

# INTRODUCTION

## Redefining art worlds in the late modernity

**Paula Guerra and Pedro Costa**

The definition of 'art worlds' that was first conceived, developed and publicized by Becker has had a large impact in various disciplinary settings, namely in the sociology of the arts, as well as in the society and economy of culture (Becker, 1982). In our understanding, the continued presence of the concept in these mediums is well justified — we can see in countless investigations of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century how it fits both analytically and conceptually in research agendas. The book we are presenting here stems exactly from the importance that art worlds have taken in our same agendas as well as those of our wide research network. In a way, this book is a tribute to Becker and to the importance of the analytical concept of the art world in the research to the arts, namely to the way in which it shows that artworks are not individual products, rather stemming from spheres of interests and wills, with cooperation being a major part of artistic production. For any work of art to be presented as final it requires numerous tasks connecting dozens of individuals and bringing them together. However, more than simply nodding to the concept, this book also seeks to show the way in which the concept of 'art world' has been developed, increased, changed and transformed to fit the plastic reality of contemporary society — specifically the information and communication society, virtual spheres of production, mediation and fruition, and transglobal horizons of arts, culture and life (Guerra, 2010).

The concept of the art world implies very clearly the notion of artistic creation as a collective endeavour, and as a result brings into the table the myriad of complementary activities which support the artwork, as well as the feedback, the contact of the public and its understanding — reception, fruition and mediation. As we have noted, cooperation is vital in this, as "in all the arts we know, much like in every other human activity, cooperation is ever present" (Becker, 1982: 7). People involved in artistic production strive towards those tasks which are more prestigious, rewarding and more interesting, in a process of systematic labour division and stratification (Becker, 1982). Whilst in some

performance activities, like cinema, this is very overt and explicit, it is also present in other more 'solitary' acts such as painting or poetry-writing. This is a key aspect of the concept: that cooperation happens not only in the same spatial or temporal frame, but taking into account the whole production cycle of the artwork, from the materials needed for its conception to the resources required for distribution and recognition. For all of this to happen, however, there need to be "a group of people whose activities are necessary for the production of works which that world, and maybe others, recognize as art" (Becker, 1982: 34).

The cooperative work involved in artistic production implies the existence of conventions which define the way in which agents should cooperate. By working together, individuals establish conventions which are then made it to the standard way of making art (Guerra, 2013; Maanen, 2010). Artistic conventions contribute for the organization of artistic labour in cooperation: "[they] dictate the materials to be used (...) which abstractions to make out of certain ideas or experiences (...), the way in which materials and abstractions should be combined (...), suggest the appropriate size of an artwork (...) [and] regulate the relationships between artist and audience, specifically the rights and obligations of each one" (Becker, 1982: 29). Becker emphasizes the importance of these informal agreements in sharing knowledge of a certain medium, in the way in which that knowledge can be find and is deeply related to the type of connection found in the artistic *metier*. The arts operate and determine both wider social rules and customs as well as more specific workings of the artistic world. These latter are particularly important to distinguish between a 'cultivated' audience and one which does not 'understand it': that is, the capacity to see common objects as artistic creates boundaries between social actors (Crane, 2007).

Despite these conventions, and without contradicting them, many times the art worlds stem into autonomous subgroups with their own specific rules and followings. At the heart of the issue is the fact that even in trying to be unconventional the use of conventions is dominant. This notion has been the object of several investigations, in particular through the critical lens of Simon Frith, who used it in the context of the music industry to separate between a) the art music world; b) folk music world; c) commercial music world (Frith, 1997). It is also this sort of focus on consensus and lack of focus on the subversive potential of the art worlds which has garnered Becker with criticism — namely in pointing out how conflict and unequal possession of material and symbolic

resources between agents and artists shape the specific forms of art worlds (Crane, 2007; Guerra, 2010; Maanen, 2010).

The bourdeusian concept of field is in this sense quite far from the art world as understood by Danto (1964) or Becker (1982). Rather than focusing on the specific interactions inside the cultural field, or on the cooperation between cultural agents in the production of their work, Bourdieu (1996) is more interested in rebuilding the structural positions of the field, seen here mostly as a place of antagonism and symbolic struggle. This does not mean, however, that the two cannot be bridged (Guerra, 2010, 2013, 2015).

Maria de Lourdes Lima dos Santos (1994: 421) notes this exactly, when she states that in Becker there is a “notable descriptive recreation of the way in which the artistic process works in diverse art worlds, that is, the goal which is common to Bourdieu of de-mystifying the aestheticist conception of art”. That is, by providing a thorough description of the way in which art is made possible only by collective effort, Becker refutes the view of the artistic object as the result of an isolated genius. Since the artistic object is a result of cooperation in different forms, according to the author, in reference to a set of conventions and a common understanding of the art world, they in turn generate a common *praxis* (in a way the *illusio* to which Bourdieu alludes).

Likewise, Becker does not ignore that the interactions taking place inside the art worlds are not always consensual. There are divergent interests at any given moment, which tie the artist to certain pathways and shape the cooperative network towards certain types of artwork. The acceptance of these constraints by the more radical artists — in exchange for wider publicity and acknowledgement of their work — is a common reality. Notwithstanding, the presence of non-standard work flowing through alternative channels is a reality which Becker did not fully address — and it is here that the agonistic perspective of the segmentation of the artistic field of Pierre Bourdieu shows itself to be particularly useful.

As Maria de Lourdes Lima dos Santos (1994: 421) points out, this leads Becker to the idea of “each art world being closed on itself”. Contrary to this, we can see by analysing cultural creations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in particular cultural creations of post-industrial society and the cultural industries, that in art forms such as rock it was the question of social and cultural order, from power structures to daily behaviour, which became the core focus of art as a form of protest. In Becerk’s analysis, unlike Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu & Haacke, 1994), we do not find the micro-macro articulation of art production structures, nor is there

mention of the domination and dependency within and between fields/art worlds. The study of the change of an art world tends to reduce the possible types of innovation to internal changes in these structures, and sees them as possible mostly out of the cooperation and organization of the respective agents, when in reality, most times change is a by-product of conflicts towards authority and the redistribution of specific capitals (Guerra, 2010, 2013, 2015).

Becker's analysis would come to inspire a theoretical line, known as the production of culture perspective, with a great Anglo-Saxon presence. Diana Crane, the foremost representative of this line of study of artistic creation, has applied the notion of art world (which she refines into the notion of culture world) to various forms of urban culture. In her most notable work (Crane, 1992), the author deepens Becker theoretical conceptions, especially in regards to the different cultural producers and their artistic-professional trajectories and their looks towards innovation.

Crane also notes the way in which the association of urban culture to the elite culture has grown more unstable. Nowadays a number of factors have arisen which lead to a questioning of this model of urban culture — of the way in which it overstates the influence of elites and “ignores both the existence of non-elite urban cultures as well as the progressive loss of influence of elite urban cultures”; the emergence of new actors (urban promoters and big companies), whose influence over elite cultural forms has increased, who seek to benefit directly or indirectly from these new forms of culture; the elite control model does not accurately adequate to urban areas — with corporate cities being highly decentralized, with suburban commercial centres and communitary centres which fulfil the role previously held by the ‘urban core’ (Crane, 1992: 111–112).

These urban cultures are understood, by Becker's terms, as art worlds, whether elite or not. They all possess the same components: cultural producers and backup personnel; conventions and understandings shared by all members, which serve as standards towards which to compare any given product; gatekeepers such as critics, DJ's and editors, which evaluate the cultural products; the organizations inside which, or around which, many of these activities take place (exhibited, taken place or produced) and the audiences, whose characteristics can define the sort of cultural products which are patented, presented or sold in a given urban setting (Crane, 1992: 111–112).

By condensing the strong points of Crane's proposal, Maria de Lourdes Lima dos Santos (1994: 421–422) notes exactly how it nuances Becker's typology —

which divided artists into integrated professionals, mavericks (innovators), folk artists and naive artists — by showing how certain production, diffusion and fruition conditions can provide contact between the various types. As such, Crane's proposal notes an organizational context which is wide, varied and segmented, with fluidity taking the place of art form boundaries. Diana Crane aims to show then how the types of productive and receptive organizations produced by art forms also serve as a factor promoting their heterogeneity. She distinguishes several art worlds: network oriented, both in isolated networks and intersecting networks; profit-oriented and non-profit.

First of all, there are informal social networks, led by creators and consumers who regularly know and interact with each other, are driven by small cultural organizations which give them the resources for producing, promoting and showcasing their work. This is seen as a stimulating combination to produce aesthetically original and ideologically provocative work, as these networks tend to attract young people and innovation by working towards a continuous feedback loop between creators and their audience (Crane, 1992: 113). A second type of 'cultural world' is structured around small profit-oriented businesses where "the activity of the creators is centred more on the organization itself than on the network of fellow creators. The goal is to produce work which pleases, rather than shocks or bedazzles, the audience" (Crane, 1992: 114). A third kind of art world arises out of non-profit organizations, whose objective is to preserve ethnic and artistic traditions, more than develop new productions: "cultural products associated with different art worlds differ in their aesthetic characteristics" (Crane, 1992: 114). So as to go beyond the limits of their social network, the creators seek to receive 'recognition' by the art world. In this sense, the creation of artistic 'styles' serves to operate control networks (gatekeeping ports) which evaluate, exhibit and sell the work (Crane, 1992: 119).

Examples of how this can be done, for instance, in passing from being known as a 'maverick' to an 'integrated professional', is uncannily similar to the bourdeusian notion of artistic field, and the symbolic struggles between the newly-entered (or 'heretics') and the established (or 'orthodox') seeking to change the specific types of capital and to restructure the positions within. Here, the most notable advances in the reflection started by Becker and Crane (1992: 109–142) are ones which address the audiences and their effects on the producers, such as the work developed by DiMaggio when he states that "studying the systems of production without a theory of demand runs at the risk

of assuming that production and distribution of art can be explained simply as demand-driven variables" (1987: 442).

Likewise, Arthur Danto would also note how relevant and heuristic the notion of field is to these analysis (Danto, 1999). The author notes how Bourdieu went against Sartre's reading of Flaubert's *Education Sentimentale* seeking to explore the structures and 'rules' which are at the base of the artist or creator (Danto, 1999: 215). The relational notion of field — specifically the 'literary field' — which Bourdieu (1996) presents has each actor define his objective position by relation to each other position. To be an 'artist' is then to occupy a position on the field known as 'art world', which means that the artist is objectively related to positions occupied by critics, collectors, art dealers, specialists, etc. It is the field that 'creates the creator' and thus promotes notions and boundaries of what is possible by definition of what positions each actor occupies. The artistic and literary field is an objective structure and as such turns the question of what is art and what makes artists themselves into objective questions. From this idea, Bourdieu developed the necessary science to understand the problem: an historical science of the cultural fields (Danto, 1999: 216).

Following these theses, we have structured this work around what brings us to and separates us from Becker. The chapters you can find here pay tribute to the author at the same time as they critically re-analyse his perspective.

Part 1 — aptly named *Art worlds, moments and places* — seeks to bring festivals and big events into question, showing their importance in materializing art worlds, including the following chapters: *Slovenian visual artists throughout history: A network analysis perspective* by Petja Grafenauer, Andrej Srakar and Marilena Vecco; *'From the night and the light, all festivals are golden': The festivalization of culture in the late modernity* by Paula Guerra; *Dublin calling: Challenging European centrality and peripherality through jazz* by José Dias; and *Moments and places: The 'events' as a creative milieu between society, culture and emotions* by Pierfranco Malizia.

Part 2 — *Art worlds in motion* — shows us exactly the changes in the internal logic, the mechanisms and actors which develop the arts in contemporaneity, namely poetry, architecture, indie rock and design, and counts with the following contributions: *Mutation of the poem on the web* by Lígia Dabul; *The architect profession: Between excess and closure* by Vera Borges and Manuel Villaverde Cabral; *'I make the product': Do-it-yourself ethics in the construction of musical careers in the Portuguese alternative rock scene* by Ana Oliveira and Paula Guerra;

*From the shadow to the centre: Tensions, contradictions and ambitions in building graphic design as a profession* by Pedro Quintela.

The third part — *Art worlds and territorial belongings* — territorializes Becker's art worlds in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Tâmega region (Portugal), and in various areas of Slovakia. It counts with contributions of Cláudia Pereira, Aline Maia and Marcella Azevedo with the chapter *Celebrities of the Passinho: Media, visibility and recognition of youngsters from poor neighborhoods*; Tânia Moreira with *Redefining sounds, outlining places: Rock, scenes and networks*; and Yvetta Kajanová with the chapter *Gospel versus profane music in Slovakia*.

In a very interesting way, and showing once more the potentials of art worlds in understanding the arts as collaborative and participative processes, the fourth part emerges with the title *Art words, creative communities and participation*. In this part, we can find chapters by Vera Borges (*Collaborative art: Rethinking the Portuguese theatre*), Carolina Neto Henriques (*Assembling the hybrid city: A critical reflection on the role of an Institute for (X) for a new urbanity*) and Cláudia Madeira (*Art programming as a test laboratory for social questions: the case of Horta do Baldio, a vegetable garden for agriculture*).

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