Negotiating Values in the Creative Industries

Fairs, Festivals and Competitive Events

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1 A Salon’s life: field-configuring event, power and contestation in a creative field

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Research on field-configuring events (FCEs) is still at an early stage, but existing research suggests that such events as art fairs and biennales, film and music festivals are especially important within creative fields (e.g., Anand and Jones, 2008; Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006; Tang, Chapter 3). This might relate to the regular need to evaluate what should be considered as art, an uncertain and temporary notion, the shared understanding of which is the very basis of any ‘artworld’ (Danto, 1964). Hence, the stakes for participants are high. Galleries, for instance, struggle to obtain a booth at the main art fairs where millions of dollars worth of transactions are made (Thornton, 2008), and art fairs and biennales have risen to such a central position in the art market that they are now an industry in themselves – as the chapters by Don Thompson (Chapter 2) and Jeannine Tang (Chapter 3) in this volume show.

While FCEs are mostly considered as co-ordination mechanisms in the existing literature (Lampel and Meyer, 2008), research also suggests that in creative fields they operate as important mechanisms whereby the dominant group in the field is allowed to wield symbolic power (Anand and Watson, 2004). As such, a central FCE is a typical feature of a centralized field ruled by a dominant group. Referring to Appadurai’s notion of a ‘tournament of value’ (Appadurai, 1986), N. Anand and his co-authors Mary Watson (2004) and Brittany Jones (2008) show that the FCE operates as a ‘tournament of value’ where the dominant view of value is enforced and that of creativity promoted as it rejects competing approaches (Peterson and Anand, 2004). Yet, Brian Moeran and Jesper Strandgaard Petersen’s notion of a ‘tournament of values’ outlined in the introduction, and developed further by Moeran in his chapter on book fairs (Chapter 5), opens up an alternative perspective to this approach by suggesting that FCEs might be events where dominant values are contested instead of being reinforced. Such a situation can be found in many FCEs where intense discussions, debates
and disagreements take place around what should, and what should not, be considered as ‘worthy’, and ‘unworthy’, art, with or without ‘value’.

Our intention in this paper is to explore the circumstances under which FCEs are ‘tournaments of value’ in the singular, and so contribute to the centralization of power within a field, and when they are ‘tournaments of values’ in the plural, where contestation takes place. To do so, we look at the French Salon de Peinture, which was founded in 1663, and became the dominant FCE in the field of fine arts from the 1740s and remained so until the end of the nineteenth century. Crow (2000: 1) has indicated that ‘after 1737... [the Salon’s] status was never in question, and its effects on the artistic life of Paris were immediate and dramatic’. The Salon was the place where artists wanted to have their works of art displayed and where artistic reputations were made and broken. In this respect, the Salon can be considered as the prototype of an FCE in a creative field in the modern age. Within the period studied, we distinguish two sub-periods: the first from 1737 to 1830, when what went on in the Salon was unchallenged; and the second from 1830 to 1881, when certain voices started to criticize the Salon’s system of jurying, and artists themselves developed alternative venues in which to exhibit. During these two periods, we focus on the power plays between the dominant coalition in the Salon and other members in the field around it.

This case study suggests that the circumstances under which an FCE is a tournament of value or of values depend upon the kinds of power relations at play between the FCE’s gatekeepers and the other members of the field. When competing views exist in the field, they are represented in an FCE, so that it is difficult for gatekeepers to impose a unique sense of worth, unless they are able to secure the support of a critical mass of field members. The case study also suggests that some level of contestation, and possibly scandal, within an FCE might be a useful means of ensuring that it remains prominent in the field. If gatekeepers impose a unique sense of worth or value in the field through an FCE, they will inevitably overlook innovation, contribute to the emergence of competing FCEs, and reduce the attractiveness of their own FCE. We suggest some extensions to these findings by drawing from examples in the contemporary art and film festival fields.

In the following section we will review existing theoretical insights into power and contestation in FCEs, before introducing the empirical setting and presenting the method that we have chosen to follow. We
will then develop an analysis of the Salon and the creative field of contemporary art in France from 1737 to 1881, focusing on power and contestation within the field during this period. In the final section, we will discuss our insights and the limitations of our chapter, together with the potential that we envisage for further research.

**Power and contestation over values in creative FCEs**

FCEs are temporary social organizations where ‘people from diverse social organizations assemble temporarily, with the conscious, collective intent to construct an organizational field’ (Meyer et al., 2005: 467) and ‘to promote ideas about the way work in the field ought to be done’ (Oliver and Montgomery, 2008: 1,048). Lampel and Meyer (2008) distinguish two kinds of FCE. The first consists of distinct, single FCEs – such as standard setting conferences – during which specific technical features are discussed and possibly agreed upon (e.g., Garud, 2008); the second consists of repetitive or periodical FCEs, such as award ceremonies (e.g., Anand and Watson, 2004) or art fairs, at which the field is periodically reassessed by participant members.

Studies of creative fields have, like our own, tended to concentrate in particular on the latter (e.g., Anand and Jones, 2008). In fact, they insist that these periodical events not only set standards and define categories, but also contribute to the ongoing reproduction and reassessment of creative activities, and what should be valued as art works. Periodical FCEs in creative fields have been considered as places and moments where those in control of the FCE reproduce and reactivate the dominating structure of the field. Referring to Lukes (1974), Anand and Watson (2004) apply the phrase ‘agnostic thesis’ to these FCEs, in that rituals not only help groups within a social system to exert control through processes of mystification, but also give rise to the taken-for-granted sanctioning of ritually endowed power that comes from patterning and repetition. As such FCEs can operate as rituals of ratification for the existing structure of domination (DiMaggio and Mullen, 2000). One powerful way to do this is through the distribution of symbolic power. FCEs, like award ceremonies, are rituals where the worth of art works is put to the test. To be awarded a prize, or even to be short-listed for one, implies that those in charge of the selection recognize and value the submitted work. As such, these gatekeepers have the power to impose their view on what ‘art’ should be in this field and are allowed
to dispense symbolic power to the winners (Anand and Watson, 2004; Anand and Jones, 2008). It is likely that actors who do not share the aesthetic view (or ‘appreciative value’) of those in charge of the FCE will be rejected and marginalized.

Yet other research on FCEs suggests that contestation can and does take place within an FCE as different actors supporting different views struggle to achieve domination by one means or another (Garud, 2008; Oliver and Montgomery, 2008). Such studies tend to focus not on repetitive events like the ones we have discussed so far, but on one-off FCEs, such as those where a specific standard is being decided for the whole industry (Garud, 2008; Oliver and Montgomery, 2008). However, this dimension of contestation has largely been ignored in the existing research on FCEs in the so-called creative industries. What is important, therefore, is to evaluate the extent to which a periodical FCE either is a mechanism that contributes to the reproduction of domination within a field, or is a place for debate and contradiction. We may also need to evaluate the circumstances in which these two contradictory directions articulate themselves. But to do this we need to consider the organizational fields in which FCEs take place, both as hierarchical structures and as arenas of conflict.

Hierarchy and conflict over values in creative fields

Creative fields are organizational fields in which actors interact around a common purpose related to some kind of creative activity, such as film making, music, book publishing, and so on. However, creative fields cannot be reduced to creative industries, markets or populations, for they include not just the suppliers of creative goods and their buyers, but also all sorts of other kinds of actors – like critics, juries, professional bodies and patrons – who, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of creativity.

Organizational fields are hierarchical ensembles characterized by a structure of power. Dominant actors are able to impose their visions on others in the field, and then structure and eventually stabilize it (DiMaggio, 1983). Professional associations are typically part of the structure of domination (Greenwood et al., 2002), in that they diffuse knowledge and norms in the field and influence other actors. By so doing, they also diffuse a specific view of how activities should be performed, leading to mimetic behaviour. Eventually there emerges a
collective rationality that corresponds to the dominant view of the creative activity concerned (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

One way to enforce this dominant view is through periodical FCEs, which some authors (e.g., Anand and Watson, 2004; Anand and Jones, 2008; see also Moeran, 1993), taking up a felicitous phrase used by the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, call ‘tournaments of value’. Although not concerned with FCEs as such, Appadurai defines tournaments of value as complex periodic events, where actors compete for status, rank, fame or reputation. To develop this notion, he drew on material from the case of the Melanesian Kula where reputation and fame are gained through the giving, receiving and exchange of decorated necklaces and armshells. Just like these Kula exchanges, contemporary ‘tournaments of value’ have an impact beyond the specific place and time in which they occur, since ‘their forms and outcomes are always consequential for the more mundane realities of power and value in ordinary life’ (Appadurai, 1986: 21). During these ‘tournaments of value’, the worth of what field actors do is evaluated on the basis of the overall view of value shared in the field. Some works are rewarded and their creators then gain symbolic power. Film crew members can receive Academy Awards or Oscars (Baumann, 2001), musicians Grammy awards (Anand and Watson, 2004) and writers literary prizes (Anand and Jones, 2008) that are all recognition of the value of their work. As such these periodic rituals are moments where the established order is reenacted and the gatekeepers of a particular FCE are able to impose their view of what is valuable and to hand out rewards to those who comply with it. In this way FCEs like these contribute to a top down structure of the field (Peterson and Anand, 2004) where those who oppose the dominant view are marginalized or excluded (White and White, 1993).

Yet, an organizational field is not just a hierarchical structure where the many comply with an established order imposed by the few. Authors have moved beyond this arguably consensual view of the field, and now also account for it as an arena of strategy and conflict, as well as of negotiation and dialogue (DiMaggio, 1983; Hoffman, 1999). In particular, they show how participants argue about the sense they want to give to their activity, and how best to do so. This seems particularly relevant for creative organizations like fashion houses and film studios where discussions frequently take place about a particular activity and how it should be performed. Indeed, endless debates about creative activities
are endemic to these fields, from the contradiction between the different, and apparently opposing, logics of commerce and aesthetics, on the one hand, to disagreement on fundamental definitions of what constitutes creativity or art, on the other. Differences of opinion about the very nature of aesthetics are also very important. For example, in painting, there is an historical debate between those who are convinced that drawing is more important than colour, and those who support the opposite view. How these different views can be expressed in an FCE where the worth of works is evaluated remains unclear. Yet, in their introduction to this volume, Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen open up a new avenue for research by insisting on the plurality of values in contemporary societies. Accordingly, they suggest that another form of tournament might exist in creative fields: that of a ‘tournament of values’ – that is, a tournament where several competing values are involved and in constant negotiation. The notion of a ‘tournament of values’ is an invitation to us to consider the plurality of values at stake in an FCE. This includes tournaments where opposition to what should be the dominant set of values takes place, and as such maps out an important direction for us to better understand those FCEs where contestation over these dominant values takes place.

Our intention in the remainder of this chapter is to build on the distinction between ‘tournament of value’, on the one hand, and ‘tournament of values’, on the other. Our aim is to explore under which circumstances an FCE in a creative field can be called a ‘tournament of values’, where contestation takes place, and under what other circumstances it is a ‘tournament of value’, where consensus over value is reenacted and domination maintained. In order to focus on circumstances and reduce the risk of other explanations that might relate to the specificities of different FCEs, we here develop a longitudinal study of a single FCE, the annual Salon de Peinture, which was first a ‘tournament of values’ before becoming a ‘tournament of value’.

Empirical setting and method

Our analysis outlines the influence of the Salon de Peinture (the Salon) on power and contestation within the field of French contemporary art from 1737 to 1881. By taking such a long period into consideration, we are able to document different points at which power relations within the field of art came to vary. The decades on which we focus
correspond to a period during which French contemporary art rose to become prominent in Europe. While such prominence cannot be attributed only to the Salon, its importance as an FCE increased accordingly. This may be seen, perhaps, in the fact that during the nineteenth century artists, collectors and patrons would gather from all over Europe, as well as from parts of Asia and North and South America, to join the Salon, which as a result came to be seen as the major event of Parisian artistic life.

To go about this case study, we have used a historiographic method that links longitudinal and qualitative approaches (Ventresca and Mohr, 2002), and which seems particularly well suited to report on the complexity of institutional processes and major transformations taking place within an organizational field. In addition, this method permits an analysis that takes into account the actors in a field over a long time and allows an exploratory process facilitated by a qualitative approach. We have privileged contemporary sources where possible, and have made use of the archival resources of the National Institute of Art History (Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art, INHA) and the French National Library (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, BNF), both located in Paris. We have also collected data from contemporary sources like the notebooks of the Salon, correspondence between art traders and artists and articles written by the critics in specialist publications like L’Artiste, La Chronique des Beaux Arts et de la Curiosité and Le Mercure de France. To validate these archival data, we crosschecked and then enriched our information by drawing on secondary sources which included biographies of painters and art traders (e.g., Assouline, 2002), as well as analyses of artistic movements (e.g., Rewald, 1986), artistic life (e.g., Crow, 2000; Vaisse, 1995; White and White, 1993) and the Salon itself (e.g., Mainardi, 1993).

In our analysis of all these data, we drew on narrative technique as one way to realize a longitudinal analysis (Langley, 1999). Narrative techniques are particularly well suited to ‘organizing data when time plays an important role and where a single case provides rich and varied incidents’ (Chiles et al., 2004: 505). We were thus able to confront the analyses of historians with the other analyses that we came across and thus moved closer to a more meditative view of our historic data, which we then organized into intermediate formats like tables to highlight the most interesting elements. Through this process approach, we were able to observe not only how the context evolved and how certain
tendencies became more marked (Langley, 1999), but also how the positions of members of the field with regard to the Salon evolved. In other words, we engaged in a progressive layering of meaning onto the texts at our disposal in order to produce a theoretical narrative that answered our research question (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003).

**The Salon: 1737 to the 1840s**

An analysis of power relations and contestation at work in the French contemporary art field suggests that we distinguish between two periods. In the first, lasting from 1737 to the 1840s, the main contestations and aesthetic battles taking place at the Salon may be classified as a ‘tournament of values’, in which amateurs, artists and critics disputed and renegotiated the accepted values of the Academy. After this, in the second period, contestation within the Salon seems to have become more difficult and to have moved to other venues, so that during this period the Salon can be viewed as a ‘tournament of value’.

While the Salon was officially founded in 1667 as the place where members of the Academy (*Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture*) could regularly show their work to the public, it actually became a periodical event only in 1737. Prior to this artists worked mainly at the command of their patrons and collectors, but from the fourth decade of the eighteenth century the Salon created a public space in which the greater public outside the art world could gather, look at and comment on contemporary paintings.

The official gatekeeper of the power of the Salon was the Academy, which was founded in 1648 under the protection of the King, with its main purpose being to elevate the fine arts and make them distinct from commercial craftsmanship. Central to this project was the training of artists, and the codification of the existing, mostly empirical, knowledge of painting (Sciulli, 2007). This strategy proved extremely successful. While during previous centuries France had arguably been a peripheral place for art compared with Italy, its importance increased along with the role of the Academy. Central to the codification that it oversaw was the establishment of a hierarchy of ‘genres’ – that is, it created an ideal according to which some styles of paintings were seen to be more valuable than others. This valuation was related to the capacity of a genre to embody the high ideal of art supported by the Academy and the
expectation that painters become ‘artists’ who were not just craftsmen but individuals of ‘genius’ who could demonstrate their culture and imagination. This they were expected to do in particular in historical and religious paintings, which therefore came to be considered as the highest genres. Such paintings were also meant to educate their viewers, both aesthetically and morally. Landscapes and still life, on the other hand, together with paintings that depicted scenes from everyday life were considered to be ‘minor’ because they were mere reproductions of what an artist saw. Related to this hierarchy was also an emphasis on what Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen refer to as ‘technical’ values. Painters were expected to be experts at drawing, in particular with regard to the anatomy and perspective. Drawing was considered to be a ‘proper’ activity for an educated man, while putting colours on a canvas was considered to involve more ‘manual’ work and as a result came to be valued less.

The Academy tried to enforce this hierarchy of genres and expected the Salon to be the place to do so. As the works on show began to be criticized by critics, who were emerging as a specialist group at this time, a commission was created in 1748 to examine all works in order to control their morality and protect the tradition of the ‘great painting’. According to Crow (2000), the main purpose of this commission was to limit access for mediocre works and thus to reduce the possibility for critics to make negative comments about each year’s Salon. This move was not entirely successful. While the creation of this jury led to a restriction in the number of works exhibited, their action did not have the impact intended upon the critics, who became the first source of contestation. As an anonymous critic complained in 1749, the Academy operated as an authority which was:

... wielded in the manner of those conquerors who distribute among their captains the lands which surrender to them, without bothering themselves over whether the people are left with the means to live. As long as this evil persists, one sees only discouragement in the latter and vain glory of the former. Cited in Crow (2000: 126)

This roused the wrath of the first secretary of the Academy, Mr Cochin, who demanded that critics should submit their work to censorship before publication and that it should not be allowed to be anonymous. He also teamed up with the chief of police to seize and destroy the work of all the ‘unofficial critics’ during the 1760s and 1770s.
In spite of all this, the Salon, like other FCEs, was not isolated from all that was going on in society at large – as Lise Skov and Janne Meier make clear in Chapter 11 in this book. It was these debates that influenced the kinds of discussions, as well as the evolution, taking place in the field of art. In this respect, critics were instrumental in linking the aesthetic debates in the field with the larger political and social debates in French society.

The notion of an art critic, and the profession associated with it, first emerged with the Salon (Wrigley, 1993). As the first Salons took place, comments appeared in booklets, journal articles and confidential letters. Unofficial critics became increasingly influential despite efforts to censor them. They supported painters of minor genres such as Vernet, Chardin and Greuze who enjoyed huge success among the bourgeoisie and the greater public, who learned about their works through reproductions. Greuze was the main figure (Crow, 2000), with his celebrated paintings representing moral scenes portraying humble people. Their quality challenged the hierarchy of genres and they were used by critics to diffuse their aesthetic, as well as political, opinions. Diderot, often regarded as the author who established a base line for the style of the Salon critic (Wrigley, 1993), insisted on bringing in moral and political dimensions. Challenging the hierarchy of the genre was one way to challenge the Academy, and beyond that the hereditary class society on which the monarchy was based. The popularity of Greuze’s paintings contrasted with the lack of interest in historical paintings, considered by critics and the public alike to be boring.

What is of interest here is that the work of painters like Greuze came to be accepted at the Salon, which in itself enabled the critics to develop their comments and expect the public to go to these exhibitions, see the paintings on display, and share their views. For its part, the Academy tried to integrate these painters first by accepting their work at the Salon and then by encouraging them to become members of the Academy itself. Greuze, for example, had his first submission selected in 1755 and his work thereafter was never rejected until 1765. Two years later, however, he was told that his paintings would not be accepted for the Salon again until he submitted work to become a member of the Academy.¹

During the following decades, the number of critics increased – as did the divorce of taste between the public and the Academy. Some suggested that the decline of the arts, a recurrent theme, was due to the Academy and its corporatism (Carmontelle, 1779), but the gap was eventually reduced once a new administration of fine arts took over. Reflecting the
values of the Enlightenment, this administration ordered historical paintings displaying a morality closer to that of the bourgeoisie. Eventually a new school emerged in the 1780s – neo-classicism – which was able to obtain the support of the Academy, critics and the general public. While this school ruled the artistic field for a few decades, its domination was challenged in the 1830s – not by critics so much as by artists themselves.

In 1791, during the French Revolution, the Salon jury was suppressed, only for it to be reestablished in 1798 following numerous complaints by both artists and officials. While still dominated by the Academy, the new jury tolerated the exhibition of works that did not slavishly respect the academic tradition and it was at the Salon that the next artistic battle was to be fought: the one over romanticism.

Emerging by the beginning of the 1820s, romanticism opposed the dominant neo-classical orientation of the Academy. The ‘Raft of the Medusa’ (Le radeau de la Méduse) presented at the Salon by Guéricault in 1819, and the ‘Death of Sardanapalus’ (La mort de Sardanapale) exhibited by Delacroix in 1827, provoked an outcry because they emphasized colour over drawing, and used loose brushwork and strong colours or exotic settings. In these paintings, both artists referred to historical painting in ways that were totally inappropriate for the tenets of the Academic style. Guéricault used a large format and heroic style which hitherto had been limited to historical painting that treated contemporary events. For its part, Delacroix’s Sardanapalus had nothing to do with Western history, the traditional setting of historical art works, and did not offer any moral conclusion. In both cases, the paintings were accepted for the Salon, before being attacked by adherents to the academic style, and defended by critics who happened to be prominent romantic authors. The Salon thus became the place where artistic battles were fought. Delacroix, the head of the romantic revolution, had all his submitted paintings accepted by the jury, with a rare exception being the Salon of 1836 where his painting was rejected, creating a scandal. After many years of battle against the neo-classical style, a compromise was finally reached and Delacroix was elected a member of the Academy in 1857 at his seventh attempt.

The second period: the 1840s to 1881

While the number of paintings accepted at the Salon every year increased, so did the rejection rate, which seems to have been around a quarter of all
submitted works in the 1820s (28 per cent in 1833, 26 per cent in 1834), but more than half in the 1840s (57 per cent in 1840, 59 per cent in 1843). At the same time, the academic style became more specific and more popular. Starting in the 1770s, neo-classical painters led by David were able to secure the support of both the Academy and the public, and their influence on the Academy and the jury remained dominant. In the meantime, acceptance of work to be exhibited at the Salon became more and more difficult, in particular for those opposing the academic style. As a result, contestation developed outside the Salon.

A new genre of paintings, realism, emerged in the 1840s as a direct attack on the ‘high’ historical genre acclaimed by the Academy. Realism rejected all idealized forms of painting. Courbet, its main proponent, famously said: ‘Show me an Angel and I’ll paint you one’. Not surprisingly perhaps, his paintings were rejected by the Salon jury several times. Following the rejection of all the paintings he submitted in 1847, he observed:

It is bias on the part of the gentlemen of the jury: They refuse all those who do not belong to their school, except for one or two, against whom they can no longer fight, such as Messrs Delacroix, Decamps, Diaz, but all those who are not as well known by the public are sent away without a word. That does not bother me in the least, from the point of view of their judgment, but to make a name for oneself one must exhibit, and, unfortunately, that is the only exhibition there is. Cited in Galenson and Jensen (2002: 8)

Yet, while Courbet was periodically rejected from the Salon, he was in fact able to keep on exhibiting regularly elsewhere. In 1855, he even set up a pavilion in front of the Salon to show some of his paintings that had been rejected. Eventually, he and the Academy agreed on a truce and he became an accepted and well recognized painter in the 1870s.

Edouard Manet met with the same problems. When he submitted his first works to the Salon in 1859, a member of the Academy, Thomas Couture, wrote: ‘Does anyone paint something so ugly?’ (Blunden and Blunden, 1973). Manet firmly believed that the Salon was the place where innovators had to go in order to challenge the academic order. Yet his submissions were regularly rejected (in 1863, 1866, 1867 and even 1877) and, even when some of his work was passed by the jury, his style was still severely criticized both by the Academy and the critics and their public.
The jury and the Academy did not control just access to the Salon, but they were also in charge of the hanging of works, and thus of how each artist’s work should be distributed in the space available in the galleries – a variation on the kind of ‘situational value’ that we will also see in later chapters by Timothy Havens (Chapter 6) and Brian Moeran (Chapter 5). The Academy’s members in charge of this task made sure that the most interesting paintings – that is, those more likely to question the authority of the jury – would be difficult to see. In this way, together with the jury, they were able to limit access of the public to innovative artists.

In fact, the public and majority of the critics enjoyed the academic style. Indeed, the artists who practised this style had adapted to the need to make their work more interesting and so appeal to the public. Paintings in the academic style offered nicely brushed representations of moral scenes. Artists like Meissonier, Cabanel and Bouguereau who adhered to this style not only received official support and orders from patrons, but also enjoyed popular success.

On the other hand, both the general public and the critics found it hard to understand the work of the innovators. When admitted to the Salon, Courbet’s and Manet’s paintings repeatedly created scandals. In 1865, Manet had a nude painting accepted, ‘Olympia’, where a naked woman was portrayed in realistic style – in sharp contrast to the idealized nudes that were common in academic painting. The scandal surrounding the painting and the reaction of the public were such that the organizers had to remove the painting to a small remote room. The critic Paul de Saint Victor wrote that ‘art sunk so low doesn’t even deserve reproach’ (cited in Hamilton, 1954), while Charles Blanc, who did regular Salon critiques from 1840 to 1880 and was very influential, always supported spiritualism and idealism in art (that is to say, paintings with a moral and some socially contextualized ideas) and opposed materialism (in other words, paintings mostly concerned with the reproduction of reality and art for its own sake). In his view, realists and impressionists were materialists whose work lacked a higher message (Flax, 1998). While there were a few critics who engaged in supporting the realists and impressionists, their audience remained limited.

Collectors further contributed to the enforcement of this domination by refusing to buy works that did not accord with the academic style. Paul Durand-Ruel, a prominent art dealer of the time and one of the few to support the impressionists, wrote in his memoirs:
Prince de Joinville, among others, told me pleasantly that he had been scolded one day by King Louis Philippe for having bought for my father a painting by Marilhat that had just been refused at the Salon. It was, so to speak, a crime in the eyes of many people. Venturi (1939: 150)

With the beginning of the Second Empire in 1852, the administration of the Salon and its jury entered a period of aesthetic conservatism. The Salon was to reflect the style of the Empire and celebrate the status quo. A-E Nieuwerkerke, the Superintendent for Fine Arts, headed the jury of the Salon from 1852 to 1870 and was opposed to innovation. He considered Courbet’s painting style to be not ‘the sort that the government should encourage’ (Roos, 1996: 69). Then in 1872 the system for electing members of the jury changed, so that only those who had received medals and awards were allowed to select who should participate. Not surprisingly, these artists were the most conservative by temperament and had a strong interest in electing juries that would share their views and favour the acceptance of their own work in the Salon, rather than that of innovative artists (Roos, 1996).

Although those artists whose work was rejected regularly signed petitions to protest against the high rejection rate and the lack of openness of the jury, these had little effect upon the jury’s practices. However, some critics supported the innovators. When reviewing the Salon of 1868, Emile Zola (1868), a supporter of Manet and the impressionists, wrote:

The Salon is opening today. I did not step in the exhibition rooms, and I already know what the long queues of paintings hanging on the walls look like. Our artists did not use us to expect any surprise, each year the same mediocrities are there with the same stubbornness.

Yet, the audience for such critics remained very limited and the Salon was extremely popular during this period. Between 200,000 and 450,000 visitors would come to the exhibition every year during the 1860s (Vaisse, 1995) and collectors offered to buy academic paintings for large sums of money.

The situation did not improve at the beginning of the 1870s when the Empire came to an end. Philippe de Chennevières, the new Director of Fine Arts who oversaw the Salon, revered only tradition. He dismissed new tendencies like ‘democratic painting’, which expressed a political tendency that he openly disliked. Commenting on ‘A burial at Ornans’ (Un enterrement à Ornans) by Courbet, one of the artist’s most important (and controversial) paintings, Chennevières wrote:
If democratic painting is to be found in the dirtiest and most common tones modelling the most hideous forms of the ugliest choice, I certainly cannot deny that M. Courbet is a democratic painter. Cited in Lemaire (2004: 196)

Because the selection of works for the Salon was increasingly conservative, it became very difficult for innovative painters to obtain public recognition and access to the art market. One of them was Claude Monet who wrote to one of his sponsors in 1861:

That fatal rejection [from the Salon] has almost taken the bread out of my mouth; in spite of my not at all high prices, dealers and collectors turn their backs on me. Above all, it is saddening to see how little interest there is in a piece of art that has no list price. Rewald (1986: 225)

As they were regularly rejected (Table 1.1), a group of artists close to Manet decided to organize themselves and created an association – eventually becoming known as the ‘impressionists’ – whose purpose was to put on regularly a series of exhibitions parallel to the Salon (Galenson and Jensen, 2002). Those who wanted to take part in this exhibition were not allowed to submit to the Salon. The first exhibition took place in 1874 and was a modest critical success that attracted some attention even though it was a financial failure. Manet himself always refused to exhibit with them, arguing that the battle had to be fought at the Salon. Yet, the impressionists, along with their allies, started to develop an alternative to the Salon.

While sceptical about the sort of art exhibited, critics supported the idea of holding and being able to view regular exhibitions outside the Salon. Increasingly a network of support was built to provide alternatives to the Salon. Art dealers extended their activities, with some trying to offer for sale those art works that had been rejected by the Salon. Paul Durand-Ruel (1831–1922), the ‘art dealer of the impressionists’, is considered by art historians as the symbol of this new type of actor in the art world (Green, 1987; Jensen, 1988; Moulin, 1987; Whiteley, 1979; White and White, 1993). His gallery was active in buying impressionist paintings from the 1870s and became increasingly successful as the monotony of the Salon became obvious to both critics and collectors. The former increasingly felt that academic art lacked some artistic genius, a new David or Ingres, who could give it a new start.

As a result, Monneret (1999) suggests that, during the 1880s, two distinct systems emerged involving two types of artists, reputation
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*Table 1.1 Participations in the Salon and in the impressionists exhibitions (1859–81)*

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*Source: Rewald (1986).*
mechanisms, art dealers and collectors. One type was the traditional Salon system; the other was a new art system organized around art dealers’ galleries, and supported by critics. This alliance gave rise to the ‘dealer-critic system’ (White and White, 1993), and led to the formation of a new market. Within the Salon system, the situation worsened and the tension between the Academy and the newly established French Republic increased. Art dealers and critics, on the other hand, began to develop a sustainable alternative to the Salon with the express intention of promoting innovative painters.

Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter, our initial intention was to highlight circumstances in which an FCE either favours the reproduction of domination or allows contestation within a creative field. A historical analysis of the Salon from 1737 to 1881 allowed us to contrast two main periods in order to address this issue. In the first period, contestation took place within the Salon, making it a ‘tournament of values’, while in the second, the Salon became an event in which domination was reproduced in a ‘tournament of value’, where a consistent set of technical and aesthetic values held sway and other spaces outside the Salon had to be created for contestation to express itself.

This leads us to suggest that circumstances under which FCEs are ‘tournaments of value’ or ‘tournament of values’ relate to power relations and contestation within the field. An FCE can be a ‘tournament of value’ so long as its gatekeepers are willing to enforce a consistent set of valuation principles and receive the support of a critical mass of members of the field. This is what happened at the Salon from the 1840s to 1881, where the Academy and the jury were able to achieve hegemony in the field. Jury, critics, public, the state and collectors shared the same view of what constituted value in art and supported this dominant view. Building such a consensus was made possible by popular artists who were able to meet the expectations of both the Academy and the general public, as well as by critics who spread the view of value promoted by the Academy among the public. When the second condition, the support of a critical mass, and more particularly critical support, are absent, an FCE can become a ‘tournament of values’ so long as the gatekeepers are willing to accept contradictions within it. This is what happened from 1737 to the 1840s, when the dominant view was
opposed by a critical mass of both critics and the public, leading to limitations on the power of the jury. As a result, the interests and values of the public had to be resolved, and the evaluations of both critics and the jury reconciled. In this respect, the Salon became a space of freedom where discussion and aesthetic battles could take place.

Finally, the results of this case study suggest a third point. An FCE can be a ‘tournament of value’ even if it lacks the support of a critical mass of field members. This is arguably what happened from 1881 onward, as the jury kept enforcing a single view of aesthetic value while a critical mass of collectors, critics and eventually officials were looking for more diversity and different forms of appreciation. In this case, the ‘tournament of value’ became increasingly marginalized and arguably was no longer an event that ‘configured the field’ because a critical mass of field members rejected it and walked away. As a result, the Salon did not reflect the field any more. This result suggests that whether an FCE is or is not a ‘tournament of value’ eventually coincides not only with decisions made by that event’s gatekeepers, but also with overall power relations within the field as a whole.

These results highlight the fact that unless there is a high level of consensus in the field over the values held by its members, some level of contestation within an FCE might be necessary in creative fields for it to remain dominant. Contestation within the Salon, for example, reduced the power of the dominant faction, as well as their capacity to control the field. It also allows a debate about values to take place during the FCE concerned. As a tournament of values, a creative FCE like the Salon is a place where participants debate the meanings of those values and possibly go about renegotiating them. This diversity also attracts the attention of the public at large, which can enjoy the debates and occasional scandals that take place within the FCE. When the Salon became too restrictive, it shifted from being a ‘tournament of values’ to become an event where the gatekeepers would celebrate only their power and views, insisting on the number of art works that were exhibited, and seemingly ignoring the critics who insisted that these numerous works had little or no artistic value. In this way, the Academy gatekeepers rejected contestation. As diversity declined, the Salon became closed to innovation and lost its ability to be the kind of FCE where values of the creative field were debated, which in turn meant that it was then unable to provide an accurate picture of the field as a whole. Generally speaking, then, if debates take place outside an FCE, then that FCE cannot be a
place where actors can make sense of the field. This restriction favours the emergence of other FCEs created by innovators who are excluded from the dominant FCE, thus leading to competition between old and new FCEs and the potential decline of the dominant one. It also reduces the attractiveness of the dominant FCE and increases the likelihood that field members will participate in other events that begin to reconfigure the field.

This suggests that an FCE should account for the different tendencies of the field and be the place where ‘things happen’, and where some scandal (or, in the terminology of some other contributors to this book, ‘buzz’) is at least made possible. If we look at the contemporary art fairs discussed by Don Thompson in Chapter 2, for example, we can see how much effort fair organizers put into making sure that all the various art tendencies are properly represented. Committees to select artists and special exhibitions rooms for avant-garde art are all features that allow an art fair to remain prominent. In this respect, it might even be interesting to see the extent to which scandals, provocations and contestation within an FCE positively contribute to its overall reputation both in the contemporary art field and in other creative fields such as fashion and film. For example, the London-based Frieze Art Fair, arguably Europe’s fastest growing art fair, benefited from events such as the Chapman brothers doodling obscene drawings on bank notes during its 2007 edition. The Cannes Film Festival, discussed by Steve Mezias and his colleagues (Chapter 7) is another example. The opening movie at the 2009 festival was ‘Up’, a US animated movie targeted at a broad, family-based audience – not exactly the sort of audience that might be anticipated for the winner of the Golden Palm award that year, which was Michael Haneke’s ‘The White Ribbon’, a story built around strange events in a small Lutheran village which seem to involve some sort of ritual punishment involving the abused and suppressed children of the villagers. In the same year, the official selection included the much-discussed movie from Lars von Trier, ‘Antichrist’, which provoked a lot of debate and argument. What is at stake for the festival is for it to find a balance between more mainstream movies like Hollywood blockbusters, confidential art movies and movies that are potential sources of scandal, to attract attention and generate debates.

This chapter opens up avenues for future research. In particular, more attention could be paid to individual participants’ strategies before, during and after an FCE. The decision to participate, or not, in an FCE can be considered as a strategic move, in that participation implies the
acceptation of the event’s underlying principles, while refusing to take part is a statement made by the actor concerned. FCEs can also be used as places to demonstrate and protest against the dominant view, a dimension that has not been explored so far. As such, FCEs are interesting settings to analyse the articulation between the institutionalized order, and the way actors are supposed to behave, and individual agency, and how actors can depart from expected behaviour and challenge the existing order. Further research could also help reduce the limitations of this chapter’s findings. What appears as crucial in the case of the Salon is the role of the public, so that in those FCEs (like London Fashion Week or the Frankfurt Book Fair) to which the public has no, or limited, access, it may be possible to exert greater control within the professional field.

Notes
* The authors would like to thank for their help Dominique Lobstein of the Musée d’Orsay, Catherine Coudert, Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen, Brian Moeran, Grégoire Croidieu, Steve Mezias, Charles-Clemens Rüling, Jeannine Tang and all the participants in the Creative Encounters workshop on fairs and festivals at which an early draft of this paper was first presented.
1. Despite his efforts to be accepted as a painter of history, Greuze was eventually received as a minor genre painter.
2. The wrecking of the boat Medusa happened some months before the painting was done. The tragedy occurred because of the incompetence of the captain, an aristocrat who had just returned from exile to be put in charge of the boat and did not listen to the advice of more experienced sailors who were of lower rank. Thus, the wrecking became a public scandal and the symbol for Republicans of the incompetence of the aristocrats who were back in power. As such the painting could also be considered a critique of the restoration of the monarchy.
3. Two paintings by Delacroix were also rejected in 1845, although two others were accepted in the same year.
4. After the French Revolution, the Academy became known as the ‘Institut’. For ease of comprehension, we use the term ‘the Academy’ throughout this chapter.
5. See, for example, Thornton (2008) on Art Basel.

References


A Salon’s life: FCE, power and contestation


