction, the public and private, and voyeurism and collaboration. These artists share characteristics of postmodern practice: appropriation, site specificity, impermanence, accumulation, and hybridisation. They seek to subvert fine art characterisations in terms of media and categorisations. At the same time, we can note that they all conform to the habitus background discussed above: All were born within the same 5-year period, all trained in London (two at Goldsmiths), and all are London based. Moreover, they all connect closely with the structures of the field of contemporary art.

Conclusion

In the preface to *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu (1996) anticipated the cries of protest if the sociologist "puts the love of art under the scalpel" (p. xvi) of a social deconstruction of aesthetic sensation. He justifies doing so for a variety of reasons. First, it attempts to "construct systems of intelligible relations capable of making sense of sentient data" (p. xvi) and, in so doing, offers the possibility of escaping the rule of the so-

cial construction of pure sensation. Such an understanding recreates the social space, which gave rise to it, identification with the characters active in it, and the necessity of what they did according to the sociohistorical logic of the field. To this extent, the approach enhances an appreciation of the *raison d'être* of artistic experience and pleasure, which might "seem to be more reassuring, more humane, than belief in the miraculous virtues of pure interest in pure form" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 188).

In one sense, what we see in the field of art production might be considered to be a fairly cynical manipulation of social means for personal gain. It certainly raises questions about the nature of art and creative practice. For example, in the terms of this analysis, we might conclude that radical art can only occur outside of the field. But to note the field manoeuvres of the contemporary is to offer no judgement. There is little point in asserting a sociological deconstruction in place of an aesthetic construction. Rather, it is to approach a reflexive understanding of what Bourdieu concluded to be the "expressive impulse" in "trans-historic fields" and of the necessity of human creativity immanent in them.

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