

### **The artist and the art fair: Changes in Agency?**

Art fairs were established as a sales platform between sellers and buyers of works of art, in most cases between galleries and collectors. Frieze Art Fair, established in London in 2003, tried to actively reposition the meaning of the art fair, creating in the organisers' own words, "The Fair with a Difference". Described by Barragan<sup>1</sup> as the birth of the "Curated Art Fair", Frieze Art Fair also brought the artist - the producer of art - into the realm of the art fair. Through the non-commercial Frieze Projects and Talks, but also through artist passes, the encouragement of site specific and solo-presentations which required the presence of artists and artist focused dinners and parties. The artist took centre stage, it could be argued. This focus on the artist as producer has had implications for the whole programming of the art fair, and the artists brought with them a new group of people who previously had not engaged with the art fair in depth: critics and curators.

This paper will trace the measurements Frieze undertook in order to establish the artist, who traditionally did not (want to) engage with art fairs. Secondly, it will investigate the implications of this shift in regards to the arts ecology. Did the inclusion of artists enhance or compromise the agency of artists in the commercial realm? Did it expand the role of the art fair beyond this realm and increase its criticality? How has Frieze as the first curated fair changed the landscape of art fairs? And where do we stand today? This talk is part of an ongoing research project on the role of the artist in the art market based on archival research of primary documents (related to Frieze), Interviews with artists and curators and relevant secondary materials.

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<sup>1</sup> Barragan, P, 'The Art Fair Age', Charta, 2008