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An Analysis of Sustainability
Practices in the Visual Arts
Industry

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	3
1.1 An Overview of the Environmental Crisis	6
1.2 The Environmental Crisis and the Visual Arts Industry.....	8
1.3 Research Aims.....	11
Chapter 2: The Visual Arts Industries	13
2.1 Defining the Visual Arts Industries	13
2.2 Visual Arts Industry Purpose in Society.....	16
2.2.1 A Brief History of Visual Arts Institutions	17
2.2.2 Contemporary Responsibility of Art Institutions	21
2.3 Visual Art and Institutions as Generators of Change	26
Chapter 3: Ecological Sustainability and Visual Arts.....	29
3.1 Contemporary Imagery of Sustainability	30
3.1.1 Ecological Sustainability Imagery and Greenwashing.....	34
3.2 Movements of Ecological Sustainability in Visual Arts.....	36
3.2.1 Environmental art and Eco-Aesthetics	37
3.2.2 Socially Engaged Art.....	40
3.2.3 Arts Activism.....	42
Chapter 4: Corporate Sustainability.....	44
4.1 Corporate Accountability	47

4.2 Current Models and Methods for Sustainability Accounting.....	50
4.3 Applicability of Sustainability Accounting for the Visual Arts Industry	55
Chapter 5: Research and Case Studies	59
5.1 Current State of Sustainability Accounting in the Visual Arts Industry.....	61
5.2 Christie’s Auction House.....	70
5.3 Gagosian Galleries Case Study	78
5.4 Art Basel Art Fair	82
Chapter 6: Discussion	87
6.1 Current State of Sustainability Accounting in the Visual Arts Industry: Variation and Opacity	87
6.2 Betterment of Sustainability Practices in the Visual Arts Industry	91
6.2.1 Decolonizing Nature Through Visual Arts.....	93
6.2.2 Eco-Art Education	97
6.2.3 Sustainability Research Through Visual Arts	100
Chapter 7: Conclusion	103
Acknowledgements.....	108
References	109

Chapter 1: Introduction

The global visual arts industry emits 70 million tonnes of CO₂ per year (Bottrill and Tickell, 2021). This staggering amount of 70 million CO₂e contradicts the ecologically sustainable front that visual arts institutions have flaunted in recent years. The abundance of exhibitions and events that foreground environmental awareness creates the appearance of an ecologically sustainable industry, meanwhile carbon emissions prove the contrary. Yet, this guise of ecological awareness is not completely misrepresentative, as there is a long-standing connection between arts and the environment. Notable artists such as Agnes Denes, Louis Weinberger, Robert Smithson, Allison Janae Hamilton, Betsy Damon, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Cai Guo-Qiang, and Olafur Eliasson produce artworks which call attention to the environment and its prevailing relevance. These artists, through a variety of mediums, reflect on the climate crisis, dystopias and utopias of the environmental future, and environmental-human relationships. They present an environmental cognizance which forces environmental contemplation and enhances contemporary environmentalist movements.

Wheatfield — A Confrontation, a notable artwork by Agnes Denes is a powerful artistic interpretation of the environment, sustainability, and the contrastingly man-made world. The project began in 1982 taking place on a landfill located in lower Manhattan. At the time and still today, lower Manhattan was notorious for being the economic and financial heart of New York City, the locale of Wall Street and the World Trade Center. Agnes Denes radically intervened on the economic hub by planting a 2-acre crop of wheat. This artistic intervention juxtaposes the natural world, symbolized through wheat, against the man-made concrete environment. Moreover, through its symbolism it compares two types of markets, agricultural and financial, and additionally represents two contrasting lives, that of rural laborers and of urban financiers. After 4 months, nearly 1,000 pounds of wheat was harvested, leaving nothing but bare soil behind (Chianese, 2013). In regard to the project's end, Denes (1992:22-23) observed that, "All those Manhattanites who had been watching the field grow from green to golden amber, the

stockbrokers, and the economists, office workers, tourists, and others attracted by the media coverage, stood around in sad silence. Some cried.” Denes’ artwork had elicited an emotional response and garnered an empathetic human-nature relationship, all in the surprising location of a bustling metropolitan landscape. Following the project’s completion, Denes had the harvested wheat shipped across the world as part of a traveling exhibition dedicated to world hunger, therefore furthering the artwork’s epistemology (Chianese, 2013).



Figure 1: Photograph of *Wheatfields – A Confrontation*.
(Photograph by Donna Svennevik, *Wheatfields for Manhattan*, 1982.)

The Manhattanite's emotional response prompted through Denes' *Wheatfield — A Confrontation*, demonstrates the ability of art to connect to human pathos regarding the human-environmental relationship. However, today most sustainability issues are managed through rational thought such as sciences, politics, and mathematics. Contrastingly, some theorists, such as Hans Dieleman (2008), argue that sustainability requires a different “more-than-rational” level of thinking to successfully create the dramatic change that is necessary to form a more sustainable earth. Dieleman explains that the current rational thought process behind sciences and politics tries to segmentize and simplify the indivisible and multi-disciplinary nature of sustainability. Rather, it is best to utilize visionary, creative, and imaginative methods to generate sustainable solutions. Dieleman indicates the arts are an effective way to obtain human reflexivity, empathy, and intuition, all of which are necessary to create long-lasting social change. Therefore, the arts have potential to create both more meaningful and effective change towards sustainability in comparison to the traditional sustainability methods of science, mathematics, and politics.

The power of visual imagery must also be taken into consideration when deepening our understanding of how to produce a more sustainable planet. Imagery, upon which the visual arts are founded, has been scientifically proven to generate strong cognitive links (Shepard, 1967; Delorme, Poncet and Fabre-Thrope, 2018). These imagery generated cognitive links can often be found utilized in educational contexts. For example, the assistance of visual framing has been employed by centuries of economists communicating their ideas through graphs, diagrams, and charts. For instance, one can quite easily recall a depiction of a simple supply and demand graph. Economic imagery such as this, because of its ability to create a strong cognitive link, has been ingrained into economic education and consequentially ingrained into today's economists. Imagery produced cognitive links such as these may promote traditional modes of economic thinking which favors growth over sustainability. However, the creation of new economic diagrams that prioritize sustainability have the power to generate an understanding of a new sustainable economy (Raworth, 2017). This example of economic imagery proves the inherent cognitive power of imagery which must be acknowledged, accounted for, and harnessed throughout all industries while moving towards sustainability. The visual arts industry is suited particularly well to harness and mobilize this power of imagery and sustainability.

1.1 An Overview of the Environmental Crisis

The discussion of the climate crisis has permeated nearly every industry in the past half-century and the visual arts industry is no exception. However, to gain a better understanding of the current practices of sustainability within the visual arts industries, it is best to first acknowledge the larger context of the climate crisis. The initial recognition of the climate crisis began as early as the 60's by scientists such as Rachel Carson (2012) who published the infamous book *Silent Spring* in 1962 which recognized the human impact on the environment. Then continuing into the 70's and 80's, when scientist such as Wallace S. Broecker (1975) coined the term 'global warming' and world organization formations occurred such as the United Nations Environment Program's (UNEP) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (Jackson, 2007).

As the decades pass, we are quickly approaching deadlines set by climate scientists and experts, which signal the brink of a climate crisis. For example, the IPCC's (2022) guidelines state that we must aim to not exceed a global temperature rise of 1.5C in comparison to pre-industrialization eras. Another example is Johan Rockström and Will Steffens' (2009) Nine Planetary Boundaries which outline the nine main limits of the earth's systems, six of which have already been exceeded. By continually approaching and exceeding these guidelines we risk even more irreversible damage to the earth's climate. Today, many individuals, organizations, institutions, and governments have pledged to assist in the fight against climate change and the climate crisis is generally acknowledged and accepted as being a critical issue. However, when everyone claims to be combating the climate crisis, yet goals and deadlines are not being reached, how can we identify and hold accountable the faults and flaws in our systems? A more in-depth approach to analyzing and organizing the sustainability accounting of industries and organizations must be taken. Looking into governmental and institutional implementation of sustainability practices through policies, regulations, and guidelines helps to confirm their participation in the larger fight against climate change.

Preventing the earth from environmental collapse should be enough motivation to create dramatic change in how society prioritizes sustainability concerns, however, financial motivations consistently present themselves as more pressing in the current economic system. Financial and economic motivations are notorious for hindering sustainable progress, showing that big business greed can trump the notions of a circular economy, but there are ways in which economics can benefit sustainability (Gough, 2017). Often, economic motivations are key factors in decision making for policy creation, including sustainability policies (Raworth, 2017). The influence held by economic incentives directly impacts governmental and institutional sustainability policies and is often intertwined in their contents. For example, economic incentives are present in both the European Green Deal (Fetting, 2020), as well as the Paris Agreement (2015). Positive sustainability-oriented economic incentives such as these strengthen sustainable development which diverges from traditional growth-centric economic devices such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The trend towards introducing sustainability policies has in turn affected the corporate world, through the formation of ideals like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Corporate Sustainability (CS). This combination and subsequent utilization of politics, economics, and policies can swiftly impact a range of industries, therefore, benefiting environmental preservation, circular economies, and sustainability-gearred solutions.

This political and economic method of handling multi-industry sustainability issues proves to be effective because of the interconnectedness of industries. As identified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (2016), the energy and transportation sectors are cited as some of the largest industrial polluters on earth. Thanks in part to governmental policies, a large and certainly necessary portion of efforts and resources are allocated to the study of these industries and their transition sustainable options such as green energies and eco-friendly transportation. However, these industries are not stand-alone and are deeply intertwined with many, if not all, other sectors' activities. Therefore, to ensure we reach the goal of maintaining the earth's climate we must acknowledge the interconnected and integrated nature of the economy, to manufacture radical change throughout all industries (Köhler et al., 2019).

1.2 The Environmental Crisis and the Visual Arts Industry

The visual arts industry is also linked to these high pollution industries and relies on them for many of its own functional aspects. The transportation industry is highly involved in the shipment of artworks and materials to museums, galleries, auction houses and art fairs. The visitors and art workers also utilize transportation methods to attend events and exhibitions around the world. The energy industry is also incorporated through maintaining and displaying artworks as well as the spaces in which they are exhibited. Even after this brief consideration, we can comprehend that the visual arts industry, just as any other, leaves behind a prevalent carbon footprint, specifically of 70 million tonnes (Bottrill and Tickell, 2021).

As mentioned previously, economic factors can benefit or hinder the development of sustainability practices within a range of fields including cultural. Experts have accordingly acknowledged this relationship, thus coining the term ‘culturally sustainable development’ which links the critical relationship between economic, environmental, and cultural systems (Throsby, 1995). The contemporary visual arts industry as a member of the cultural scope, falls under these moral obligations of maintaining cultural heritage in an economic and sustainable way. In accordance with the visual arts industry this culturally sustainable development can be considered in the context of a nonprofit system such as museum or a for-profit system like an art gallery. In for-profit systems, art is handled similarly to the luxury market, backed by financial motivation. It can often occur that financial motivation and investment is prioritized over other more ethically charged decision making such as sustainability. Therefore, it is a delicate situation to balance culturally sustainable development when considering the strong financial motivations which undercurrents the contemporary visual arts market.

Presently, most organizations and institutions within the visual arts industries appear to be in accord with environmental crisis acknowledgement. This sprouts from a long history of the intertwinement between topics of the environment and the arts. Even in prehistoric times there were Indigenous peoples who produced large-scale earthworks which manipulated the earth’s soil (Stewart, 2018). Contemporarily, its peak began in the 60’s and spanned through the 80’s,

emerging from environmentalist movements (Galafassi et al., 2018; Blandy et al., 1998). Today the connection of culturally sustainable development is strengthened through the official statements released by visual arts institutions as well as contemporary socially engaged artists and artworks who reflect on the state of the environment. Art activists' groups also participate by drawing attention to the environmental crisis in the context of the art world and utilize their resources to hold institutions accountable while educating others.

Even though artists and art activist groups are boldly pursuing the introduction of more sustainable methods and perspectives in the visual arts industry there is still a wide range of commitment from visual arts institutions and organizations. Currently, CSR activities are a standard practice in the visual arts industry. Many institutions have introduced charitable ventures, educational departments, and unique CSR events. However, not nearly as many institutions have introduced sustainability-specific practices. We can argue that in a time of environmental crisis, sustainability is equally relevant as other CSR activities and should be integral to the visual arts industry. Yet, investment in sustainability practices, innovations, and solutions, varies greatly depending on the institution. Some institutions show a large amount of commitment while others are completely lacking, highlighting that there is no sustainability standard within the industry. Often socially engaged artists and art activists play an accountability role. Through their medium of choice, they call out institutions who they feel are not engaging enough in the fight against the climate crisis. Thanks to these artists and activists, there is a newly budding societal expectation and accountability practice for visual arts organizations.

Corporate accountability is becoming standard practice in a variety of industries. In the visual arts industry, this corporate accountability is often exhibited financially. Visual arts institutions and organizations often publicize annual financial reports, which reveal their internal and external evidence of financial accounting. Yet, sustainability accounting for the visual arts industry is a relatively new practice. Because of sustainability accounting's recentness in the field of visual arts, there is a range of underexplored possibilities. Discussions such as decolonization of the arts and nature, sustainability education through art, and sustainability research through art are gaining traction within the arts community. Further development and

implementation of how we can apply these to visual arts institutions could be extremely beneficial to the wider understanding of sustainability.

As previously mentioned in the analyzation of Agnes Dene's *Wheatfield – A Confrontation*, the arts visual arts displayed a unique ability to create an emotional connection to the environment, facilitating a more empathetic human-environment relationship. Therefore, visual arts institutions and organizations are especially well positioned to take on the task of harnessing this skill to benefit sustainability studies. A more profound and empathetic relationship to the environment can influence social institutions, support the idea of 'ecological citizenship' (Thomsen, 2015), and benefit the deeper mind-set change that is necessary to create a more sustainable planet (Dieleman, 2008; Bowers 1993). If the visual arts industry learns to manage these distinctive abilities, it could completely change the approach of sustainability education and sciences, moving away from the traditional 'rational' sustainability methods (Dieleman, 2008). As illustrated previously, industries are extremely interconnected such as the transportation and energy industries intermingling with the visual arts industry. Therefore, as research in sustainable development continues through the visual arts industry, because of industry interconnectedness, it may benefit the larger sustainability system.

1.3 Research Aims

The analyzation of the current sustainability practices of organizations and institutions involved in the visual arts industries facilitates a better understanding of the genuine level of sustainability commitment as well as possible areas of improvement. This thesis aims to address three relevant questions and their relative topics. Firstly, acknowledging the present-day topical importance and literature on sustainability practices prompts the question; What are visual arts institutions currently practicing for sustainability measures? Consequently, we must ask; How and to whom are the institutionalized actors of visual arts held accountable? Thanks to corporate accountability, we can gain a better understanding of these implemented sustainability practices through reports, presentations, certifications, and policies. Furthermore, enabling a stronger comprehension of accountability systems within the field of visual arts. Looking into the future of sustainable development we may question; What are viable future options for improvement of sustainability practices in the visual arts industries? This may open the floor to further research, as well as practical actions to be put into action within visual arts institutions and organizations.

To confront the issue of sustainability accounting in the visual arts, the thesis will firstly define the visual arts industry and the involved institutions and organizations. Followed by a historical review and contemporary perspective of the role and influence of the visual arts industry and the major institutions involved, including museums, art galleries, art fairs, auction houses, and higher education art institutions. Proceeded by a exploration of the deeply intertwined relationship between ecology and visual arts in the form of eco-art and arts activism. To further the understanding of current sustainability standards the thesis will review topics of corporate social responsibility and sustainability as well as corporate accountability. Followed by the specification of some of the current practices of corporate accounting and more specifically how they may be applicable to the visual arts industries.

Three case studies will be presented which include Christie's auction house, Gagosian art gallery, and Art Basel art fair. These case studies were selected based on a larger research process including 20 well-known visual art institutions. The three case studies were chosen to showcase

how corporate sustainability, and its subsequent accountability are implemented in some of the most renowned art institutions and how they may dramatically vary based on each institution. They highlight current and appropriate sustainability practices and divulge areas of necessary improvement. Furthermore, they display the lack of transparency which is common in the art industry and the breadth of sustainability commitment, which ranges from little to no activity to well-involved sustainability efforts.

The research conducted to produce said research and case studies was carried out through secondary qualitative and quantitative research based on publicly available information. The utilization of publicly available materials addresses the concern opacity within the visual arts industry while also revealing the efforts of external stakeholder accountability. A wide variety of materials such as the institutions' websites, public presentations, interviews, as well as reports, policies, and press releases revealed the variety of mediums which accountability tasks can be performed, many of which came directly from the institutions themselves. However, other resources from activist groups and news articles revealed the sustainability efforts from a less institutionally biased perspective.

Following the case study reviews, the discussion portion reveals the concerns of opacity and variation of sustainability methods and accounting in the visual arts industry, revealing the areas of improvement. Accordingly, the thesis presents visual art-specific solutions to sustainability concerns including decolonization of nature, sustainability education, and utilization of visual arts to deepen sustainability science. The possibilities outlined are possibilities to introduce sustainability in a way which is particularly available to visual arts institutions.

Chapter 2: The Visual Arts Industries

2.1 Defining the Visual Arts Industries

Throughout this analysis I will refer to the visual arts industry, so that I can more narrowly define the scope of my topic. This enables me to be more exclusive with the intended application of this thesis.

The visual arts industry is a sub-category of the arts industry as whole. It focuses specifically on the visual arts, as implied in the title, rather than other arts, such as performance art which may include drama, music, and dance. Another art form which is not included in the realm of this thesis is the literary arts such as poetry, novels, prose, etc. The visual arts include the practices of traditional fine arts such as painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, filmmaking. These in themselves could be considered their own sub-industries. For example, filmmaking could be considered part of the film industry rather than exclusively visual arts. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I will be referring to several art forms under the visual arts industries separately, but in acknowledgement to their individual industries.

Throughout the thesis I will mention the institutions that make up the visual arts industry. This includes several of the traditional institutions that have comprised the arts sector for decades. Including but not limited to museums, auction houses, galleries, art education institutions, and art fairs. Other organizations such as art non-profits and independent foundations, which are dedicated to the promotion of visual arts, may also be included under this subject.

While the focus of this thesis is the traditional visual arts institutions, we must keep in mind parallel industries which are encapsulated within the creative class. Theorist Richard Florida (2012) explains the creative class as a collection of people who are employed under the scope of

creating new ideas, innovations, or creative content and provide a high level of human capital. Those employed under these premises include quite a large group consisting of architects, educators, musicians, artists, engineers, scientists, and even more. Florida studied the economic and social impact of the creative class, which is deeply intertwined with arts and culture.

Many of the visual arts institution's workers could be considered members of the creative class and therefore, can also influence the visual arts industries because of their interconnectedness. This means that the creative classes' values, morals, and expectations influence the institutions for which they work. Florida (2012:56-62) defines the social values of the creative class, which greatly differ from the past working class. The creative classes' values identified are individuality, meritocracy, diversity, and openness. These aspects transform what values they put into their creative work for society as well as what they expect from institutions with whom they work. Therefore, we have seen a shift in the work values expected towards more self-expression focused values.

As mentioned previously, the creative class covers a variety of industries ranging from topics closely related to visual arts such as culture and tourism and extending as far as engineering and science. Even these less apparently creative industries are linked to the visual arts industry. For example, engineering and IT are necessary for the management of visual arts institutions, and often make a great impact on the sustainability of said institutions. IT management is necessary for nearly all visual arts institutions including cataloging, website design, archival, marketing and many other aspects. How the digital world is managed at an institution can change the sustainability practices of an institution. For example, if a company decides to utilize digital marketing or catalogs over paper marketing and catalogs, there is a lower carbon footprint. We must also consider energy and construction factors such as building emissions which may include lighting and condition management, also makes a large difference on an institution's carbon footprint. There are plenty of other industries which we must also acknowledge like waste management which impacts sustainability in terms of food waste or recycling. Transportation is another industry which impacts an institution's sustainability such as art handling and transportation of art, as well as visitor and worker travel. The variety of industries which need to be considered for functional aspects of art institutions and organizations will be further explored through case studies later in this thesis.

These are just a few examples of other “non-creative” industries which largely impact the sustainability measures of visual arts institutions and should be considered throughout the thesis. In conclusion, while narrowing the definition of the visual arts industries to focus on more traditional institutions’ definitions we must still consider quite a large scope of other industries which are also necessary to the function of the visual arts institutions and organizations.

2.2 Visual Arts Industry Purpose in Society

The arts have always had a place in society as a social institution. A social institution is a set of established expectations and norms that are set in society to help support its survival. Therefore, if art is considered a social institution, it must fill basic human societal needs. This topic of debate has an array of solutions that have been proposed. Some claim that art's function in society is to act as a release of tension to reduce social conflict, others say it acts as a form of "self-gratification" (Albrecht, 1968).

Either way, art is universally acknowledged and incorporated into every culture. Not only is it incorporated into cultures, but usually it is found at the center point of every cultural society, as often a decline in arts symbolizes a decline in society (Langer, 1966). However, its purpose is not interpreted identically in every culture. For example, art can be interpreted as a form of self-expression and individuality. Other cultures can utilize art as a form of collective expression or it could be linked to religious symbolism, an expression of the non-earthly world. Regardless, the social institution of the arts produces a sense of morale and solidarity in communities throughout the world (Albrecht, 1968).

The difference in expression of art signifies a change in purpose as well. The purpose of the arts fluctuates and mutates, just as cultures themselves do. Thus, as societies and cultures change so does the expression and purpose of the arts. For context of art's societal influence, it's important to further analyze the purpose of visual art. By doing so we can better understand accountability measures and why we must hold these institutions accountable. First, I will briefly recount the history of visual arts institutions of the western world. Contemporarily, we must investigate how the purpose fluctuates based on differing visual art institutions. Then we can analyze the implications it may have on sustainable accounting in the visual arts industry.

2.2.1 A Brief History of Visual Arts Institutions

Historically visual arts industries have functioned as an influence on society. Its institutions have been a reference point for society and culture (Langer, 1966:5-12). Both enabling us to display our cultural values as well as influencing our own cultural values. However, over the course of history its role has changed, therefore it is necessary to look historically at the role of visual arts industries and how its relative institutions have changed. When we observe how the role of visual arts industries have developed over time, we can better understand their accountability patterns throughout history.

For much of western art history, deep appreciation for art and aesthetics was considered for the well-educated upper class of society. For example, in Renaissance Italy, art enabled the nobility to assert their power and wealth onto society. Nobility would commission artworks, such as architectural feats and sculptures, specifically for public display (Cole, 2016). Thus revealing that one of the purposes of the visual arts was to flaunt societal status. However, it was recognized that the visual arts also could be generally understood by the uneducated poor, making it the perfect mechanism for social status affirmation. Nevertheless, this establishment of power is only one purpose of visual arts throughout the course of modern western art history.

After the start of the French revolution, the seat of the French monarchy moved from the center of Paris to Versailles and the empty palace began to grow into one of the world's most famous museums to date. August 10, 1793, marked the opening of the Louvre as a museum. What once began with just a few rooms dedicated to the display of artworks from the royal collection, began to take over the entirety of the palace (McClellan, 2008). The new museum was dedicated to be a place of universal knowledge and scholarship for the entire world (McClellan, 2008). It symbolized a movement away from the traditional hierarchical society, and opened aesthetic beauty to all (Carrier, 2002). Here, they enable students from the recently closed Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture to work directly by viewing the paintings of the masters (McClellan, 2008). Now artists could receive a more diverse form of art education. Artists began

receiving their education from a variety of art schools that also covered a variety of stylistic practices (Brauer, 2014).

Conversely to the newly established Louvre Museum, the 18th and 19th century French salons catered to the private elite rather than to the general public. Therefore, changing the assumed responsibility of the visual arts that were included in these French salons. The French salons acted as a reference point for the tastes of French bourgeoisie and nobility (Kale, 2004). Often, they were hosted by upper class women within their private homes, exclusive to those within the same socio-economic status (Brauer, 2014). Salons were considered places of social, intellectual, and even possibly political gathering (Kale, 2004). The artists invited to display their artworks were often commissioned prior to the event. The artworks chosen were above the economic market and catered privately to society's elite. Therefore, the responsibility of the artworks included was to please the tastes of upper-class Parisians. Eventually the private salon developed, becoming more public and globalized, inviting artists from different artistic backgrounds and schools from around Europe. The new salon was now within the realm of the commercial market where art could be sold and purchased (Brauer, 2014). The responsibility of visual arts had changed once again, towards a more self-expression-oriented outlook, rather than focused solely on pleasing the bourgeoisie.

Within just the span of time of the French salon's, art's purpose had changed from a private to a more public eye. When the French salons were created only for elite society the visual arts only needed to account for the opinions of that elite. They were the only people absorbing the visual arts, hence why it was often commission based. Artists were reliant on what their commissioner's opinion was. However, as the French salon opened its doors and began to accept a wider range of both artists and audiences, the artists no-longer needed to be held fully accountable to their upper-class hosts. Rather, they could branch out to forms of self-expression where then they were held accountable to a larger public of critiques.

For example, we can look at painter Edouard Manet, who had his painting *The Spanish Singer* accepted at the French salon in 1861. However, two years later, his paintings were rejected from entering the salon and rather demoted to the Salon des Refusés (the exhibition of rejects). Where his now renowned artwork *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* (The Picnic) was highly criticized. Manet, once a celebrated artist of the salon, now elicited rage and confusion from the

public (Richardson, 1982). All because he had not followed the traditional painting techniques from artists before him. Through this example we can see the clash of purpose, self-expression versus public appeal. Also displayed is a clash of institutional purpose, this particular salon was in fact an exhibition of rejects to begin with. This clash is still relevant today when debating the purpose of art institutions and their artworks. To whom are they trying to satisfy and what are their duties of accountability?

Eventually, French salons diminished and made way for other institutions such as auction houses and other art organizations (Brauer, 2014). During the middle to late 18th century renowned auction houses such as Christie's, Sotheby's, Bonhams, and Phillips were established. The new auction houses brought the art market to a new level, which the salons had not fully realized. The art auctions were seen almost as "celebrity events" for British aristocracy (Huda, 2008:19-32), again serving more to society's upper class.

As the world became more industrialized and therefore globalized, there was a new priority of cultural exchange. A hallmark event of this cultural exchange was the World's Fairs. Beginning in 1851 in London, held in the iconic Crystal Palace and consequently producing some of the world's most iconic structures, such as Paris' Eiffel Tower or San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. The world's fairs travelled globally promoting innovation, handicrafts, and differing cultures. They claimed to have presented "a certain excellence of taste," (Monaghan, 1940). However, these exhibitions hosted by the western world, had an undercurrent of colonialism. Reinforcing racist and prejudiced preconceptions against the non-western world (Wong, 2022). This is a strong example of the shamefully missing accountability practices in renowned institutions.

Just as the world's fairs had aimed to display global cultures, many art institutions today have similar aims. Rather than only displaying their own cultures, they display an interpretation of many other cultures. Today, this is a common practice in museums around the world including the British Museum, Metropolitan Museum, and Louvre, just to name a few. This globalized tradition has also become a standard practice of contemporary art fairs such as the Venice Biennale, documenta, Art Basel and many others. Where different regions around the world still flaunt their culture, innovations, and thoughts through artistic representations. However, today

we find a stronger and still improving sense of caution and accountability in accordance with the display of other cultures.

As we can see, even through this brief recounting of modern western art history there was a dramatic transition from visual arts serving mostly the wealthy families of society in the safety of the private collections, to the general public. This transition from private to public changes the societal institution of art, making it accessible to everyone. This also affects the responsibilities of the visual arts, considering previously the art's purpose was to entertain the private, and changed to educate the public. Therefore, different accountability measures in favor of its new responsibilities must be put into place. Especially when considering "controversial" topics such as race, sustainability, and politics.

2.2.2 Contemporary Responsibility of Art Institutions

As revealed in the historical review, as different art institutions developed so did their audiences and functions in society. They also have had an ability to dramatically affect public opinion and shape morals for society. As their roles in society have changed, so have their responsibilities and accountabilities. Fortunately, today there is a clear way to understand the responsibilities that institutions internally hold themselves to, mission statements. Mission statements are typically posted for the public and reveal institutions' goals and aims for what they are striving to achieve. However, as we will reveal later in the thesis, they can often be vague and generalized.

During my studies of this topic, I've analyzed five of today's most common institutions: museums, art fairs, auction houses, galleries, and art education institutions. Each of these institutions have varying roles in contemporary society and, accordingly, differing responsibilities. Therefore, I have briefly analyzed these traditional institutions' contemporary situations and missions.

Museums:

As was prevalent in the previous historical review of the Louvre, the main purpose of museums is to provide knowledge and art for all. Today we have a more in-depth definition of a museum provided by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). According to ICOM, "A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing." Previously museums have been interpreted as a moral compass for society, a place above the blurred lines of controversy and ambiguity in society. While museums often try to act as a neutral zone, they often carry the biases of the directors, curators, and academics who manage them. Many people

today acknowledge this contradiction (Cotter, 2016). Historian Andrew McClellan (2008:14) states that in recent years art museums have stepped up “to foster global cooperation and understanding through a heightened awareness of shared interests and common values bodied forth in works of art.” The public has recognized this new duty, and consequently taken action by heavily criticizing museum practices and effectiveness by attempting to hold them accountable through public action such as protests and performances.

Art Fairs:

In this category I’ve included both art fairs and biennales, because of their historically blurred lines. The supposed boundary between biennales and art fairs are because of art fairs’ commercial purpose. While biennales are understood as large cultural exhibitions. However, this line has been blurred in the past. For example, the Venice Biennale had also been a commercial art fair from 1942 until 1968. On the other hand the typical commercial art fairs are slowly morphing into biennales with highly curated exhibitions (Seah, 2008). Because of these two practices’ similarities I’ve grouped them together. Therefore, depending on the institution, their purposes vary greatly. For example, the Venice Biennale focuses on the display of other cultures around the world, through contemporary arts. While other fairs such as Art Basel and Frieze Art Fair have a central economic focus. The central idea derived from these institutions’ mission statements appears to be the promotion and innovation of the contemporary arts. Often at these art fairs and biennales management and the artists assume the role of responsibility. When discussing contemporary, contemporary topics and controversies are often brought into question. For example, in Art Basel Miami 2022 the installation *ATM Leaderboard* by the design collective MSCHF displayed the checking account balances of those who presented their card. Then their information and photos were added to a leaderboard style display (Dreith, 2022). This is a prime example of art fairs reaching beyond their traditional mission statements into a more controversial role of addressing current issues, rather than letting art fairs simply be about promoting contemporary art.

Auction Houses:

Auction houses have a definitive interest in the commercial art market and could even be considered the backbone of the art market. As mentioned in the historical review, even at the beginnings of auction houses, they were regarded as almost celebrity-like events for the elite of society (Huda, 2008). Auction houses focus on facilitating a sale of goods by bringing together a buyer and seller through the auction format of bidding. Therefore, the responsibilities of the auction house lie within staying committed to the fair sale between both parties, unlike other institutions who are more deeply involved with the public. Historically auction houses have dealt with the secondary market, but in recent years institutions like Sotheby's have been breaking into the primary market (Shaw, 2022). This certainly creates a shift in the auction houses' role in the art market. Another important function of the auction house is to evaluate the value of an artwork. Often, this is carried out through competitive pricing strategies. The value that an auction houses places onto artworks greatly impacts the public opinion of value that an artwork has (Ashenfelter and Graddy, 2006). For example, if one artwork sells for \$5 million and a different artwork sells for \$36 million, the general public is more likely to place more importance, and therefore value, the more expensive work of art. So, while auction houses may not directly work with the general public, their sale and transaction information is still available to the public. Therefore, they still massively influence our art appreciation and perception. This ability to influence public opinion on the estimated value of art is something that should be kept in mind when analyzing the accountability practices of auction houses.

Galleries:

Galleries also function as a commercial establishment in the visual arts industry. Often their goal is to collaborate with artists to help sell and promote their artworks both to the public and to other art institutions. The art gallery is often the first step in the establishment and advancement of an artist's career (Joy, 1996). Some of today's most iconic galleries, also known as mega-galleries or blue-chip galleries, are the Gagosian and David Zwirner Galleries. These international galleries work with both living artists as well as deceased artists, by working with their estates. Either way, these galleries have a purpose of advancing the circulation of art (Joy, 1996:9-12). These larger galleries have a large responsibility to the artist who they represent and

continue the promotion of their artworks. However, most art galleries cannot be considered mega-galleries. There is a wide array of other types of galleries such as standard commercial art galleries which operate on a much smaller scale, selling at prices more affordable to the public. We also have artist-run galleries, corporate galleries, auction house galleries, public galleries, and non-profit galleries (Joy, 1996:16). Today, many galleries have also been assuming a new role within their communities, providing education and even assistance for public health (Camic and Chatterjee, 2013). Once again, depending on the type of gallery their responsibilities vary and therefore so do their accountabilities. Generally, their main responsibilities are to promote the artists who they represent and influence the public in favor of their artists while generating sales.

Art Education Institutes:

Art education institutions have an important role and responsibility in today's visual art industry. As we can see throughout history there has been a growth in art education institutions. Today, there is a wide variety of institutions with differing specialties and focuses. There are traditional, higher education art institutions such as the École des beaux-arts of France or the Accademie di Belle Arti of Italy. There are also plenty of newer institutions such as Sotheby's Institute of Art and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago are higher education institutes which have been established based on existing institutions. There are also non-higher education institutions and organizations such as the Arts Students League of New York. Institutional practices also change depending on a selection of different factors such as location, the included disciplines, tuitions, and private versus public (Hazelkorn, 2005). However, all these institutions rely on their students, so it's necessary to ensure that students and educators are pleased with the quality of education being provided at said institutions. Therefore, they have a responsibility to ensure that students are graduating and/or completing their studies, while being fully up to date on current innovations, techniques, skills, and practices. Today, many institutions are adapting and readjusting their priorities and offerings to stay competitive in the currently saturated education market (Hazelkorn, 2005). They are widening their range of disciplines, practices, and missions and therefore creating more responsibilities.

As we can see there is a great variety of art institutions included under the umbrella of the visual arts industry, as these are just a few of the more traditional visual arts institutions. In comparison to their historical roles in society, some things have changed greatly while other things have stayed more or less the same. While the institutions vary greatly amongst themselves, there are some common themes of responsibility throughout all of these institutions. Those being: promotion and protection of arts and culture, and often a sense of innovation and pushing the industry forward.

2.3 Visual Art and Institutions as Generators of Change

As mentioned earlier, we must consider art as a social institution. In general, social institutions, at their core, help to support our survival and functioning. In this way art's ability to bring forward a sense of community makes it an ideal instrument to bring awareness to societal issues (Albrecht, 1968). Keeping in mind the values of today's creative class; individuality, meritocracy, diversity, and openness (Florida, 2012), and the social expectations that come along with it; the combination of art as a societal institution and the new creative class mentality enables art to be a powerful social instrument. An instrument which can not only be utilized to bring awareness to societal issues but also to encourage critical change (Albrecht, 1968).

Several studies have been made to discover how partnership with traditional institutions can create a positive force for social change (Javorka, 2021). When collaboration with traditionally oppressive institutions occurs with a mission of change it enhances discussion, producing the possibility of a stage for critical debates of ethics, morals, and other divisive topics to produce societal change. Following are a few examples of this within visual arts:

The Whitney Museum & "Triple-Chaser":

In 2019 outrage surrounded the Whitney Biennale. Protests were hosted nearly every Friday for months on the building grounds. The outrage occurred after the discovery that Warren B. Kandors, a Whitney Museum board member, was the CEO of Safariland, a defense manufacturing company. It had been discovered that this company had been producing tear-gas canisters that were utilized along the border of the United States and Mexico against asylum seekers (Greenberger, 2019; Weber, 2018). Soon after, an open letter was produced, demanding he step down from the Whitney Museum board, signed by hundreds involved in the New York City art scene. The group Forensic Architecture also discovered that Kandors was executive chairman of the Clarus Corporation, which produces Sierra Bullets in Gaza, possibly aiding and abetting war crimes.

The group, Forensic Architecture produced a video artwork titled *Triple-Chaser* for the Whitney Biennale. *Triple-Chaser* highlights Safariland's involvement in supplying tear gas to countries where it is employed against its own civilians, as well as evidence that Sierra Bullets are being used by the Israeli Military Industry (IMI) in Gaza (Vartanian and Weber, 2019). After the Forensic Architecture collective shared their video evidence with the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), the ECCHR produced and sent a letter to Kander's company Sierra Bullets, addressing their consideration to take legal action for the possible aiding and abetting of war crimes in the case of the IMI (Vartanian and Weber, 2019).

Through this example, we can see how the arts do in fact have the possibility to act as a social institution that can bring powerful change and a strong sense of unity. Through the arts, awareness of the clash between culture and politics in the case of Warren B. Kanders and the arms trade was discussed and created societal change. By presenting *Triple-Chaser* at the 2019 Whitney Biennale, the institution originally accused of complicity in the situation, it brings the debate to a more public stage forcing the institutions to recognize their involvement and be held accountable. The museum's director was forced to acknowledge the issue with a statement, "This is a challenging time for many of this country's cultural and educational institutions. Here at the Whitney we are engaged daily in exploring the range of difficult topics dealing with fairness, participation, and ethics," (Kinsella, 2019)

Rijksmuseum & Slavery:

The Netherlands, where the Rijksmuseum is located, has a long history of colonialism and slavery. Previously the issue had rarely been acknowledged at the Rijksmuseum institution. However, recently they have updated their permanent collection with a project titled *Rijksmuseum & Slavery*. In this exhibition they have added 77 new labels to pieces from their permanent collection. However, these labels were only kept on display for 1 year. They have stated that post-exhibition, they will reevaluate their existing labels and begin to integrate the histories into their standard labels. The partnering exhibition titled *Slavery*, recounts 10 true stories of enslaved people and their owners across four continents during the Dutch Colonial Period.

In The New York Times interview with Nina Siegal (2021) the exhibition curators mention that the museum's establishment was during "an era when museums were built to convey a nationalistic narrative, to speak about what Europe had achieved." And now the museum is working to reconcile with their past through these newest exhibitions. This coincides with the previously mentioned topic of utilizing historically oppressive institutions as a conduit for initiating social change. A powerful message comes across when such a renowned institution opens their doors to critical discussions about their own histories and practices. This is another realization of responsibilities. In the case of the Rijksmuseum, they have begun to claim responsibility for their lack of recognition of the Dutch nationalist past. By producing these exhibitions and hopefully continuing to edit their existing labels they have discovered a new form of accountability for their institution.

Through the examples of *Triple-Chaser* and *Slavery & Rijksmuseum*, we can see how the exploration of different social, political, moral, and ethical issues may be reconciled within visual art institutions. We can see that even traditional art institutions can be a positive channel for critical discussion and social change in relation to a multitude of topics. Also acknowledging the fact that if it is a more traditional institution, the impact may even be greater because of this exact factor, as they have a higher social value. The visual arts have an impressive influence on society because of how it has been ingrained and accepted as a social institution, enabling it to influence other social institutions. Also, as previously mentioned in this chapter, the inherent multi-disciplinary nature that is necessary to manage these institutions could also be impacted by the same social changes. When considering this possibility for change we can inquire about how sustainability can be taken into consideration for these larger societal changes. In the next chapter, I will explore the connection between the visual arts industry and sustainability.

Chapter 3: Ecological Sustainability and Visual Arts

“In the twentieth century era of displacement, disillusionment, and social upheavals the artist has had to face different challenges. He has had to cut through the ego-tangled scene to reach the free horizons that held a promise of the new “common” of man-environment. Clearly, the artist’s sensibility has entered a new phase of orientation which its prime goal is to provide a format for the emerging ecological consciousness.”

- Gyorgy Kepes, *Arts of the Environment*. 1972.

As discussed at the end of Chapter 2, the arts have a unique advantage to facilitate change, especially when considering social institutions, including our societal norms, human habits, and expectations. In this chapter, I will examine the application of visual arts as a medium of representation and change for ecological sustainability.

The topics included in this chapter analyze the contemporary socio-economic situation of the interconnectedness of sustainability and the visual arts. Firstly, I review the imagery most associated with sustainability and how it impacts our interpretations of sustainability. Sustainable imagery has the capability to influence us both positively, as well as negatively, for example, in cases of greenwashing. However, many constructive art movements have sprouted from the long-term connections between visual fine arts and ecology. Therefore, I will review how artists have interpreted ecological connections and incorporated it into their arts practices. Another important aspect of ecological sustainability and the visual arts is the command of art activism groups and what they have done thus far to generate accountability within the visual arts industry.

3.1 Contemporary Imagery of Sustainability

In the contemporary world we are constantly bombarded by imagery, whether it's emojis, company logos, social media apps, or advertisements. The amount of imagery we encounter daily in the digital era cannot be compared to any other age (Grau and Veigl, 2011). As briefly mentioned in the introduction, when we encounter imagery, our brains have a shocking ability to remember the images. Several studies have shown our ability to recognize and memorize images. During these studies researchers discovered astonishing numbers like the fact that humans can accurately, at a median rate of 98.5%, remember thousands of images after around 5 seconds of viewing. Even 1 week after viewing the images, humans were able to remember the images at an accuracy of 33%, a rate which is equivalent to the memorization of verbal materials immediately after (Shepard, 1967). Further studies show that the brain has an even higher capacity to remember images when encountering them several times. In one study participants were asked to view 200 images for a brief 20ms at a time, after being shown the image several times they were able to remember them at 89% accuracy (Delorme, Poncet and Fabre-Thrope, 2018). Studies such as these prove that humans are extremely visually adept and equally susceptible to visual branding. (Plassmann, Ramsøy and Milosavljevic, 2012).

This mental capacity to process imagery can be extremely beneficial in a world overwhelmed with imagery. According to Oliver Grau and Thomas Veigl (2011:6), editors of *Imagery in the 21st Century*, "Images increasingly define our world and our everyday life: in advertising, entertainment, politics, and even in science, images are pushing themselves in front of language." Images often help to portray thoughts and complicated issues such as how economists utilized imagery so that learners could better comprehend complex theories (Raworth, 2017).

In sustainability practices we also see this technique utilized through logos and infographics. The most popular being the Mobius Loop, also known as the recycling symbol. These three arrows forming a triangle shape represent the waste lifecycle and recall the terms: reduce, reuse, recycle. The recycling symbol immediately provides a call to action; to recycle. In general, the implementation of sustainability imagery conveys the action viewers can take in the present moment (Beers et al., 2010). There are also other recognizable symbols which relate to

sustainability such as the other recycling symbol, often used in Europe, which is two green arrows intertwined to form a green dot. Another well understood image is the leaf symbol found next to a menu food item, highlighting that it is either vegetarian or vegan.

Today, many institutions have utilized the tactic of pictorially symbolizing sustainability. A currently popular example of this is the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These symbols have started to become common practice for institutions and corporations to display on their websites, in their presentations, and educational material. Each of the 17 sustainable development goals are represented by a colored block which contains a symbol, number, and a few words that best encapsulate the mission of that goal. The UN even encourages institutions to utilize these icons within their media, when following the dedicated guidelines. This helps companies present which of the sustainable development goals their practices align with or aim to achieve. It also enables viewers to quickly interpret what the companies and institutions are aiming for without necessarily having to dive too deeply into their mission statements or initiatives.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Figure 1: United Nations. Sustainable Development Goals.

The icons linked to the UN sustainable development goals encapsulate a lot of information related to sustainability through the combination of imagery and a small amount of text. Another powerful example of this is the Doughnut economic model. The economist and author of *Doughnut Economics*, Kate Raworth (2017:249), states that, “By combining the well-known power of verbal framing with the hidden power of visual framing, we can give ourselves a far better chance of writing a new economic story - the one that we so desperately need for a safe and just twenty-first century.” Her depiction of the ‘ideal’ sustainable economy has garnered a lot of attention in recent years, because of its representation of the circular economy, rather than a growth focused economy. The ideals of this economy closely echo those of the UN Sustainability Goals but represented in a different model. In this model she combines a doughnut shape composed of three rings representing the social foundation (necessities for all humans), the regenerative and distributive economy (which is the ideal realm for humankind), and the ecological ceiling (a zone we should avoid surpassing). The diagram highlights what composes these zones, or rings within the doughnut. The goal of this circular/doughnut economy is to stay

within the social foundation and ecological ceiling to preserve the planet and ensure a sustainable and just economy (Raworth, 2017).

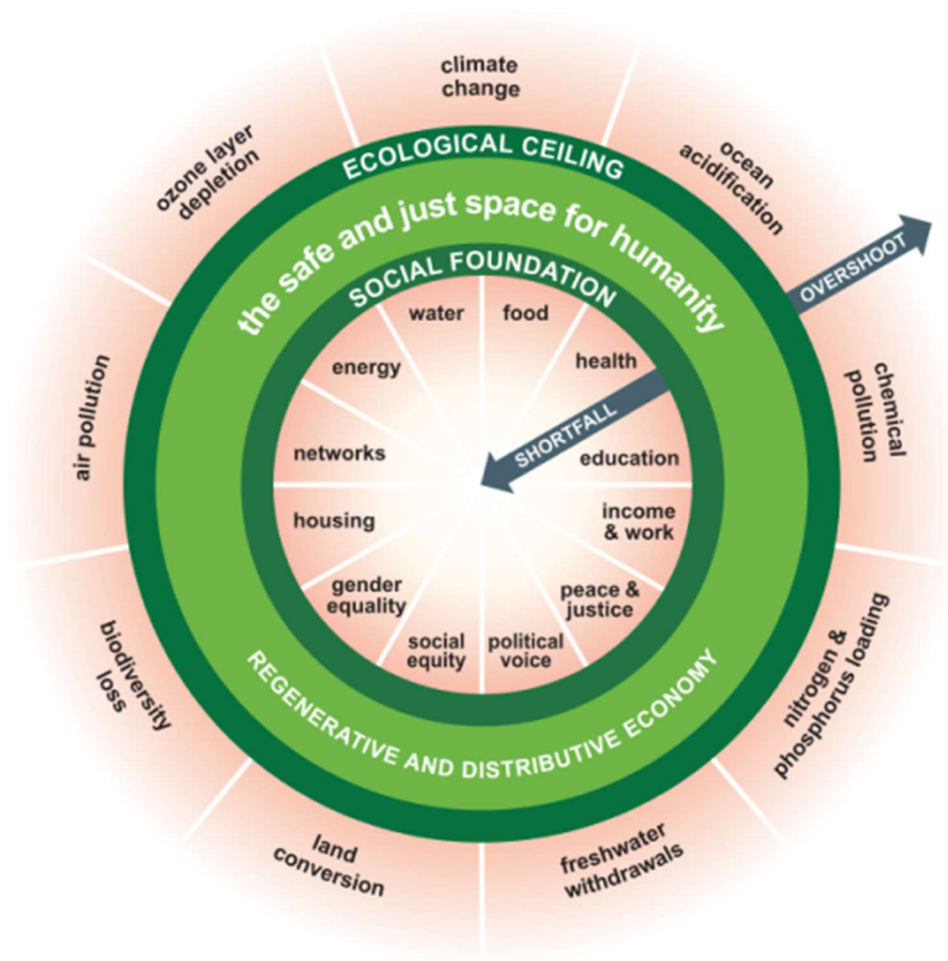


Figure 2: Raworth, Kate. The Doughnut Economics Model. <https://doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics>

3.1.1 Ecological Sustainability Imagery and Greenwashing

As shown through the above examples, images of sustainability can have a positive impact. They can act as a generator for mental recall of sustainability notions, and they can easily break down complicated topics to be more easily understood. Conversely, sustainability imagery may also have negative side-effects. Corporations have recognized the efficacy of imagery through their branding, logos, and advertisement. Some corporations have applied this efficacy to sustainability claims for positive stakeholder influence (Torelli, Balluchi and Lazzini, 2020). ‘Greenwashing’ is defined by TerraChoice (2007) as, “the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service.” The plastering of a recycling logo onto packaging, or utilization of nature and greenery images for advertisement can influence the consumer to believe that a company or product is environmentally friendly (Parguel, Benoit-Moreau and Russell, 2015; Schmuck, Matthes and Naderer, 2018). Other companies and institutions utilize a greenwashing tactic even at the corporate level, only reporting statistics that portray an ideal environmentally responsible institution, without substantial environmental practice to back it (Torelli, Balluchi and Lazzini, 2020). Unfortunately, this can lead to misleading stakeholders about a company’s sustainability practices, with very little consequences in return.

Another issue regarding the depiction of sustainability through imagery is contradictory to the positive simplicity of image comprehension. Some argue that the current imagery of environmentalism is romanticized and can be interpreted too simply (Hansen and Machin, 2013). Rather than encapsulating the multi-dimensionality of sustainability, imagery can reduce it to an elementary issue. Images do have the power to evoke emotions and therefore connect people more deeply to socio-ecological issues. However, we must be aware that decontextualizing socio-ecological issues through simple symbols may create a detachment where people no longer relate the concrete socio-ecological issues (Thomsen, 2015). Rather than recalling a multitude of issues, revealing the depth of sustainability, it might provide us with a very shallow interpretation. Fortunately, there are many artists who have knowingly fought against the detached representation of sustainability in imagery (Thomsen, 2015).

As detailed previously, imagery surrounding sustainability has the potential for a large positive change, a call to action, if you will. However, there are also potential downsides that must be recognized and avoided. This will ensure that sustainability issues are not reduced to a simple one-dimensional issue, but rather displayed as an inherently complicated and multi-disciplinary issue. By doing so people can better understand how we can create dramatic change in sustainability practices. Artists are a strong force in this realm and can greatly improve our connection with sustainability through imagery if practiced correctly.

3.2 Movements of Ecological Sustainability in Visual Arts

As sustainability has become a growing concern, more people within the arts community have begun to address it through their range of practices. Artists have reflected on the topic of sustainability for many years and during the second half of the 20th century several environmental art movements emerged. Environmental art such as land art and ecological art launched a new sense of aesthetics, eco-aesthetics. These movements and the artists involved have shined a light on the complications surrounding ecological sustainability. Other socially engaged artists, who take a critical look at our social institutions have also concerned themselves with the issue of sustainability. Through these combinations of artistic practices sustainability has been investigated through multiple perspectives such as, ecologically, economically, and socially. In this portion of the chapter, I will present some examples of notable artworks within these movements that have contributed to an enhanced and multifaceted representation of sustainability. Additionally, we must consider the contributions that many arts activists groups have added to the discussion of sustainability practices and accountabilities throughout the visual arts industry.

3.2.1 Environmental art and Eco-Aesthetics

Environmental art is an art movement which is influenced by nature and is accomplished through a range of different artistic disciplines. Typically, environmental art reflects on topics of ecology and in general, the human-environment relationship. The timeline of the environmental art movement coincided, non-coincidentally, with the growth of international environmental worries (Ryan, 2007). Today, considering our current socio-eco-economic state, there has been a growing number of artists boldly engaging in topics such as the climate crisis, ethics, sustainability, and social justice. Often, we can see environmental art utilizing raw and natural materials working with the natural world. Encapsulated in this movement are the sub-categories of Ecological art, also known as Eco-art, as well as Earthworks/Land Art. These terms are often used interchangeably, however, there are some notable differences between them.

When considering land art, often we recall the classic example of *Spiral Jetty* by Robert Smithson. However, pre-dating contemporary earthworks by over a thousand years are the earthworks of prehistoric indigenous North Americans, also known as effigy mounds. Effigy mounds are often overlooked when considering land art; they present themselves as mounds, often in a shape that relates to animals, humans, and nature and can still be found today around North America (Guéno, 2017). While the purpose of these mounds is still unknown, their existence validates that the human and ecological connection is an instinct that can be explored through artistic disciplines. Contemporarily, *Spiral Jetty*, built in Salt Lake, Utah displaced 6,000 tons of black basalt rock from the lake to create a massive coil shape reminiscent of the molecular make-up of the salt-crystals found within the lake. This is a prime example of a contemporary earthwork because of its material make-up and interaction with the natural

environment. Typically, land art and earthworks are site-specific and are significant because of their earthly materiality which submits to the natural environment.



Figure 3: The Great Serpent Mound is pre-historic indigenous North American earthwork. Built around 300 B.C. and measures 411 meters long. It can still be seen today in southern Ohio.

As mentioned, another sub-category of environmental art is ecological art. The eco-art movement was defined by its peak in the 1960s and 70s with artists such as Agnes Denes, Helen and Newton Harrison, Joseph Beuys, and Alan Sonfist. Ecological art can be defined as the artistic practice that is, “grounded in an ecological ethic and systems theory, addressing the web of interrelationships between the physical, biological, cultural, political, and historical aspects of ecosystems.” (Wallen, 2012:235). Often eco-art goes past the traditional notion of “art for art’s sake” and intends to facilitate critical discussion about sustainable practices on a public stage (Guy, Henshaw and Heidrich, 2015). Take for example, the artwork *Wheatfield – A Confrontation* by Agnes Denes, which was mentioned during the introduction. Its critical observation of man and nature through the contrasting wheatfield and concrete buildings relate it to the eco-art movement. Other artworks like Hans Haacke’s *Rhinewater Purification Plant* accomplish an even bolder statement. In this artwork installed at Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany in 1972, Haacke created a water purification system which displayed the polluted water from the Rhine River, as well as the fresh water that was generated and pumped into a goldfish tank. The remaining grey water was used to water the outdoor museum garden. Scandal arose

when the museum's sponsor, the Krefeld city municipality, was also discovered to have been funding the major Rhine River polluter, Krefeld Sewage (Weintraub, 2012). Through this artwork Hans Haacke, confronted the environmental issue of pollution as well as the social and economic institutions that enabled the pollution.



Figure 4: Hans Haacke. *Rhinewater Purification Plant*, Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany, 1972.

3.2.2 Socially Engaged Art

The previously mentioned Hans Haacke's artwork can also be categorized as socially engaged art, because of its collaboration with the water treatment plant workers, and its push towards discussion regarding water pollution. The Tate Museum defines socially engaged as an artistic practice which engages with communities of people through participation, collaboration, or open dialogue. Since socially engaged art is inherently about the relationships between beings, it is natural that it would go hand in hand with discussing our social institutions. This art movement can be a powerful source to generate the dialogue and innovation that is necessary to change the current social institutions such as policies, politics, sustainability practices, education, healthcare, and the endless list of our societal norms.

A bold representation of socially engaged art is Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Vehicle* project which employs socially engaged art in a way which does not impose order but rather highlights inequality through useful function. The artist created mobile sculptures that can be utilized by the homeless population of New York City as they move throughout the city. Its multi-functional design can store belongings and provide shelter for the city's homeless population. Rather than trying to camouflage the homeless population, Wodiczko assists the homeless while creating an artistic disruption in New York (Deutsche, 1988:3-35).



Figure 5: Krzysztof Wodiczko. *Homeless Vehicle*, New York City, 1988-1989.

By example of these artworks, we can see that socially engaged art has the potential to induce critical discussion, participation, and innovation. In the case of Wodiczko's *Homeless Vehicle*, his artistic intervention even had the possibility to generate a partial solution for the homeless crisis in one of the world's largest cities. The artworks mentioned in this chapter indicate that artists and their visual arts practices have the capacity to innovate, and problem solve for the climate crisis. However, we must ensure that all the visual arts industry has a similar mission to ensure the generation of large-scale change. This must include visual arts industry leaders and the significant visual arts institutions to strengthen their overall efforts.

3.2.3 Arts Activism

The role of Wodiczko's *Homeless Vehicle* started a wave within the industry. The work inspired many other artists to generate collaborative and community focused artworks which work to the betterment of society (Gardiner, 2018). His work also occurred during the foundational period of arts activism. Today, arts activism plays a critical role in asserting expectations and responsibilities onto institutions within the visual arts industry. Arts activist groups are known for their impressive displays of protest, performance, and writing to call out major industry actors in their questionable practices. This essential accountability role has become a central aspect of arts activist organizations' operations.

There are many groups combating a variety of issues within the visual arts industry. One of the first notable art activist groups beginning in 1985, The Guerilla Girls, tackles feminism within the visual arts. Their projects, writings, and protests have been fighting against the lack of female representation within visual arts institutions for decades. They have practiced both collaborative efforts with institutions as well as guerrilla tactics, hence the name (Kahlo and Kollwitz, 2010). Since the 1980's several other arts activist groups have emerged covering concerns of sexism, racism, LGBTQ+ rights, and more recently, the climate crisis.

Within the past few years there has been a growing concern for the climate crisis and its relationship with visual arts. This can be observed through the growing number of activist groups and organizations established with the goal of improving the relationship of arts and the climate crisis. Some of these groups include Art Climate Transition (ACT), Liberate Tate, Gallery Climate Coalition (GCC), Decolonize This Place, ART 2030, Center for Sustainable Practice in the Arts, Green Art Lab Alliance, and many others.

Protests against art institutions' involvement in the climate crisis have been at the top of the news, generating sensationalist expectations surrounding the topic of climate activism within the art space. Most recently, there has been an explosion of defacement of artworks around Europe. Climate activists have glued themselves to Botticelli's *Primavera*, thrown soup at Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*, and smeared cream on Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (De La Garza, 2022; Kaufman,

2022). Whether or not this is the right way to proceed with climate activism in the realm of the arts is debatable, however we must acknowledge that change is necessary. Other groups such as Liberate Tate have become renowned for halting the sponsorship of fossil fuel company BP's involvement with the Tate Museum sponsorship. There are also plenty of other organizations beginning the process of recording and cataloging the sustainability practices of visual arts institutions, such as the Gallery Climate Coalition and their carbon footprint reports, or the Galleries Commit's Climate Action Database.

The combination of environmental art movements, socially engaged art, and climate activist groups have brought a larger sense of environmental awareness throughout the visual arts industry. Hand in hand with this awareness is the growing sense of corporate responsibility in relation to the climate crisis in visual arts institutions. Thanks to corporate responsibility, many arts institutions already have accountability practices in place, typically for other realms of their responsibilities, such as finances. However, we must continue to explore its applicability to the climate crisis.

Chapter 4: Corporate Sustainability

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an essential aspect of the modern corporation. The motivation behind corporate social responsibility is debatable and a variety of theories stem from what is the range of corporate responsibility. Unarguably, the fundamental duty corporate responsibility is that it obeys the laws of its jurisdiction and secondly, to satisfy its fiduciary duties. However, some argue that the fiduciary satisfaction for a company's primary stakeholders such as the directors and owners should be placed before the 'contradictory' wants of secondary stakeholders, such as environmental sustainability (Bradley, 2019). However, newly instated government policies and laws are incorporating more sustainability regulations, and more companies are realizing the financial benefits of 'green' options (Bradley, 2019). Therefore, more companies are incorporating an even more sustainable definition of CSR into their company practices.

Another growing business standard is Corporate Sustainability (CS), which began to gain momentum after the World Commission on Environment and Development 1987 report *Our Common Future*. The main goal for CS practices is to sustainably satisfy both social, economic, and environmental standards (Montiel, 2008). When it first emerged, CS had a stronger focus on ecological concerns in comparison to CSR. However recent studies into the development of CS and CSR definitions reveal their growing similarities stating, "because of their shared environmental and social concerns, CSR and CS are converging, despite their paradigmatic differences. In CSR, environmental issues are a subset of a broader social performance dimension. In the CS field, the social dimension has become an increasingly important part of the sustainability paradigm." Concluding that, "Contemporary businesses must address economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental integrity before they can lay claim to socially responsible behavior or sustainable practices," (Montiel, 2008:260).

As mentioned previously the primary stakeholders are the principal concern when considering a company's duties and responsibilities (Bradley, 2019). Consequently, this causes a more financial and fiduciary focused perspective. CSR reporting could be motivated because corporations feel it is the right thing to do, but there is overwhelming proof that it also drives a firm's trust and popularity and therefore improves their economic situation. This fulfills their primary fiduciary duty to boost shareholder value (Galant and Cadez, 2017; Bradley 2019). However, studies prove that secondary stakeholders, especially Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) can also influence a company's CSR and their disclosures (Thijssens, Bollen and Hassink, 2015). Since secondary stakeholders are impacting the reputations of a company, the companies must also seek to satisfy their expectations.

CSR and CS continue to converge and rise in popularity, with more than 96% of the world's 250 largest corporations reporting on sustainability as of 2022, according to the KMPG organization. However, as more firms publicize their CS and CSR practices we run into the issue of distinguishing true responsibility versus solely performative action (Mazutis and Slawinski, 2015). Once again, the issue of greenwashing arises. One theory has identified the three main deceptions that occur when greenwashing: confusion, posturing, and fronting (Laufer, 2003). This deception can occur both internally and externally. Externally, corporations may create confusion by only presenting information which communicates an environmentally sustainable firm while actually executing poor environmental performance (Delmas and Burbano, 2011; Laufer 2003). This is possible because of the ability for managers to only disclose information which may create a positive outlook on the corporation and disguise the reality of the organization's operations (Strathern, 2000; Carnaghan, Gibbins and Ikäheimo, 1996). Then corporations may front by whistleblowing or scapegoating. This whistleblowing may come in the form of accusing a different firm of negative activities. Finally, the firm can posture through effective public relations efforts, further communicating their commitment to CS and CSR issues (Laufer, 2003). These same CS and CSR deceptions may also occur internally within the corporation by fronting through internal positions and committees, such as sustainability committees or managers. Further posturing is then committed through convincing internal firm members of their commitment to CS and CSR practices (Laufer, 2003). However, managers must be aware of the possibility that stakeholders might question the credibility and legitimacy of these practices (Carnaghan, Gibbins and Ikäheimo, 1996).

Therefore, transparency and authenticity are key when implementing CS and CSR. Increased transparency has been proven to have economic benefits, via less stock-market shocks (Delmas and Burbano, 2011), and as studied, authenticity can be executed through two major components. The first being distinctiveness, which can be defined as the extent to which the CSR activities align with a firm's core mission, vision, and values. The second being social connectedness, which is displayed through how well a firm's CSR efforts are embedded in a community's social context (Mazutis and Slawinski, 2015). Through these methods, corporations can better convince both their internal and external stakeholders of its positive sustainable impact.

When firms practice CS and CSR activities, whether they are in the case of greenwashing or actual impactful sustainability practices, it is an attempt to prove legitimacy (Torelli, Balluchi and Lazzini, 2020). Therefore, we must be able to differentiate the authenticity of the activities and hold firms accountable for it. Within this chapter I will review what sustainability accounting is and its purpose within a firm, as well as some of the most common sustainability accounting practices. Concluding with its applicability to the visual arts industry.

4.1 Corporate Accountability

Accounting is the action of holding firms responsible for their business practices including CS and CSR activities. Accounting practices are often used both internally and externally, they also vary greatly depending on a variety of factors such as the type of corporation or institution. Some situations which may change accountability practices are the size of the firm, what their claimed missions and values are, and which industry the firm belongs to. It may also be affected by the social and cultural expectations within that community, jurisdiction, or society. Accounting can also be utilized for a multitude of departments within a firm such as finances, ecological sustainability, management, and many others. Either way, corporate accountability is a necessary facet of today's firms to confirm the ethicality of its practices. In general, these accountability practices, when published and practiced correctly, form a trust which creates a stronger bond between a corporation and its stakeholders.

Over the past few decades there has been a change in corporate accountability expectations, which was noted by the United Nations Environmental Programme in their 1999 annual report. Corporate accountability culture is converting from an opaque practice to a transparent one. Previously stakeholders needed to inherently trust organizations, because the only information they could gather was through what little the company themselves released. This was advantageous to firms because of the power dynamic which they were able to hold over stakeholders. Today, because of information access and instated right to information laws throughout many countries, the corporate organizational culture is moving towards transparency (Swift, 2001). This transparency certainly does not remove the power dynamic that corporations have over stakeholders, but it does enable firms and stakeholders to have a more balanced relationship.

If CSR acts as a way for a company to paint an enlightened and sustainable image of themselves then accountability is the resin which seals its stakeholder trust. However, "As the term accountability implies, people want to know how to trust one another, to make their trust visible, while (knowing that) the very desire to do so points to the absence of trust," (Strathern,

2000:310). This is why organizations try to address the lack of trust, between themselves and stakeholders to better establish their good corporate commitment. Therefore, making the firm more trustworthy and reliable to act in good ethical faith. The more trustworthiness that is built within the firm stakeholder relationship, the less necessity there is to constantly prove accountability (Swift, 2001). Naturally, as a firm gains experience and their accountability practices mature and gain momentum, they develop their own authenticity (Carnaghan, Gibbins, and Ikäheimo, 1996). This again is another method to help reaffirm the authenticity and legitimacy of not only a firm's accountability practices but also of their CSR and CS activities.

As mentioned earlier CS and CSR activities often have underlying financial and market motivators, the same truth applies to corporate accountability practices. Studies have been conducted that the accountability practice of CSR reporting has proven to be a beneficial risk management strategy. In general risk management strategies are put in place to prevent negative events from occurring within a firm. In accounting practices and specifically with CSR reporting, an organization analyzes their societal, environmental, and economic impact while also engaging with stakeholders. The combination of these two elements helps to identify potential trouble spots, or risks, therefore acting as a form of risk management (Christensen, 2016). As previously mentioned CSR reporting also helps to build a firm's reputation as an ethical and trustworthy company and these benefits leak into the marketplace. The reporting increases the public and stakeholder perception of the firm's intent, so if misconduct occurs, the intent will be perceived less maliciously, therefore creating less of a stock price reaction, because of their pre-existing positive reputation (Christensen, 2016). However, these market benefits mean that organizations may lean into economic opportunism, only disclosing information to the public which benefits their image, rather than practicing honest accountability. This creates the suspicion surrounding greenwashing and introduces the discussion of how to determine if firms can be trusted to execute their own accounting or if it should be carried out by a third-party organization (Swift, 2001).

When exercising corporate accountability, there are a variety of methodologies and reasonings for its execution. There are also many different frameworks which manipulate how accountability may be practiced. For example, cultural and societal frameworks may change what is being held accountable as well as the method in which the accountability is ensured

(Strathern, 2000). They differ based on a variety of factors, such as the activity that is being accounted for, the stakeholders addressed, as well the firm's general operations. For example, there are both formal and informal methods for accountability (Willmott, 1996). These can be held either internally or externally and reveal themselves through many different practices. Some examples of formal accountability systems could be traditional CSR reports, or annual account statements. While informal accountability may present itself as a socialization of open communication internally at a firm (Roberts, 1996). Social expectations surrounding accountability may also fluctuate depending on the cultural context. One example of this would be that depending on cultures stakeholder importance could change. In Germanic and Latin countries often the employees and creditors are considered the most important stakeholder, therefore accountability practices are better exercised on these main stakeholders. On the other hand, in Anglo-Saxon countries the company's stockholders hold a higher priority and therefore the accounting is better geared towards this stakeholder group (Carnaghan, Gibbins, and Ikäheimo, 1996). This shows how accounting practices can vary regionally and therefore need to be altered to better suit a firm and its stakeholders.

Accountability practices must also be adjusted and evolve depending on how stakeholder pressures change over time (Carnaghan, Gibbins, and Ikäheimo, 1996:169; Tsalis et al., 2020). Previously, accountability concerned mostly financial accounting. Accordingly, institutions would publish documents such as financial disclosure reports for their stakeholders to view. This way, people who were monetarily involved in a firm could feel confident in a firm's economic situation. Today, considering the environmental crisis, many internal stakeholders and external pressures are concerned with environmental sustainability (Delmas and Burbano, 2011). Therefore, corporations have had to adjust their accounting practices to include the new ecological sustainability pressures and include environmental impact transparency in their accounts.

4.2 Current Models and Methods for Sustainability Accounting

Considering the increasing pressures of sustainability accounting that both internal and external stakeholders have placed onto firms, many accounting methods have been implemented. As mentioned, CS and CSR activities are beginning to merge (Montiel, 2008), and therefore new accountability practices often account for a combination of social, economic, and environmental responsibilities. To better understand the applicability of sustainability accounting to the visual arts industry, we must briefly overview some of the common practices, models, and methods of sustainability accounting.

Sustainability Reports:

Sustainability reports are becoming common practice amongst many institutions. As observed by the KPMG organization, in 1999, only 35% of the world's 250 largest corporations were reporting sustainability and as of 2022 that number has reached 96%. While most of these reports are made on a voluntary basis, some governments are now implementing laws which require sustainability reporting (Ioannou and Serafeim, 2019). The reports' inclusions and sustainability reporting tools (SRTs) may vary depending on the firm. Some reports include only ecological and environmental issues, while others emphasize a more generalized approach of CSR reporting (Tsalis et al., 2020). However, the three key SRTs include: frameworks, standards, and rating and indices (Siew, 2015). Frameworks serve as a guideline for sustainability reporting. For example, the reports which include a more traditional emphasis on CSR, may be following the standard sustainability reporting format developed by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) (Christensen, 2016). However, there are plenty of other frameworks that can be adopted for sustainability reporting such as The Global Compact, SIGMA Project, and the Carbon Disclosure Project. Standards, when utilized in sustainability reporting, are a more specific set of requirements and principles to be implemented as an SRT (Siew, 2015). And rating and indices involve third-party evaluation of a firm's sustainability practices (Siew, 2015). Sustainability

reports can be an effective format because of their ability to provide an abundance of information to a firm's stakeholders.

Sustainability Certifications:

Certifications are another method that many firms use to confirm that their products, buildings, practices, and/or materials are sustainable. There is a wide range of certifications that a firm can acquire. For example, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, reviews building sustainability. They gather information regarding carbon footprint, energy and water usage, waste, and building materials, to provide an LEED rating and certificate. Other certifications include animal welfare certification, such as Vegan Action, textile certification such as Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), and climate neutrality certifications like Climate Neutral. However, the market for certifications is saturated and appears to be highly unregulated. But when a quality certificate is issued to a firm, it can contribute to the perception of legitimacy stakeholder have of the firm.

Environmental Partnerships:

Environmental partnerships (EPs) can be identified as voluntary collaborations between companies, organizations, and/or firms which aim to improve a firm's environmental activities. These joint activities help to promote shared knowledge, resources, and experiences to better tackle the complex and multi-disciplinary issue of climate change in a much more efficient format than a firm trying to tackle the issue on their own (Poncelet, 2003). There are three main types of EPs, which can be identified through their objectives: innovation-seeking, legitimacy-building, and policy-influencing (Wassmer, Pain and Paquin, 2017). Innovation-seeking EPs are often partnerships between corporations seeking to create new products, reduce costs, or increase profit through environmentally friendly innovation. There are also legitimacy-building EPs, to validate the authenticity of a firm's CSR activities. Often these partnerships occur between a company and an NGO who has robust experience with environmentalism efforts such as volunteering, charity work, or even experience in third-party environmental auditing. Lastly, policy-influencing EPs are typically corporations who seek to partner with other firms that may

have political leverage. This type of EP may be useful because of the growing number of environmental policies being introduced and their effect on corporations. Therefore, these corporations utilize collaborative efforts to influence government decision making processes (Wassmer, Pain and Paquin, 2017; Poncelet, 2001). Overall, when properly considered and organized, environmental partnerships can be an appropriate solution to the complex nature of environmental issues and sustainability concerns.

Sustainability Leadership:

Recently, there have been structural changes to the top management teams (TMT) of firms. They have begun adjusting their TMTs to better reflect stakeholder values, this means incorporating sustainability management positions such as Chief Officer of CSR or Chief Sustainability Officers (CSO) (Wiengarten, Lo and Lam, 2017). Other firms have decided to introduce sustainability committees composed of elected employees. All these positions help to manage and strategize sustainability practices and CSR activities within an organization, just as any other managerial position such as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) or the Chief Operating Officer (COO). Incorporating these positions and committees into a company, may also be performative to prove CSR dedication to a firm's stakeholders. However, many recent studies have proven the true efficacy of these positions and committees as they do have the ability to influence business outcomes. The studies conclude that the appointment of a CS or CSR committee greatly improves a firm's social and environmental performance (Orazalin, 2020; Velte and Stawinoga, 2020). Other conclusions state that the appointment of a CSO can improve firms' financial performance (Wiengarten, Lo and Lam, 2017). In short, sustainability management positions can be beneficial to building external and internal sustainability efficacy, which leads to greater perceived authenticity.

Sustainability Policies:

The 1987 *Our Common Future* report by the World Commission on Environment and Development recommended that organizations begin implementing sustainable policies which both meet the needs of today, while avoiding harm to the future generations. Since then, many

firms have begun to incorporate sustainability policies as a tool which can be utilized for accountability purposes internally within an organization. Other corporate policies such as employee codes of conduct and equal opportunity employer policies help firms to follow established modes of ethical practice and also help to regulate internal activities. This same principle can be carried out for sustainability accounting. Some common sustainability policies in firms include Fair Labor, Waste Management, and Donation/Charity policies. There are even companies which specifically assist firms in sustainable policy formation such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Policies certainly introduce an element of accountability; however, they are not without flaws. In many companies CS policies are created, yet there is a gap between policy implementation and a lack of following action. To avoid this, it is better if the policies are specific in nature and paired with action plans (Ahmed, Mubarik and Shahbaz, 2021).

Climate Transition Plans:

Climate transition plans are growing in popularity and therefore becoming a larger field of study. This is because their recognition of environmental problems requires radical and dramatic shifts rather than small incremental changes (Köhler et al., 2019). A climate transition plan as defined by the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) is a, “time-bound action plan that clearly outlines how an organization will pivot its existing assets, operations, and entire business model towards a trajectory that aligns with the latest and most ambitious climate science recommendations.” As established through this definition, climate transition plans incorporate scientifically based recommendations which introduce specific actionable guidelines such as the Science Based Target Initiative (SBTi) or the Climate Action 100 (CA100+) (Zhou and Shrimali, 2023). In 2022 the CDP examined over 18,600 companies and 4,100 organizations disclosed they had a climate transition plan, yet only 81 organizations credibly disclosed their plans. Positively, 6,530 organizations stated that they were in the process of developing a climate transition plan. Because of the rapidly growing field of climate transition plans, networks such as the UK Transition Plan Taskforce (TPT) and Sustainability Transition Research Network (STRN) have formed. The STRN has even established areas where further research can be conducted, such as how existing business models can be deliberately phased out, how the transition process can be

sped up, the inherent political and power transitions, and how society and culture impacts transition plans (Köhler et al., 2019).

As established, there are a variety of potential methods to enact sustainability accounting within a firm. However, a recurring theme throughout all these models and methods is disclosure. Without disclosure there is an opaque gap between a firm and its stakeholders and therefore a lack of accountability. Continued caution must be exercised because of the potential that companies may manipulate the disclosures of their reports, policies, and plans to appear environmentally friendly. As mentioned, greenwashing can appear in many forms and these forms of accountability are not immune to the practice of greenwashing.

The selection of methods and models for sustainability accounting which have been included in this chapter are applicable to every firm, industry, or culture, of any size. Therefore, in this time of desperation towards climate action there are few excuses as to why a firm shouldn't implement some of these methods. We must begin to consider which industries have most often excluded sustainability accounting from their practices and under what pretenses they may begin to introduce sustainability accounting.

4.3 Applicability of Sustainability Accounting for the Visual Arts Industry

In the visual arts industry, corporate accountability has been widely practiced. For example, most arts industry organizations have been practicing financial accountability for decades. Visual arts organizations and institutions often publish their annual financial reports for its stakeholders, such as museums publishing their financial reports because of their governmental ties. Even though the visual arts industry is well rehearsed in accountability practices, many do not adhere the same accountability principles to their sustainability practices. In today's climate emergency, other industries have been implementing sustainability accounting practices, to prove that their firm is taking the climate crisis seriously. However, as mentioned, the visual arts have barely had a proportionate reaction.

This lack of sustainability accounting in the visual arts prompts several questions, one of them being: what are the unique circumstances of accounting for the visual arts industry? Unlike many other traditional for-profit firms, a large portion of art institutions and organizations are non-profit. Therefore, the stakeholders which demand accountability practices are different from for-profit organizations. Non-profit organizations usually have a higher moral or ethical motive behind their organizations in comparison to the typical financial focus on selling a product or service. In the visual arts industry, typically, the motive is promotion of arts, culture, education, or artistic innovation. Even the for-profit institutions, such as auction houses and galleries also include the basic motive of arts promotion.

An accounting concept which is highly applicable to the visual arts industry is the concept of the 'caring profession' and 'higher principals.' Richard Laughlin coined the term 'caring profession' to describe professions which are dedicated to social services such as health and education (Laughlin, 1996). I argue that much of the visual arts industry could be included as a 'caring profession.' Often arts institutions and organizations aid the larger purpose of social services. Art museums offer a range of educational services to their visitors, such as educational workshops with children, educational tours, and even accessible libraries. Biennales often offer similar educational programs. For art education institutions, education is obviously a major

priority and the driving purpose of the institution. Outside of the realm of major institutions, many smaller visual arts organizations provide social services to their communities. For example, Art for Refugees in Transition helps to assist war refugees to rebuild their identity through art and the Art Therapy Project which provides free art therapy to youth and adults who have experienced trauma.

Laughlin (1996) states that these caring professions typically have higher principals to follow such as morals, religion, ethics, or personal conscience. These higher principals have the possibility of clashing with traditional professional value principals, like economic principals. In some cases, these economic principals are overridden by the expectations of the higher principals. Which means rather than acting out of economic and monetary interest these caring professions operate from their higher principal interests. So, when applying accountability practices for caring professions including some arts institutions there must be consideration as to what should be accounted for. Should their social services and CSR activities be included in their accounting practices?

Museums, Higher Education Art Institutions, and Biennale's are also, for the most part, nonprofit organizations and institutions. Again highlighting, what the caring profession and higher principals' theory has already acknowledged. Rather than focusing on building profit as most traditional business models their interest is in promoting social services. Some argue that "Because of its inherent interest in promoting the public good, the nonprofit sector is uniquely positioned to demonstrate approaches to sustainability reporting that acknowledge and honor social and environmental concerns as equal in importance to economic concerns," (Jones and Mucha, 2014:1479). As mentioned, when recounting the historical purposes of visual arts institutions, many institutions were and still are viewed as moral and ethical high grounds. They are assumed to be places of ethical standards, just like most nonprofit institutions. Therefore, this theory of sustainability reporting for nonprofits could also be applied to the nonprofit portion of the visual arts industry.

In the past years there has been a rapid growth of the nonprofits sector, including arts nonprofits. As the nonprofits sector grows, so does their ability to make an impact on communities (Jones and Mucha, 2014). As the sector and impact grows, their responsibilities and influences should also be acknowledged through accountability practices to ensure the

authenticity and legitimacy of their efforts. Not only do the stakeholders benefit from introducing accountability practices for nonprofits but also the organizations themselves do. By introducing accountability practices, they only further validate their own mission statement and values of positive social, economic, cultural, and/or environmental contributions to the community and their stakeholders (Jones and Mucha, 2014).

When considering the visual arts industry organizations and institutions as nonprofits or caring professions, we must consider what their mission, values, and higher principals are. Does sustainability fit into this vision? Can sustainability be considered a higher principle? I would argue that fits perfectly into the vision of the arts industry. When looking back at the analysis of purposes for the visual arts industry, the overwhelming theme was protection, promotion, and innovation of the arts and culture. And to follow through with the execution of this mission we must ensure its long-term sustainability both economically, socially, and ecologically.

The visual arts industry accounts for massive amounts of CO₂ emissions, 16 million tonnes of CO₂ emission are generated just from energy related emissions. 2 million tonnes from arts shipment and business travel and a whopping 52 million CO₂ emissions from visitor travel each year (Bottrill and Tickell, 2021). These numbers alone prove the necessity of more sustainability practices and accounting in the field of visual arts. If visual arts institutions hope to keep up their ethical and moral high ground, then they must start implementing more dramatic sustainability efforts into their institutions and organizations.

In conclusion, sustainability accounting is highly applicable to the visual arts industries and its major actors. Therefore, it should be implemented just as many other industries today have done. Yet, many institutions shallowly participate in sustainability promotion without any internal shifts or changes to create true change towards more sustainable practices. The organization Galleries Commit sent out a survey to hundreds of art galleries in the New York City area. In this survey, they compiled the responses from 140 art workers to uncover the true sustainability measures in NYC art galleries. The findings were less than stellar, with less than half (47.4%) of workers stating that their gallery engages in sustainability or resiliency practices and planning. This is just a peek at what the arts industry has been lacking for sustainability measures in only one art epicenter. It opens the door to question what sustainability measures

have taken place at major art institutions around the world and how they are being held accountable for their actions.

Chapter 5: Research and Case Studies

To better understand the current state of sustainability measures in the visual arts industry it is best to observe and analyze institutions and organizations' practices. This chapter reviews a range of visual arts institutions revealing the environmental sustainability measures they execute, the different accountabilities, and the impact of said measures. To provide an initial basis of knowledge, I will review and discuss the methods of research conducted that led to choosing the selected case study choices. The research entails 20 institutions which were analyzed for their sustainability practices. This general analysis of sustainability practices will be followed by the specification of three institutions for case studies, which are notable for their sustainability practices, or lack thereof. The contrast between the three selected institutions displays the wide range of sustainability practices in the visual arts industry and addresses the proposed research questions; What are visual arts institutions currently practicing for sustainability measures? How and to whom are the institutionalized actors of visual arts held accountable?

Previously, I had defined the major institutions in the visual arts industry including Art Fairs, Auction Houses, Art Higher Education Institutions, Museums, and Galleries. For the initial research analysis, I observed four institutions per category, specifically choosing some of the most renowned institutions in each category as well as institutions known for their current sustainability practices. All the selected institutions engage with contemporary art, therefore maintaining focus on the current visual arts industry. Although, I must note that the climate crisis is not only applicable to contemporary art institutions, and it should be considered throughout all visual arts institutions. Overall, this selection process was to acquire a general basis of the current sustainability practices for the industry and identify any gaps between sustainability, implementation, and accountability. I also must address the bias of selecting European and North American institutions. This choice was made in particular due to accessibility of information, in which political influences like the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal make

sustainability information more publicly accessible. As well as documentation language barriers which occurred for many Asian and South American institutions.

The 20 institutions which I've analyzed as part of the initial research include:

Art Fairs: documenta, Art Basel, The Venice Biennale, Frieze Art Fair

Auction Houses: Christie's, Sotheby's, Phillips, Bonhams

Galleries: Serpentine Galleries, Gagosian, David Zwirner, Hauser & Wirth

Museums: Guggenheim, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Tate Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA, Los Angeles)

Higher Education Institutions: Royal College of Art, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, The Universität der Künste Berlin (UdK), École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts

Following the overall research observations, three institution-specific case studies are proposed which underscore the diversity of sustainability accounting commitment in the visual arts industry. The case study institutions include Christie's auction house, Gagosian galleries, and the Art Basel fair. These institutions display dramatic variations in their initiatives and methods of implementing sustainability. By comparing three institutions it is possible to gather a better understanding, not only of the variation of sustainability practices, but also the current state of sustainability practices in leading institutions, their future intentions, and how other institutions may follow their lead. These observations may also reveal why hesitations around sustainability efforts exist and what we can do to improve sustainability efforts in the visual arts industry.

5.1 Current State of Sustainability Accounting in the Visual Arts Industry

Reporting:

It appears that when considering publicly published sustainability reports museums are taking the forefront. For example, the Tate, Guggenheim, and MOCA museums all have, or are in the process of, initiating public sustainability reporting. A particular standout is MOCA which has already actively, and publicly reported sustainability practices and initiatives at the museum through the annual MOCA Sustainability Report (2021; 2022). Additionally, they have produced multiple editions of an Environmental Newsletter (MOCA, 2023) and have even begun to release exhibition specific carbon emission reports, such as the Pipilotti Rist exhibition (MOCA, 2021). Another common practice among museums is a public statement or press release declaring an ecological emergency. The Tate is one of the many museums which had declared an ecological emergency which was published in 2019 and accompanied by a 2018/2019 carbon footprint report. Yet, Tate has reserved from publicly publishing any additional carbon footprint reports since its initial 2018/2019 report (Tate, 2020). The Guggenheim Museums are also signaling the beginning stages of public reporting by dedicating a website section to future annual reports. In the meantime, the Guggenheim has only published one exhibition carbon report (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2022). Contrastingly, MoMA has not contributed to public sustainability reporting and only has a dedicated sustainability webpage, stating their achievements and vague sustainability goals.

In comparison to the efforts of museums, the visual arts industry's largest auction houses, art fairs, and academic institutions lack public reporting concerning sustainability, with only a couple of exceptions. From the art fairs analyzed, of notable interest was the Frieze art fair which, unlike most institutions, does not have a dedicated sustainability webpage, even though the Frieze art fair co-founder, Matthew Slotover is also a founding member of the Gallery Climate Coalition (GCC) (Buck, 2022). In 2010 the Frieze art fair partnered with Julie's Bicycle and the Mayor of London to publish the Green Visual Arts Guide (Frieze Art Fair, Julie's Bicycle and Mayor of London, 2010), but there have been no recent reports or documents published.

Other art fairs such as the Biennale, documenta, and Art Basel seem to be actively incorporating sustainability measures and are even successful in carbon neutrality, in the case of the Venice Biennale as reported on their website. Overall, these sustainability successes and missions are displayed through dedicated webpages, but often these sustainability webpages lack clarity and do not report many clear and measurable goals to be held accountable for.

Auction houses Sotheby's, Bonhams, and Phillips have little to no reported sustainability measures. This could reflect their lack of sustainability practices in general, hence there is nothing to report. However, there is one stand-out auction house, Christie's, which has surpassed not only other auction houses but other visual art institutions and organizations in their sustainability reporting. This is why I have chosen Christie's auction house for an in-depth case study, which will occur later in this chapter.

Another noteworthy organization is the Hauser & Wirth gallery. Beginning in 2019, Hauser & Wirth publicly released information and data such as climate action plans and climate impact reports (Hauser & Wirth and Galleries Commit, 2022; Hauser & Wirth, 2022). Furthermore, this characteristic of publicizing knowledge is carried out through their other activities such as hosting the 2022 Sustainability in Action conference to enhance industry collaboration and information sharing. The Serpentine Galleries is another gallery which appears to be dedicated to industry collaboration. This is displayed through their hosting of several cross-disciplinary events. However, the Serpentine Galleries do not publicize any of their sustainability action plans even though said plans are mentioned throughout their sustainability policies. Megagalleries, David Zwirner and Gagosian, have no sustainability dedicated web pages and rarely release information any regarding sustainability, with the exception of one exhibition carbon impact report from David Zwirner and Atelier Ten (2020). Since this carbon impact report, no additional reports by David Zwirner have been published.

Partnerships & Sponsors:

As mentioned, when previously discussing environmental partnerships (EPs), they may occur via three main motivations: innovation-seeking, legitimacy-building, and policy-influencing (Wassmer, Pain and Paquin, 2017). Commonly occurring EPs in the visual arts

industry are NGO partnerships, which often occur through environmental auditing. For example, the partnership between Guggenheim and Art into Acres (2022) or the Hauser & Wirth and Galleries Commit (2022) collaboration, both of which were third-party auditing of carbon impact reports. A notable partnership which is both legitimacy-building and policy-influencing is the Frieze Art Fair's "Green Visual Arts Guide" (2022) which was produced in partnership with Julie's Bicycle (an NGO) and the Mayor of London. The partnership secures the fair's sustainability authenticity while also engaging politically through the Mayor of London office, which certainly may be politically beneficial considering the fair's London headquarters.

Most art institutions and organizations must seek sponsors and partners for financial and resource backing, most often through stable and economically powerful companies such as financial institutions and automobile companies. The conducted research revealed some of the leading automobile sponsors which include; Volkswagen sponsoring documenta fifteen and MoMA, BMW sponsoring Art Basel and Tate, Hyundai sponsoring MoMA and Tate, as well as Rolls-Royce which sponsors Serpentine Galleries. As mentioned, financial institutions often sponsor cultural projects such as Finanzgruppe for documenta 15, UBS for Art Basel, Goldman Sachs for Serpentine Galleries, and all BNP Paribas, Deutsche Bank, and Bank of America for Tate. Financial institutions as well as automobile companies certainly are not the embodiment of sustainability, however they have the financial resources necessary to support such grand expositions and institutions. Fortunately, it appears that in some cases seem these companies seem to be funding and supplying green innovation, such as Volkswagen installing 42 new EV charging stations for documenta fifteen. However, one can imagine more sustainable partnerships which encourage visitors to utilize public transport or walking, biking, etc. Another notable transportation partnership is NetJets, a private jet service, sponsoring Art Basel, which will be considered later in the following case studies. A major sustainability downside to financial institutions is their support of fossil fuel investment. The organization Banking on Climate Chaos (2022) discovered that, "JPMorgan Chase, Citi, Wells Fargo, and Bank of America together accounting for one quarter of all fossil fuel financing identified over the last six years." A now depleting sponsorship that has a long history of sponsoring the art industry is oil companies. Some examples of this include BP for Tate, a partnership which was recently broken off (Morris and Sehgal, 2023), and ExxonMobil for the Guggenheim Museum and Metropolitan Museum of Art (Brooks, 1976).

Exhibitions and Events:

Institutions and organizations are in the beginning phases of acknowledging the need to speak out about climate change, sustainability, and ecology. Often this is performed by incorporating events and exhibitions that acknowledge the climate crisis, help to spread awareness, and encourage change. However, we must simultaneously consider the climate impact created in the production of the events, as well as possible greenwashing that occurs when sustainability events are produced without implementing environmentally friendly solutions throughout said event production. Each of the institutions reviewed had, in some way, produced an event or exhibition concerning climate or environmental awareness. Both biennale's managed to incorporate sustainability into their themes, therefore encouraging participants to create works inspired by sustainability. Documenta fifteen had an undercurrent of sustainability in its theme of 'Lumbung' which focuses on equality, unity, and resource sharing. The Venice Biennale, especially throughout their architecture biennales, choose themes which easily include sustainability, the two most recent being: How will we live together? and The Laboratory of the Future. Consequently, many pavilions chose to incorporate the concept of sustainability through their curation, such as the Danish Pavilion's Coastal Imaginaries (Lund and Carstensen eds., 2023) and the Portuguese Pavilion Fertile Futures' (Garcia, 2023). Both the Frieze Art Fair and Art Basel, included a few contemporary artists who focus their practice on nature, ecology, and sustainability, however this is mostly representative of the participating gallery's choices. However, in the past, the Frieze Art Fair encouraged sustainability through collaborative displays such as the collaboration with Pinwheel, an NGO, to allow fair visitors to donate to a foundation of their choice.

Charitable auction events are also a common theme throughout all analyzed auction houses. Christies, which will be thoroughly described later, appears to be a leading institution in hosting sustainability focused charity auction events. Other auction houses host events like Sotheby's (2021) Art For Your World which enabled the artists of the auctioned artworks to choose which WWF project to donate their proceeds to. On the other hand, Phillip's auction house have produced few sustainability auctions, one being the Art for One Drop auction. While Bonham's produced no ecological sustainability focused events or auctions, they have produced

a few charitable auctions in which proceeds were donated to health and medicine related projects.

Both galleries and museums analyzed seem to host many exhibitions, events, and programs in relation to sustainability, some of the leaders being Serpentine Galleries, Hauser & Wirth, MoMA, and MOCA. A recurring theme throughout these events is collaboration that facilitates information sharing of sustainability practices. Some examples of this include the Serpentine Galleries' General Ecology starting in 2018, which is a running event that invites artists, scientists, and many other experts to think about the ecological relationship and conduct research in the field of ecology. However the Serpentine also hosts several other long-term programs which address the climate emergency such as Back To Earth. Hauser & Wirth's (2022) Sustainability in Action conference is another prime example of encouraging industry collaboration and sharing. However, there is a big gap in this practice just within the gallery category. Blue-chip galleries such as Gagosian and David Zwirner seem to host the least events, and as anticipated, this aligns with their lack of reported sustainability measures.

Museums tend to facilitate the most sustainability related events such as the The MoMA's recently established Emilio Ambasz Institute for the Joint Study of Built and Natural Environment, which aims to be a think tank dedicated to design and ecology. This Institute within the museum has produced events such as Circular Museum: Exploring Sustainability through Experimentation, a summit Architecture Studio in the Anthropocene, and The Third Ecology: EAHN Thematic Conference. To further establish the participation of museums in sustainability events is the example of the MOCA's recent exhibition in which they worked with the artist's (Pipilotti Ristfor) studio to ensure an environmentally friendly exhibition. MOCA's (2021) exhibition even produced a climate impact report to highlight their environmental efforts. The MOCA has also hosted and published a multitude of videos of panels, discussions, and conferences, to spread ideas and foster collaboration on the topic of sustainability. Other museum efforts include the Tate's exhibition adaptation which includes more discussion of climate justice, ecological emergency, and other social injustices which had begun after the termination of their long-term partnership with BP (Moris and Sehgal, 2023). They have also facilitated projects like "GREENART" to research sustainable ways of preserving cultural heritage. The Guggenheim museums have also introduced many events and exhibitions that correlate with ecological

sustainability. Specifically, the Peggy Guggenheim Museum had hosted sustainability workshops when participating in the Sustainable Development Festival of 2021. Similarly, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum has produced exhibitions such as *Countryside*, *The Future*, and *Spin Spin Triangulene* all of which have strong themes of sustainability and human-environmental connection.

Many of the universities analyzed have also begun to introduce programs and events which support environmental sustainability education. To illustrate, the Royal College of Arts established the SustainLab which produces collaboration between students to explore sustainability topics through events, workshops, and biweekly open critique sessions. Other institutions are focused on interuniversity collaboration such as the School of the Art Institute of Chicago partnering with the ARCH program which fosters collaboration between different Chicago universities to innovate more sustainable practices amongst all of the city's universities. In general, universities possess a unique ability to integrate sustainability innovation practices into their educational programs, which could be further developed in the future.

Building, Energy & Materials:

Adapting buildings to be more energy efficient and reduce waste is a large part of what visual arts industries can do to help reduce their carbon footprint. Art fairs can easily create large carbon footprints because of their modular and changing nature and some art fairs such as documenta fifteen have placed a focus on reusing materials for the fair structures. Documenta fifteen had also joined the network for sustainable material circulation, which reuses materials from several institutions throughout Germany (Liu, 2021). Art Basel, also, has a strong program enabling material reuse, which will be more thoroughly covered in the case study. Regarding energy, the art fairs often pride themselves in the reduced energy use such as the Venice Biennale that has already reached their carbon neutral goal and plan to utilize renewable energy sources in the future. As well as Frieze London which states they are utilizing a 100% hybrid power model and moved to 100% LED lighting for gallery booths (Buck, 2022). However, these institutions rarely released the full details regarding how their sustainable energy usage is accomplished.

Higher education art institutions also have a unique situation at hand. In their case a large supply of affordable materials are continually needed for their students. Some institutions have

implemented unique solutions, such as the Récupérathèque and the LA RÉSERVE DES ARTS (LRDA) at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. Both programs help students to recycle materials and find materials at accessible price points. Other universities focus on reducing building energy usage and waste. For example, the Royal College of Art's newly constructed campus buildings reach the BREAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) Excellent category. The university has also joined the London Higher Operations Network's Circular Food Sprint, which aims to create a circular food economy across London (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2023). They also signal through their sustainability webpage that the university uses third-party organizations to monitor their campuses' energy and waste. The School of the Art Institute of Chicago has also achieved carbon neutrality as of 1st of January 2020, by implementing changes such as incorporating stations to refill reusable water bottles, urban rooftop beehives and gardens, and receiving LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) silver certification by reducing their energy consumption by 38%.

Auction houses, galleries, and museums all have similar building needs and therefore similar sustainability practices which often include working towards LED lighting, renewable energy sources, and LEED certification to lower energy consumption. Other common methods appear to be advancing waste collection systems while introducing more recyclable or biodegradable materials and utilizing less carbon emitting forms of transportation for shipping purposes, which can be most useful for auction houses. Overall, it appears that efficient and environmentally friendly building structures and forms of energy seem to be the most common method that visual arts organizations and institutions use to pursue sustainability.

Organization Management:

To manage sustainability practices within the visual arts industry many organizations and institutions studied have implemented forms of sustainability leadership and sustainability policies. Higher education art institutions displayed a variety of policies as well as committees dedicated to sustainability throughout all the studied institutions. A notable institution being the Royal College of Art which incorporated a variety of sustainability policies, some of them being the Energy Management Policy and Sustainable Food Policy (2022). The university has also

included ecological sustainability aspects into their other policies like the Responsible Investment Policy (2022) which outlines limitations on investing in fossil fuels, tobacco, and only investing in corporations that follow human rights and labor standards. The Gift Acceptance Policy (2023) also states they avoid accepting gifts from those who have participated in environmental degradation. Often higher education art institutions form sustainability committees composed of both students and faculty, such as AG Klima at The Universität der Künste Berlin, Récupérathèque at École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, and the Green Futures Group at the Royal College of Arts.

The sustainability committee appears to be a well-welcomed addition, introduced into most of the organizations which were analyzed. All the museums analyzed had leadership positions and committees dedicated to sustainability as well as published sustainability policies. In general, art fairs, auction houses, and art galleries appear to be slowly introducing organizational management for sustainability. This can be seen through policies such as the Serpentine Galleries comprehensive environmental policy posted on their website which involves staff travel, cleaning products, energy consumption, green IT, waste management, and tangible areas of focus for their future sustainability ventures. However, unlike the Serpentine Galleries, many institutions do not make these policies available to the public and therefore it is more difficult to hold them accountable.

While many institutions have begun incorporating events, exhibitions, workshops, and conferences that highlight sustainability concerns and promote discussion, there are still large gaps where actual implementation of sustainability measures in these institutions are lacking. This is noticeable through the vagueness of the sustainability statements and policies. As mentioned before all the implemented sustainability measures must be matched with feasible and measurable action plans to ensure the practices are properly implemented. When the visual arts institutions and organizations refer to their sustainability efforts with a lack of clarity it may confirm this gap between goals and realized action. This vagueness also provides a sort of security blanket for institutions and organizations, as they cannot be properly held accountable by stakeholders. When there is a lack of exact and precise details released to the public, it is much more difficult for external stakeholders to properly prove the lack of action being taken.

This could also be the reasoning behind the decision of certain institutions to not release detailed information regarding their sustainability practices and procedures.

Taking a closer look at specific institutions may aid a better understanding of the range of commitment to sustainability issues in the visual arts industry. It will also unveil what specific institutions are implementing or avoiding, revealing the situation of sustainability accounting for the visual arts on a deeper level. It may provide more insight as to how we can hold the visual arts industry accountable, and where there may be gaps and areas of improvement that both we as stakeholders and they as an industry can implement.

5.2 Christie's Auction House

The first in-depth case study to examine is Christie's Auction House. Christie's Auction House was founded in 1766 by James Christie, when he held his first sale room at the legendary Pall Mall (Huda, 2008). Christie was painted as a "most innovative, successful, and visible auctioneer of his time," he was "widely known, painted, quoted, and caricatured, and was at the sometimes-controversial center of almost every important art sale," (Wall, 1997). Originally established for auctioning estates and artworks, their auctions grew even larger and became spectacles and performances to all those attending, whether bidding or just observing. The pompous and spectacular auction style initiated by Christie had a strong influence on the auction industry as a whole, influencing other firms such as Sotheby's, Bonhams, and Phillips, to eventually replicate the auctioning style (Huda, 2008; Wall, 1997). Continuing to boost its reputation, Christie's sells works from some of the world's greatest artists at the time such as Degas, Klimt, and Schiele.

It is notable that Christie's has a history of charity auctions. The first charity auction dates back to 1915 with the Christie's Red Cross charity sale, which raised money for war efforts. Christie's remained the leading auction house of London until post World War II, when its main competitor, Sotheby's, began establishing itself as an equally successful auction house (Huda, 2008). However, it remained extremely competitive, completing its first £1 million sale in 1970 with a Diego Velázquez portrait. By 1977 Christie's fully established itself as an international auction house by founding its first New York sale room.



Figure 6: *A Great Picture Sale at Christie's*, from "The Graphic," London. September 10, 1887. Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection.

Today, Christie's has, astonishingly established itself in 46 different countries, becoming a truly international company. They also hold the controversial record for most expensive artwork ever sold, Leonardo da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi", which sold for over \$450 million in 2017. They have expanded their auction sales across 80 different categories, even branching into the contemporary category of NFTs. Their auction sales techniques have also reached hybrid formats such as online sales, livestreaming auctions, integrating augmented reality, and even accepting crypto currency as a form of payment.

Throughout the institution's history they have continued to produce charitable auction events like the historical 1915 Christie's Red Cross charity sale. The most significant charity auction being the 2018 Rockefeller charity auction which reached \$835.1 million in sales, becoming the highest auction sale ever for a private collection. All of the proceeds of the sale were distributed to 12 different charities, which the Rockefellers have continually supported (Christie's, 2018). Other notable charity auctions managed by Christie's within the past couple of years include Core: A charity auction benefiting the humanitarian crisis in Pakistan,

Unquestioning Love: An Auction to benefit the New York City AIDS Memorial, Art For Education, and Messi: The Boots That Made History: Sold for Charity. As well as a series of philanthropic sales in collaboration with the Gallery Climate Coalition (GCC) which raised over £5.6 million for the environmental charity ClientEarth.

Christie's continues their corporate social responsibility outside of just charitable auction sales. Their CSR program, titled *Art + Soul* consists of six teams: Sustainability, Employee Engagement, Diversity & Inclusion, Staff Art Show, Cultural Stewardship & Philanthropy, and Global Day of Service. The mission statement being "We believe in the power of art in society and we endeavour to use our position in the art market as a positive force. To that end, at Christie's we strive to manage our people and practices responsibly in order to leave a positive, enduring impact on society, and to enhance the communities in which we live and work through cultural stewardship and arts advocacy." The *Art + Soul* CSR platform has produced programs such as the Christie's Fund which invests in education, mentorship, and career development strategies for those who are underprivileged and interested in the arts. They also address the Gender Pay Gap through mandatory reporting requested by UK legislation. Christie's Employee Engagement team also founded the Global Day of Service, which encourages Christie's employees' involvement in volunteering efforts like revitalizing parks, assisting in post-event cleanups, and assisting in workshops and teaching efforts.

The sustainability portion of Christie's CSR program is steered by three pillars: commit, communicate, and collaborate. They aim to become a more sustainable business by committing to reducing carbon emissions, communicating, and reporting on their progress, and collaborating with others to drive sustainable change more effectively. Their ultimate goal is to reduce carbon emissions by 50% and reach carbon neutrality by 2023. Christie's is currently an active member of the Gallery Climate Coalition (GCC). The active membership status is awarded to firms which align with the GCC guidance of (1) completing an annual CO₂ emissions report, (2) establishing a sustainability team within the firm, (3) publishing an environmental responsibility statement. Thanks to the GCC guidelines the public has access to a variety of sustainability reports, documents, and statements from Christies.

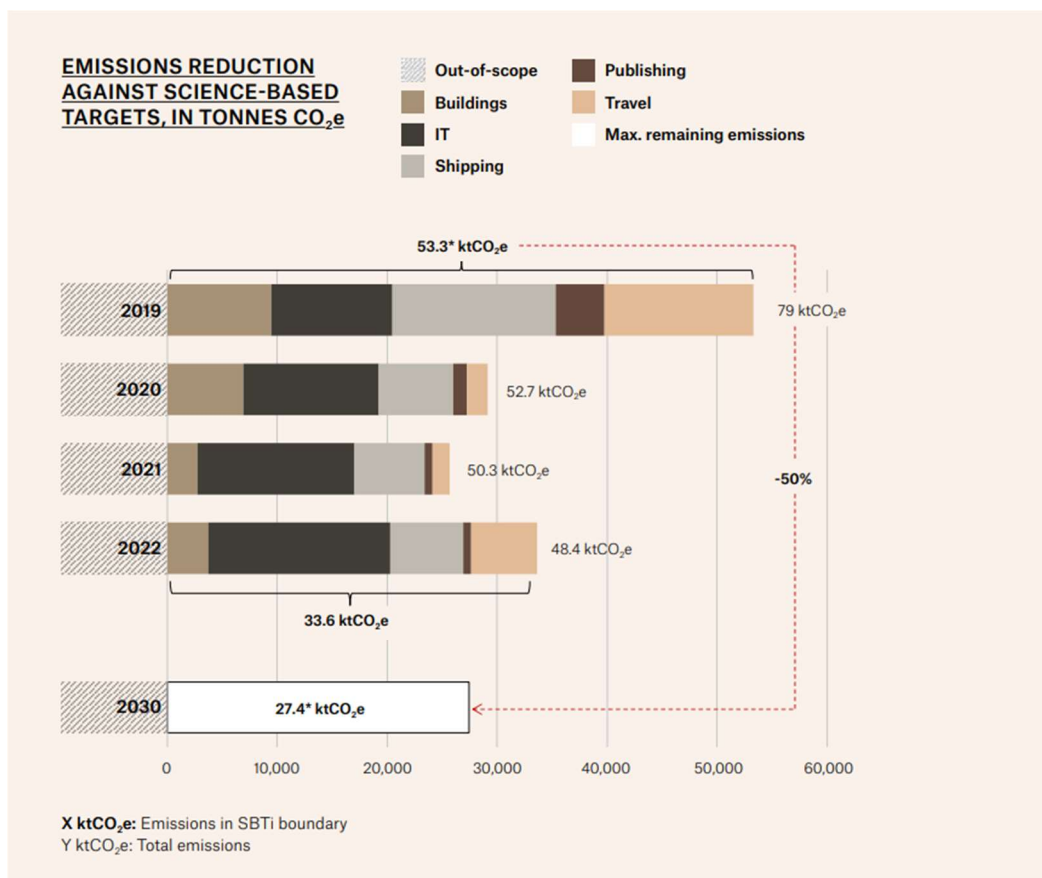


Figure 2: Christie's operational CO₂ emissions comparing 2019-2022, in relationship to their goal of 50% CO₂e reduction by 2030. From the Christie's "Environmental Impact Report: 2022."

The informational annual Environmental Impact Reports, released by Christie's (2021; 2023) provide a deeper insight into the company's goals, progresses, innovations, and even faults. The 2022 Environmental Impact Report was prepared in collaboration with Accenture utilizing the GHG Protocol for the World Resources Institute (WRI). The report begins with an opening forward by Christie's Chief Operating Officer, Ben Gore (2022), who states, "Our goals are ambitious, and success is not easy, but we are well placed to make continuing progress. Transparency will remain a key factor in our approach, and we hope that continuing to share our learnings will bring benefit to others."

The report highlights their emissions in accordance with the Science-Based Target Initiative (SBTi). In fact, Christie's is the first auction house to have their emissions validated by the SBTi, a firm which evaluates companies' emission targets in line with rigorous standards. As evident in figure 2, they compare their operational CO₂ emissions beginning with the year 2019

through 5 major departments: Buildings, IT, Shipping, Publishing, and Travel. Through the graph published in their 2022 report we can see the carbon emissions dip that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, during the 2022 rebound, the CO₂e still remained below their pre-pandemic 2019 CO₂e levels with a 45.3% difference in carbon emissions between 2019 and 2022. Most notable is the reduction of CO₂e in the travel sector and an equally notable increase can be seen in their IT area. This IT CO₂e increase began in 2020 in alignment with the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the beginnings of NFT sales in 2021. In 2022, IT emissions increased by 16% to 16,555 tonnes (the largest CO₂e of their five operational areas) which can be attributed to the introduction of Christie's 3.0, a digital platform dedicated to NFT sales, a large data storage move, and acquisition of new software and hardware.

However, they do highlight methods in which they are attempting to improve their IT related carbon emissions, such as new energy reducing block-chain networks, cloud data storage, and limiting e-waste. Other targets for improvement throughout other operational sectors include including hybrid working, switching to renewable electricity, and achieving LEED and BREEAM certifications to reduce their building CO₂e. In their publishing sector they have achieved an 87% emission reduction through reducing print catalogs. And they have reduced business travel emissions by opting for electric/hybrid vehicles, opting for train travel rather than plane, and reducing the amount of business class tickets. These large carbon emission reductions prove that internal operational change can make a large difference when considering ways to enhance sustainability in a visual arts institution.

However, inter-company collaboration can also prove to be an extremely effective method for improving sustainability efforts, especially when considering the outward effects, it may have on other firms or industries. The current industry standard of fine art shipment via aircraft produces 60 times the environmental impact in comparison to sea transportation, according to the Gallery Climate Coalition (GCC) (2022). Which is why in 2022, Christie's announced a partnership with Crozier, a fine arts logistics company, to invest in sea-freight shipping. This new partnership organizes a sea-freight service between London and New York to occur monthly, as well as a bi-monthly service between London and Hong Kong. Crozier's expertise in the technicalities of fine art shipment and Christie's large client base and market influence make this a particularly powerful collaboration. If the initial program succeeds the

collaboration plans to geographically branch out, executing other routes such as New York-Hong Kong (Kaufman, 2022). This new shipment collaboration goes hand in hand with Christie's newly implemented reusable and renewable packaging, which is utilized in certain, but not all situations. As stated in Christie's (2022) report, "this is currently in use for our trade clients and internal freight in some regions." While not fully committed, this aligns well with their announced goal of using only 100% recyclable packaging. It also appears that there is currently a Repurposed Crate model in development and trial, which they hope to employ in the future. Innovative collaboration for sustainability, such as the case of Christie's and Crozier, can be advantageous on an industry-wide scale. It has the potential to influence how art transportation is conducted throughout the entire visual arts industry.

Collaborative efforts with other environmental protection organizations have also steadily become a more common practice at Christie's. As mentioned previously, they had collaborated with GCC to produce the "Artists for ClientEarth" event which raised money for ClientEarth, a charity for environmental protection. And in 2022, in collaboration with Grapes for Humanity Global Foundation, Christie's rare wine sales funded projects which help to mitigate climate change. However, they have yet to schedule any 2023 sales or auctions in support of environmental and sustainability action, which could signal a post-pandemic disinterest in sustainability action.

To further their communication pillar in their sustainability plan, Christie's infrequently posts articles which incorporate the topic of sustainability through either events or artists. For Earth Day Christie's (2021) had uploaded a post showcasing contemporary artists who combat and discuss the climate crisis in their artworks. More recently, for 2023 Earth Day, Christie's highlighted artist Stuart Haygarth who produces artworks from recycled materials from sea pollution. The conducted interview also discusses, in part, the environmental catastrophe (Seymore, 2023). However, creating an article only once every couple of years for Earth Day can hardly be considered a convincing display of commitment to the battle against the climate crisis. Yet, it must be considered that the blog section of the Christie's website is certainly not their main area of operation, and therefore it may be one of the less effective ways for Christie's to display their sustainability efforts.

While Christie's does not publicly release any internal policies related to sustainability matters, it appears that they are introducing new policies which may change their investing habits. The 2022 Environmental Impact Report introduced the new ESG Pension – Fund Investment plans that offer employers the opportunity to invest in sustainable firms for their investment and pension plans. Specifically in the UK, they adapted the default investment option to be a net zero emissions strategy. However, this change does not appear to have reached their other international locations, raising doubts about the universality of their sustainability measures, or whether these changes are only implemented in one branch of the very international auction house.

Overall, Christie's, as it has historically been, appears to be a leading auction house for sustainability and is influencing others to implement change. Their approach to sustainability seems to be well-rounded. While of course there are plenty of areas for improvement, they are certainly taking commendable steps towards the direction of ecological sustainability. Their publicly available Environmental Impact Report is one of the first of its kind to have such depth in the visual arts industry. Through these reports it is also possible to see the improvements in their reporting overtime. In comparison to the 2019/2020 Environmental Impact Report, there has been a new depth of transparency and precision reached. The 2022 report achieves a new level of clarity, because of the specification of their goals, progress, and areas of necessary improvement. This could signal a significant improvement in internal sustainability accounting practices. It certainly makes stakeholder accounting a much easier practice, because of the public nature of the reports.

However, a potential gap was identified in the practical application of Christie's sustainability measures on a global scale. Often when referencing operational practices like their sustainable investment options or their gender pay gap reports, they specified that the operation took place only in their UK offices. Also, the renewable and reusable packaging that is only available in certain regions for specified clients. Obviously, Christie's is an extremely international firm, so this begs the question; is Christie's signaling sustainable change on a global scale, but only producing the change on a smaller scale? This could be possible because of governmental influences, which require or promote firms to be public in their information releases. Therefore, it is possible that within other jurisdictions of operation sustainability

measures are not so strictly implemented. This possible gap may also be applicable to other major firms throughout the visual arts industry, as they also tend to operate on a global scale. But, it is obvious that Christie's is making incremental changes to improve their overall sustainability to reach their goal of 50% reduction of CO₂e by 2030. We can hope that this historically influential institution will continue to inspire other visual arts organizations to follow in their sustainable footsteps.

5.3 Gagosian Galleries Case Study

Founded in 1980 in Los Angeles by Larry Gagosian, the Gagosian gallery has expanded into an international series of billion-dollar galleries. Larry Gagosian's career began rather humbly, selling cheap mass-produced posters with a significant mark-up on the side of the street in Los Angeles. Slowly he began to sell on behalf of local craftsmen, later leasing out a physical location titled Open Gallery. After a few years and numerous networking connections with L.A. celebrities, artists, and most importantly, famous gallerist Leo Castelli, Gagosian was able to open a dedicated contemporary art gallery. By 1985, he had relocated the gallery to the Chelsea neighborhood of New York City (Keefe, 2023).

Since the 80's, the gallery has grown exponentially, branching out to 19 different exhibition spaces throughout Europe, the United States, and Asia that annually generate billions of dollars of revenue (Keefe, 2023). The Gagosian empire is considered one of the elite mega-galleries of the modern day, employing over 300 people and representing dozens of the world's most prized living artists such as Damian Hirst, Jenny Saville, Takashi Murakami, Anselm Kiefer, and Titus Kaphar. However, Gagosian is also innovative in their high-quality exhibitions, that blur the lines between gallery and museum, of historical artists like Cy Twombly, Andy Warhol, Helen Frankenthaler, and Louise Bourgeois.

As an early investor to Artsy (Kolodny, 2014), an art-tech digital marketplace for fine arts, it's natural that Gagosian established other innovative art-tech platforms such as the Gagosian online viewing rooms. These viewing rooms go hand in hand with the gallery's participation in renowned art fairs such as Art Basel, Frieze Art Fair, and TEFAF. A notable department of Gagosian is its publishing house, which began in 1986, quite early in the timeline of the gallery. Still today, the publishing house releases an array of art books, exhibition catalogs, catalogues raisonnés, as well as a magazine titled *Quarterly*. All of which are purchasable online as well as in the Gagosian gift shops, another aspect of his gallery's domain.

Gagosian, while remaining a blue-chip mega gallery, also participates in some charity, social responsibility, and philanthropic efforts. In 2018, Gagosian established the Building a

Legacy program. The intent of the program is to build powerful legacies for artists through education and discourse. Some of the artists previously showcased in this program include Helen Frankenthaler's Foundation for Covid-19 relief, the Judd Foundation, and the estate of Tom Wesselmann. The Building a Legacy program facilitates events such as discussion panels, film production, exhibitions, and interviews to promote artists' legacies. A few other impactful events hosted by Gagosian include (RED) Auction partnered with Sotheby's to raise money for the fight against AIDS and An Exhibition for Notre-Dame, in which proceeds would raise funds for the post-fire restoration of the Notre-Dame in Paris. Gagosian's in-house published magazine, *Quarterly*, touches on a variety of other social concerns through arts and culture. In the latest 2023 and 2022 editions, the magazine reports on topics such as "American Artists and Reproductive Justice," "Rites of Passage," and "The Bigger Picture: Artists Against Mass Incarceration," (Gómez, 2023; Boswell, Damoah and Julianknxx, 2023; Gómez, 2022)

Other articles of *Quarterly* touch on topics of ecological sustainability interviewing organizations that focus on the climate crisis. A 2020 article titled "Sky High Farm x Project EATS," interviews two artists who are devoted to food justice, respectively founding two nonprofits. The interview links the work of artists and the creativity that may be necessary in sustainability practices (Colen and Bryant, 2020). Another sustainability related interview was published in their Fall 2021 magazine issue with the renowned Gallery Climate Coalition, following Gagosian's membership with the GCC in 2020. The interview took place with the organization's founders Victoria Siddall and Heath Lowndes (2021), in which they spoke about the conception of GCC, the importance of collaboration, and the successes of the organization thus far. This particular article is peculiar because of how the participation of Gagosian with the GCC has declined over time. Gagosian's early participation with GCC appeared to have been instrumental to the quick success of GCC's status, as mentioned in the article (Siddall and Lowndes, 2021). However, since the invention of GCC's active membership status, as previously described in the Christie's case study, Gagosian has yet to be a participatory member. Despite this, in 2021 the GCC announced the opening of a Los Angeles branch, which the Gagosian Director of Operations, Hanako Williams, is a founding committee member of. Since the publication of these two issues and the 2021 involvement with GCC, Gagosian's interest in sustainability concerns appears to have diminished almost entirely.

Since 2021, there have been few events or exhibitions related to sustainability hosted by Gagosian. Often, we only see sustainability action through the artists represented by Gagosian, such as Tatiana Trouvé who had donated the commission from her limited-edition print to the Parley for the Oceans nonprofit. Other artist involvement includes Sally Mann's artwork *Blackwater*, which received a Prix Pictet award in 2021, an organization that awards photographers who draw attention to environmental sustainability issues. Most recently, there is an exhibition *Christo: Selected Works* held at Kunsttage Basel 2023. However, we cannot consider the sustainability work of the artists to be representative of the sustainability measures of the Gagosian gallery itself.

As mentioned earlier, the organization Galleries Commit (2023) had conducted a survey of New York City artworkers, with questions concerning sustainability measures in place at their studios, museums, galleries, etc. In this survey, an anonymous artist represented by Gagosian stated, "I have been trying without much success to encourage my galleries...to be more [environmentally] conscious but so far the result has been very disappointing." The same surveyee also noted that, "Galleries will also tend to limit actions to lip service just so they can look good. Such actions need transparency and relative accountability." To combat the lack of gallery action the artist mentions that they build their own sustainability practices through dedicating a percentage of sales to carbon offsetting.

This artist's comments display Gagosian's internal versus external contradictions regarding sustainability and may reveal performative sustainability through their artist representation. As we have seen, Gagosian represents a variety of artists who create artworks discussing and drawing attention to the climate crisis, as well as donating a percentage of sales to environmental charities and foundations. Certainly, representing and therefore financially supporting these artists is a positive endeavor. However, does it accurately represent the gallery's beliefs? In the case of Gagosian you could argue that it does not, considering the lack of internal environmental sustainability and CS practices. This contradiction calls forward an additional possible area of study on how galleries may utilize the artists they represent to create a specific positive perception of their organization. Can galleries possibly utilize their artists to morally cleanse or greenwash their own institution?

I believe this statement could be extremely applicable to Gagosian, particularly because of their outward commitment to the Gallery Climate Coalition, without active participation in their mission, as displayed by their lack of an active membership badge. Other big-name galleries analyzed such as Serpentine Galleries, David Zwirner, and Hauser & Wirth have displayed a more active commitment to environmental sustainability through dedicated green teams, carbon footprint reports, innovative environmental projects, environmentally friendly building certifications, and sustainability policies. On the other hand, Gagosian lacks evidence of any of these activities, which is inexcusable considering they are one of the most economically powerful galleries currently in the art market. There is no announcement of commitment to ecological sustainability in any account other than their GCC membership. This may lead stakeholders to believe that Gagosian's sustainability measures are solely performative. Considering the lack of external transparency, the public has no evidence of any sustainable action occurring internally at Gagosian. Therefore, it is difficult for Gagosian stakeholders to hold the institution accountable for anything other than lack of transparency.

5.4 Art Basel Art Fair

Art Basel was founded by three gallerists, Trudl Bruckner, Balz Hilt, and Ernst Beyeler, who had been inspired by their visit to the Kunstmarkt Köln opening in 1967. They decided to render this art fair format in the city of Basel, Switzerland. Uniquely, the town's on location of the German, Swiss, and French border made it an inherently international event (Bodick, 2014). Immediately the art fair established itself as successful by garnering over 16,000 visitors and 110 exhibitors for its first art fair on June 12, 1970. This new art fair format admitted not only gallery owners but also art dealers, meaning it covered both the primary and secondary market. Since the founding of the fair, it has also produced in-depth catalogs to accompany visitors. Nearly two decades later, in 1989 the Art Basel fair had grown exponentially, with over 50,000 visitors each year and over 300 exhibitors. The art fair has continued to expand over the years, opening a branch in Miami Beach as well as Hong Kong.

Consequential to Art Basel's growth, its market value and influence has also expanded. According to Nicholas Logsdail of the Lisson Gallery, in 1975 booths available for rent were considered "relatively inexpensive and we covered our costs with sales of about £3,000." Today that number has grown up to a flat rate of \$33,000-\$41,500 for a booth in the Insights sector. They have also established a variety of innovative platforms for contemporary art such as the Unlimited platform, which enables non-traditional artforms to be exhibited, Art Basel Conversations panel discussions, as well as Online Viewing Rooms. Art Basel's value is showcased even more through impressive partnerships with leading companies such as UBS, an investment banking company, a partnership which initially developed in 1994. Since then, the two institutions have developed the Art Basel and UBS Global Art Market Report, first launching in 2017. The annual report offers reflection on the previous year's art market and insights into next year's trends. The 2023 Art Basel and UBS Global Art Market Report states that as of 2022, art fairs accounted for 35% of the art market's share of sales by value. While the largest sector was galleries making up 47%, in 2022 these large galleries made almost 40% of their sales from international art fairs like Art Basel (McAndrew, 2023), showcasing the influence that art fairs have on the art market as a whole.

This level of influence can be especially impactful when considering the corporate social responsibility action of art fairs. In the 2019 Art Basel and UBS Global Art Market Report it was reported that only 2% of art dealers were concerned with sustainability/carbon footprint. Since then, that number has aggressively grown to 25% in 2022 (McAndrew, 2020). Yet it is still less of a concern when compared to topics such as increased identification requirements, barriers to cross-border trade art, and competition with auction houses. Large influential institutions such as Art Basel have the potential to draw more awareness and facilitate more action for sustainability and the climate crisis particularly to members participating in their events.

Art Basel and their parent company, the MCH Group, have implemented more sustainable changes into their organization. MCH Group has been reporting annually on sustainability, including environmental sustainability, since 2014. Since then, their reports have proceeded to gain depth and transparency. Art Basel also is proud and active member of the Gallery Climate Coalition, meaning they have completed carbon emissions reporting or auditing, established a sustainability team, and had published a responsibility statement. On Art Basel's dedicated sustainability webpage, you can find a brief statement of their call to environmental sustainability responsibility as well as an outline of their initiatives. They highlight the existence of their internal sustainability team as well as the assistance of external climate strategy consulting.

Alongside Art Basel's partnership with the GCC are a few other useful collaborations with climate strategy organizations such as myclimate and the the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). The SBTi guidelines enable Art Basel to strategize sustainable development to help reduce their carbon emissions. While the myclimate and MCH partnership helps to actually calculate the carbon emissions across all of the art fairs. These reports are scarcely available to the public, as the CO₂e data for the Messe Basel venue is available through the MCH sustainability report, however this data is not specific to the Art Basel event. There is also no public in-depth CO₂e data or reporting for the Art Basel Miami fair. The two other Art Basel events: Paris and Hong Kong also do not have any data or information on carbon emissions or sustainability practices. These gaps of information create a lack of transparency on their sustainability measures.

The first MCH (2014) report was concerned mostly with building emissions, including the Messe Basel venue, where the Art Basel event is hosted. By 2022 the report had expanded to consider a wider assessment of environmental sustainability including but not limited to, booth structures and materials, transportation and logistics, suppliers, and how to actively support a circular economy. MCH, again, highlights their building energy consumption, showcasing that the Messe Basel venue electricity runs on 100% renewable energy supplied from European wind farms. Because of the venue's sustainability, Art Basel fair was able to cover 80% of its overall energy needs from renewable sources. The venue's lighting system is also being transitioned to LED lighting, to help conserve energy.

Art Basel's Miami Beach venue, the Miami Beach Convention Center (MBCC) is also working towards a more sustainable energy system. Newly renovated in 2018, the MBCC has attained Silver LEED certification through the U.S. Green Building Council. This was accomplished through eco-conscious design, such as the unique "fins" which provide shade for the building, and therefore reduce heat while still providing plenty of natural sunlight along with LED lighting. During the construction process, builders optimized eco-friendly materials by utilizing recycled materials and incorporating locally sourced materials from Miami and the state of Florida. The new building systems, such as generators, electrical, and communication have also been adapted to the risk of rising sea levels by raising them above flood level guidelines. Overall, the MBCC's new renovations have led to a 20 % energy consumption reduction, which can be considered a positive stride towards more sustainable design. However, there is no specific reporting publicly available regarding the carbon emissions of the Art Basel Miami event even though it appears the research is conducted annually through the assistance of myclimate consulting.

A notable sustainability system that Art Basel has committed to throughout all four of its fairs is sustainable materials. Thanks to Expomobilia, another company under the MCH Group, the same wall system to construct the booths is utilized at all four locations. The wall systems are shipped via sea-freight out from the central storage facility located in Düsseldorf that is semi-near Rotterdam Harbor. Expomobilia also keeps in mind the sustainability of the material they use, giving these fair walls a 7-10 year life span and keeping in mind biodegradable and

recyclable materials. This materially efficient method of both reusable and mobile materials is an innovative method that could also be implemented amongst other art fairs in the future.

While environmentally friendly transportation of materials utilized at art fairs remains a concern, so does the transportation of visitors. Often visitors come from around the world to attend renowned art fairs such as Art Basel. However, this produces massive amounts of carbon emissions. Previously Art Basel has attempted to mitigate their own travel CO₂e by off-setting 100% of their employee flights. However, Art Basel has yet to attempt to mitigate CO₂e from visitor travel. In the past years the amount of aircrafts that arrive has increased by 300 at the nearby EuroAirport specifically for the Art Basel event. Art Basel's support through the NetJets, private jet company, sponsorship further reveals their lack of action. This coincides with climate activist protests such as the protests at the Geneva Airport, in which 100 activists participated in chaining themselves to private jets and blocking entryways to the airport's private jet show (Neate, 2023). At the Miami Beach location a site-specific initiative being introduced is the carpooling promotion. In which, Art Basel is offering to cover parking costs of the event workers who decide to carpool to work. In general, little is being done to off-set, reduce, or mitigate the carbon emissions caused by the massive amounts of visitor travel to reach the Art Basel events.

The Art Basel organization also utilizes external collaboration to create location specific, environmentally sustainable solutions. In the Basel location, waste management was handled by the experts at reusecity which implements waste management protocols during fair construction and deconstruction, as well as ensures waste at the Messe Basel is properly sorted and recycled. Additionally, reusecity also provides informational webinars for Art Basel stakeholders on the topics of waste and packaging in the context of sustainability. The Art Basel Miami Beach location collaborated with Sodexo Live! who improved the sustainability of the event's catering. At the 2022 fair they implemented more plant-based meals, sourced the meal options locally, provided food donations to local communities, and introduced more biodegradable products.

Another aspect of sustainability among the art world is efforts of collaboration with other institutions within the art industry. The director of Art Basel had previously stated that, "We are proactively developing long term strategies not only to reduce our direct carbon emissions but also working with our galleries, partners, suppliers and the industry to improve the broader environmental impact of our shows.," (Buck, 2022). This encouragement of sustainability with

partners and suppliers can be seen through partnerships such as the Nespresso Café at Art Basel Miami Beach, where Nespresso showcased some of their eco-friendly initiatives. As well as several artist run initiatives, artworks, and events such as the No Waste Party or the Museum of Plastic (Sayej, 2019). However, this once again brings into question if visual art institutions are possibly using artists as fronts to show their beliefs, rather than working on their own.

Overall, Art Basel does incorporate positive environmentally friendly initiatives, collaborations, and practices. These sustainability measures can be seen through Art Basel as well as their parent company MCH. Yet, a large contrast remains between the different Art Basel events. As displayed in this case study, there is little to no information regarding the sustainability of half of the Art Basel locations, including Hong Kong and Paris. These discrepancies could be due to a variety of reasons. In the case of Art Basel Paris, it could be because of its recentness, launching in 2022, which has made it difficult to gather enough information regarding sustainability. The lack of information regarding the Hong Kong event could be due to the different jurisdiction and any protocols and regulations required. However, these claims are combatted, because of Art Basel's statement which declares that all four events are monitored for carbon emissions through myclimate. This discrepancy suggests a lack of transparency in their public reporting. It may indicate that Art Basel is only releasing information that displays the company in a positive light, rather than showing the areas of necessary improvement as well.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Current State of Sustainability Accounting in the Visual Arts Industry: Variation and Opacity

The series of case studies as well as the general research showcases some progressive strides towards ecological sustainability in the visual arts industry. In order to draw conclusions on the sustainability of the visual arts industry, the findings of the research and case studies illustrated in the previous chapter must be discussed, such as the commitment to sustainability accounting, its variations, and opacity. So, what patterns can be identified about the current state of sustainability accounting in the visual arts industry? After examining 20 visual arts institutions coupled with three institutional case studies, we have gathered a more comprehensive understanding of what sustainability measures are in place at some of the most renowned art institutions. Yet, it is difficult to reach a definitive conclusion describing the sustainability practices of the visual arts industry. I argue this dissonance is caused by two recurring characteristics, variety and opacity. The wide variation of sustainability practices throughout visual arts institutions and the opacity of their reporting complicates the ability to fully establish the current state of sustainability practices. These characteristics also make it difficult to hold the visual arts institutions and organizations accountable for their sustainability measures. The wide range of variations make it difficult to form an industry standard, like many other industries already have already put in place. Meanwhile, the opacity establishes a sense of secrecy and restricts information exchange amongst visual art institutions.

Reflecting on these institutions we can easily identify the dramatically varied sustainability practices and their subsequent accounting practices. The Cambridge Dictionary defines 'variation' as a "change in quality, amount, or level." All three of these changes; quality,

amount, and level are applicable to the variation of sustainability practices amongst the visual arts institutions. As seen in the case studies, some institutions, such as Christie's, appear to be taking a very head-on approach to sustainability, showing their commitment through high quality data and annual reporting. Conversely, other institutions have little to no action like in the case of Gagosian. Although, most institutions float in the middle-ground, between extreme progress and no action at all. They proceed with some sustainability approaches but not to the extent that is necessary to truly fight the climate crisis. This middle-ground is depicted in the case of Art Basel. Which appears to make a large effort, but not to the extent that their efforts have reached unequivocal clarity. For instance, their push for renewable energy at both the Basel and Miami Beach locations display signs of true progress. However, the lack of sustainability information regarding the other half of their events, in Paris and Hong Kong, leaves room for doubt. This middle-ground within the variations of sustainability practices is a land of vagueness and ambiguity where it appears efforts are being made, but not with such clarity and assertion.

Fortunately, the variations between sustainability practices and lack of industry standards may leave room for innovation. This innovation could be illustrated through the Christie's case, in which sea-freight transportation was established and new art packaging containers were invented. Another example, of non-industry standards, could be the unique mobile and reusable walls of the Art Basel fairs. These lack of standards may provide some freedom of thinking, as it is not restricted by any stringent regulations. Lack of visual arts industry standard sustainability practices may also lead organizations and institutions to implement different methods of internally managing sustainability practices. This may enable a change that is organization-specific, in which a firm fabricates a plan that speaks specifically to their needs. Rather than using a 'one-size fits all' approach of adapting a different institution's methods onto their own organization. However, these are just possibilities for innovation that have not been proven. It may be true that a lack of industry standards enables innovation, however we cannot conclusively state that it encourages and produces innovation.

Variation in sustainability practices and accounting, and therefore the lack of visual arts sustainability standards, makes it difficult to manage expectations in a beneficial way. Therefore, it is easier for a company to disguise themselves rather than be held accountable for their actions. In the case of Gagosian galleries, this disguising is illustrated more clearly, as Gagosian itself has

not established many clear sustainability practices, yet they are not openly called out for this lack of sustainability implementation. Industry standards could be extremely beneficial as they provide a point of comparison and guidance. If sustainability standards were implemented in the visual arts industry, it would enable stakeholders to keep institutions on track for climate justice.

Organizations like the Gallery Climate Coalition (GCC) are working to standardize sustainability efforts throughout the visual arts industry. They do this by building expectations that are outlined in their active membership guidelines. This guideline is then verified through the GCC, the verification being a form of accountability. The GCC's other programs such as the Carbon Calculator help make carbon emissions calculations an easier and more accessible process. This again forms an industry standard, by encouraging CO₂e calculating as a normal practice. The Carbon Reports can also be directly published to the GCC website encouraging companies to share their results. The posting of carbon reports also combats another issue that has arisen in the visual arts industry sustainability accounting, opacity.

Historically, the art market has been a very opaque market. Members of the art market often prefer to conduct their business with a certain level of privacy. Leading the market to be renowned for its suspicious sales, dubious agreements, and mysterious freeports. Yet, while this may be true, in recent years the market has been unveiled through art market reports such as the Art Basel and UBS collaboration as well as individual institutional financial statements. This trend of transparency has appeared to carry over to sustainability reporting as well. The transparency trend can be captured through the documents which we have analyzed in the case study of Christie's, such as their annual reports, sustainability policy, and a growing amount of sustainability content. Even in the case of Art Basel, a substantial amount of information was available to the public and appears to reach new depths with every year of reporting.

On the other hand, some visual arts institutions remain opaque, like Gagosian. This opacity creates a barrier between the firm and its stakeholders. It provides the organization with an extra layer of security encouraging accountability avoidance. This secrecy can also contribute to stakeholder confusion. When a lack of transparency occurs, stakeholders are not fully aware of the activities taking place at the firm. Even internal stakeholders can be confused because of non-specific policy, efforts, or guidelines. Employees may not know how to proceed with actionable change if the company hasn't clearly outlined what they intend to do and how employees can

carry this out through their job's activities. Contrastingly, when a firm releases information to the public it enables both internal and external stakeholders to have a stronger accountability practice. For example, Art Basel, who released information praising their practice of carbon offsetting employee flights, was publicly called out through local news source SWI (2023) for their lack of mitigation efforts to decrease private jet transport.

Another downside of opacity is its hindrance on collaboration and innovation. When companies are transparent and share information cross-institutionally as well as cross-industry it creates a higher likelihood of sustainable innovation (Poncelet, 2001). Observing other institutions can also act as a learning experience to see what did or didn't work to gather inspiration and eventually apply to their own institution. When there is opacity and therefore a lack of information exchange occurs, this information is not passed on and therefore cannot assist in helping other organizations. For example, the Venice Biennale has been carbon neutral for several years, yet the action plan to achieve this carbon neutral status was not publicly shared. Imagine how many other biennales could have benefited from this information by providing them with a guideline to reach carbon neutrality. This lack of informational exchange is being fought by NGOs such as Galleries Commit, which has a public database, the Climate Action Database, that gathers data and informational documents regarding art institutions sustainability practices.

As outlined, the characteristics of variation and opacity have manufactured the visual arts industry's lack of industry standards, secrecy, and a lack of informational exchange. These large informational gaps create difficulty in accounting for the visual arts industry and also leave plenty of room for sustainable improvement within the visual arts industry.

6.2 Betterment of Sustainability Practices in the Visual Arts Industry

Based on the characteristic obstacles of sustainability practices and their accountabilities in the visual arts industry, variety and opacity, there is certainly room for improvement. Improving the sustainability practices and accountabilities would ensure that the visual arts industry can move towards a more sustainable future and fight against the climate crisis. These improvements can be introduced and implemented through many different forms.

Certainly, some existing practices which damage the environment require immediate action and change. These extremely harmful behaviors can utilize traditional processes such as governmental legislation to enact swift and strict regulations and laws. As observed through the research and case studies, it is clear that the visual arts institutions follow any laws and regulations of their jurisdiction. Additionally, they implement other standard sustainability practices such as sustainable construction certifications, LED lighting, recycling practices, and other general energy saving methods. However, these green solutions only contribute to surface level sustainable solutions which can be completed rather quickly, with little institutional reflexivity that reflects on organizational and managerial behaviors.

On the other hand, learning ecological balance enhancing behaviors often requires a long-term approach which enhances our reflexivity. In this way we can adjust our non-sustainable values, beliefs, and social practices, which we may not pay much attention to (Bowers, 1993). These long-term realization approaches are where the arts industry's role in sustainability is most effective. There are plenty of sustainability methods which are specific to the arts and therefore may be even more successful than traditional science and mathematics-based approaches. Some studies and essays have been conducted regarding decolonizing nature through art, implementing eco-art education to teach environmental empathy, and utilizing the arts to conduct sustainability research.

All these methods are art-specific approaches that visual arts institutions can establish within their firms to move towards a more sustainable society, and in return gain legitimacy in their corporate sustainability and accounting. The benefits of more profound art-based

sustainability solutions and opportunities would add depth not only to sustainability sciences, but also to the institutions themselves. So, why is there hesitation to implement these changes? One reasoning could be because of the deeper level of internal reflexivity that must be completed when incorporating art-based sustainable solutions. Internal audits, that look into organizational behavior and social institutions of an organization require a deep level of analysis. These internal audits and their solutions are also not financially beneficial in comparison to the other green energy solutions discussed. For example, to implement sustainable art educational programming into an institution would utilize lots of resources such as money, time, and many art workers. While switching previous lighting to LED lighting may have many upfront costs, will eventually lead to cost-saving that repays the institution for their upfront costs. These art-based sustainability solutions and improvements are long-term projects that influence social institutions and therefore many of the outcomes are only seen in the long-term basis and without concrete results that may be seen in traditional 'green' solutions.

6.2.1 Decolonizing Nature Through Visual Arts

“In memory of those who have fallen silent forever, let us then give long-term men their say: a philosopher can still learn from Aristotle, a jurist does not find Roman law too old. Let’s listen to them a moment before painting the portrait of the new political leader.”

- Michel Serres, *“The Natural Contract.”* 1990.

The Western world’s disposition towards nature has been practiced for hundreds of years, rooted in European colonialism. The engrained attitude has been an overwhelming desire to conquer, master, and civilize the natural environment as well as the Indigenous peoples coexisting with these environments (Blandy, Congdon and Krug, 1998). The Western world’s colonization of the Indigenous peoples consequently colonized and suppressed the Indigenous philosophies and knowledge along with it. Even though Indigenous peoples had been living in “ecologically responsive ways,” in harmony with nature for thousands of years, their knowledge has been silenced and ignored (Bowers, 1993). Rather, their philosophies and knowledge were viewed as uncivilized and primitive by Western colonizers.

Furthermore, the Western world proceeded in attempts to control the natural world, claiming a war against nature, a legitimate ‘world war’ as proposed by philosopher Michel Serres (1990:32). This continued mindset has led us to the climate crisis we are currently experiencing. Serres (1990) calls for a “Natural Contract,” a peace-treaty between mankind and Earth. Today, ecologists and environmental activists are attempting to form this peace-treaty, which decentralizes humankind and rather poses a mode of living in which nature and man are perceived as equals. These ‘new’ environmentalist and academic ideologies are effectively the ignored values that Indigenous peoples have been practicing for thousands of years. However, rather than acknowledging this, the western world perpetuates colonization of thought through ignorance. In order to practice true sustainability and solve the climate crisis we must decolonize the natural world and its respective philosophies of the silenced Indigenous communities. We must become sensitive to the Western academic non-acknowledgement of Indigenous knowledge

that perpetuates exclusion of the populations that have suffered from colonial oppression (Demos, 2016).

This western ignorance also seeps into the domain of visual arts. As mentioned previously, the ‘ground-breaking’ land art of the 70’s ignored the prehistoric land art, effigy mounds, of the North American Indigenous. The colonized disconnection to the natural world, Indigenous knowledge, and place-based community, continues today through complex cultural patterns and social institutions, leaving us with leaders and influencers who have forgotten the human-natural connection (Bowers, 1993). These ingrained behaviors affect the art industry and its perception of climate crisis solutions. The performance art group Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination (Labofii) explains this sustainability dissonance within the contemporary cultural class:

“Many of our artists and intellectual friends fly from biennale to festival, from one city to another to make “radical culture”. It’s all part of the “rights” of the hyper mobile cultural class, a global generation that has been uprooted from any material place, ripped from local communities, distanced from contexts where they might have some agency in transforming the material world. It suits the status quo that the radical thinkers and makers don’t have a territory, belong to nowhere and float in an abstract vapid world where no solution is graspable, where radical thinking has no anchor in action,” (Demos, 2016:268).

So, what can this hyper mobile cultural class do to effectively create action-based decolonizing solutions to the environmental crisis? Art historian T.J. Demos (2016) proposes that to properly decolonize nature we must utilize a combination of properly accredited Indigenous knowledge with current academics to create ecologically valuable studies and artworks. An improving example of this is the growing collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in the Arctic, who are utilizing a combination of cultural heritage and sciences to generate ecological solutions and spread climate awareness.

Through the Western lens The Arctic has been represented as a snowy, dangerous, and desolate land; a perception that overlooks its true multicultural and multi-ethnic reality. The Arctic is comprised of eight countries (Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland,

Russia, and the United States) and home to over 40 Indigenous groups as well as non-Indigenous populations, all with rich cultural traditions (Huhmarniemi and Jokela, 2020). These traditions don't follow the Eurocentric method of separation between the arts, nature, and functionality but rather intertwine them (Huhmarniemi and Jokela, 2020:4). An example of this is the Sámi culture's use of wetland grasses to insulate their traditional fur shoes. This wetland grass, once dried, is twisted intricately into bundles of hay 'fiera', for storage purposes. These ornate fieras highlight the interlocked traditions of art, life, and ecology present in many Indigenous Cultures (Härkönen, Huhmarniemi and Jokela, 2018:6). These types of traditions and knowledge are disappearing as the Western mindset overtakes. However, in recent years there has been a reconciliation through Indigenous leaders such as, Áile Aikio a Sámi policy researcher, who begs the question "How can we curate and produce Indigenous exhibitions in a sustainable, fair and equal way that is meaningful for the Indigenous communities?" in a way that breaks misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples as primitive while dissipating mistrusts between Indigenous communities and traditional Western institutions (Huhmarniemi and Jokela, 2020:9). Some Western institutions have attempted this through the arts such as the Venice Biennale Nordic pavilion, which had converted to the Sámi pavilion for both 2022 and 2023 and the Canadian pavilion in 2019, which was dedicated to the art of the Indigenous Inuit population (Harris, 2017). This making-way for Indigenous voices is the first step of reparations for the hundreds of years of colonization and it is the beginning steps of deconstructing the cultural class's "radical thinking," that "has no anchor in action.," (Demos, 2016:268).

Arctic artists, such as Zacharias Kunuk and Ian Mauro (2010) display the potential of Arctic arts and knowledge, showing that it could enhance the human-nature connection in a way that other traditional Western analytical practices may not. Their documentary, *Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change*, depicts Inuit Elders discussing how climate change has affected their traditional methods of life in composition with powerful imagery of the arctic landscape. The Elders describe their changing environment discovered through nature-based observation, such as the different hunting patterns and animal furs that reflecting the warming climate, the earth's tilted axis through the location of the sunset and stars, and the changing clouds illustrating the long-term change in wind patterns. Yet, even with these profound observations of the Inuit's lived experiences are continuously ignored by Southern scientists. The Inuit population has even claimed that wildlife biologists are harming the endangered animal populations such as polar

bears through too many tranquilizations and drugs, arousing aggression within the animals, and implementing radio collars which inhibit their movement. Further they are not acknowledging their harm and rather blaming indigenous populations for over-hunting. Through the medium of film Kunuk and Mauro, provide a platform to the Inuit Elders to share their knowledge and voice their opinion. Overall, the documentary showcases how proper “community-based cultural representation,” can decolonize thousands of years of oral-history, which has been suppressed by the Canadian state (Demos, 2016:88).

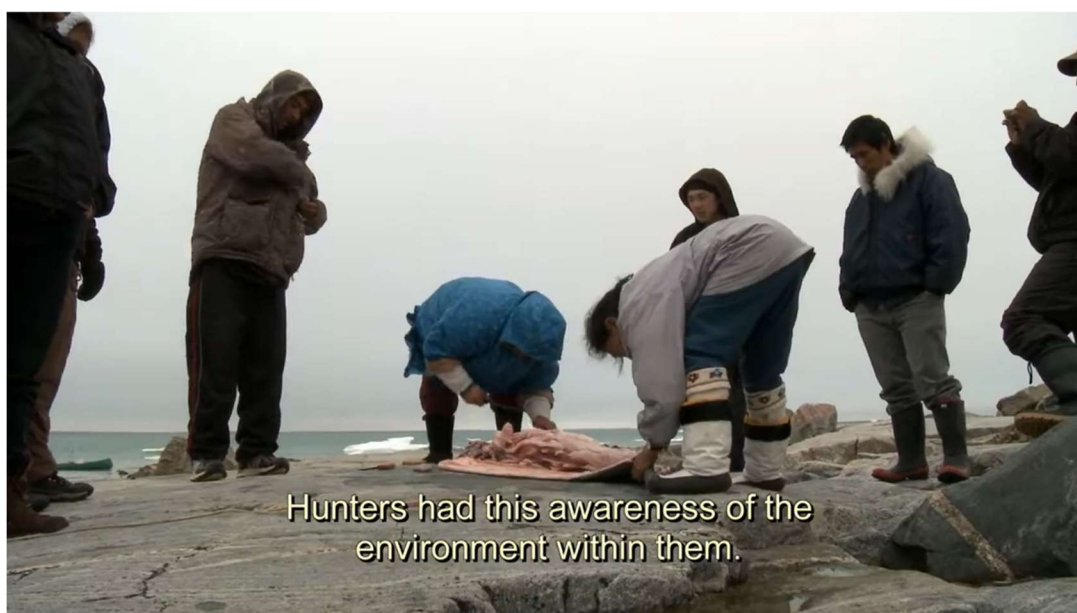


Figure 7: *Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change* (Kunuk and Mauro, 2010)

Through the visual arts, a decolonized, creative, and community-based form of environmental reconciliation can take place that has the potential to facilitate a rebirth of empathy and understanding of nature. The Indigenous communities hold a lot of practical knowledge about the earth’s patterns and materials, which often present themselves wholistically through art and craft (Härkönen, Huhmarniemi and Jokela, 2018:6). These examples of showcase the ability of arts to open pathways of communication and elevate Indigenous knowledge and expertise. This decolonization of nature can also be applied to education systems to challenge the Western mindset that has traditionally been taught in schools (Huhmarniemi and Jokela, 2020).

6.2.2 Eco-Art Education

As proven through Indigenous artworks, a supporting practice that has the possibility to facilitate both decolonization of the arts and sustainability education is, eco-art education. Educator and researcher Hillary Inwood (2008:58) defines eco-art education stating that, “Eco-art education integrates art education with environmental education as a means of developing awareness of and interaction with environmental concepts and issues, such as conservation, preservation, restoration, and sustainability.” She argues that “in this, eco-art education promises an innovative approach to ecological and environmental education, one that balances the traditional roots of these disciplines (found in the cognitive, positivist, approaches of science education) with the more creative, affective and sensory approaches of art education.” Environmental education through art is based on theoretical thinking, such as Jan Jagodzinski’s essay, “Toward an Ecological Aesthetic: Notes on a 'Green' Frame of Mind.” In this essay he discusses the mixture of historical social circumstances, dating back to ancient Greece that have led us to disconnect our mind with nature and culture. Therefore, creating a perfect estrangement for ecological destruction. Jagodzinski (1987) proposes part of the solution to the environmental crisis is utilizing art to form a ‘green’ frame of mind.

An overarching agreement in the pedagogy of eco-art education is that it is best executed when it is participatory, collaborative, community-based, sustainable, interdisciplinary, and founded on environmental empathy (Blandy, Congdon and Krug, 1998; Inwood, 2008). In the current post-industrial digital age, the connection between children and nature is waning, therefore producing adults who have little to no emotional connection to the environment and therefore lack environmental empathy (Sunassee and Bokhoree, 2021). However, studies have proven that teaching ecology and environmental sustainability through art education is a legitimate solution (Sunassee and Bokhoree, 2021; De Lorenzo, 2000). With so many visual art institutions having educational programming as a department, environmental sustainability through art education programming is an appropriate implementation in visual art institutions’ educational departments to combat the lack of environmental empathy.

In a rural village in Botswana, inhabited by the BaKgalagari people the Indigenous language of SheKgalahari is the spoken language of a mostly oral community. However, SheKgalahari is not accepted as an appropriate language in the formal education system of Botswana where only English and Setswana are accepted. Through this colonization of language not only is the Indigenous language muffled, but the Indigenous knowledge disappears, or becomes distorted through translation. Further, the more globalized educational curriculum lacks applicability to their lives, and de-contextualizes knowledge. In particular, the environmental education curriculum of Botswana focuses on picking up litter and cleaning up the environment. While this may be applicable and relevant to the lives of Botswanan students living in urban centers, for the students of rural communities like the Indigenous BaKgalagari, this curriculum and respective knowledge is irrelevant, as litter is not a concern in the rural areas. Studies were conducted to see how a more community and place-based environmental curriculum could affect the efficacy of environmental education in these rural communities. Through the arts, utilizing a combination of visual, musical, and oral arts, a more effective lesson was tested and found successful amongst the BaKgalagari students. The combination of using place-based contextualization and local knowledge through artistic skill helped children to relate their environmental education to their personal experience. Moreover, strengthening the environmental knowledge they learned in class as well as their environmental empathy (Silo and Khudu-Peterson, 2016).

Similar studies experimenting with environmental education based in artistic skills all reveal to be equally as “eye-opening” to students (Sunassee and Bokhoree, 2021). Overall, these studies reveal the need for creative pedagogy when teaching ecological literacy and environmental consciousness (Tsevreni, 2022). Confirming that sustainability education, is best taught with addition of ‘more-than-rational’ thinking, such as visioning, imagining, and creation rather than just the traditional analytical skills of mathematics and sciences (Dieleman, 2008). The visual arts industries are in a unique position of already having many of the resources necessary to enact eco-art educational programming into their institutions. Museums and galleries’ educational departments could include more eco-art educational workshops for both children and adults in their programming. Higher education art institutions can develop more courses which implement collaborative, community-based, and multidisciplinary explorations of sustainability into their degree programs such as the Creative Village program of the Arts Council of New

South Wales (De Lorenzo, 2002). The Creative Village program began in 1992 serving rural communities of Australia helping to grow their cultural heritage. Since then, the program has also reached urban areas and has added an ecological premise. All projects must have an environmental and educational aspect which will improve the communities. In the study conducted by Catherine De Lorenzo (2002), architecture and art students from the University of New South Wales became involved with the Creative Village program, producing projects such as a cultural center for Gandangara Aboriginal community. The collaborative effort between experts, the Gandangara community and university students proved to be an invaluable experience. Over 90% of the students involved in the Creative Village program stated it was their first experience of a multidisciplinary studio and since then 70% of the graduates state that they have continued to work in interdisciplinary teams. The community-based style working had left a positive impression on the students and 30% of the graduates continued working with communities in their projects (De Lorenzo, 2002).

The examples of the new educational programming for the BaKgalagari students and the Creative Village program in Australia, prove the efficacy of multidisciplinary environmental education through the arts. Through collaborative arts, these communities were able to both problem solve and promote environmental empathy. In Susanne Langer's (1966) observation of the cultural importance of the arts, she emphasizes arts role in self-expression and how it unlocks inner emotions. Additionally, she states that "Art education is the education of feeling, and a society that neglects it gives itself up to formless emotion," (Langer, 1966:12). This, stance on art education highlights its ability to teach emotional management and when utilized congruently with topics such as the environmental crisis it may form a stronger emotional relationship. These efforts can help solve the concern of diminishing environmental empathy and help to encourage the fight to conserve our natural environment.

6.2.3 Sustainability Research Through Visual Arts

As illustrated in an educational context, collaborative, multi-disciplinary, and community-based arts can raise emotional and empathetic responses to the natural environment. This deepening of emotional connection supports ideas of “ecological citizenship,” garnering a stronger sense of environmental responsibility (Thomsen, 2015). These methods of collaborative eco-art are not only effective for sustainability education, but also beneficial in deepening sustainability research. The visual arts have enhanced our understanding of psychological connection to sustainability, innovated creative and sustainable solutions, and provided insight into collaborative problem solving for sustainability. Many artists have exemplified this unique ability through their artworks.

A duo renowned for their collaborative and ecologically focused artworks are Newton and Helen Mayer Harrison. Throughout their projects they incorporate experts such as scientists, architects, engineers, politicians, and artists to develop solutions for environmental problems of common concern (Blandy, Congdon and Krug, 1998). The Harrisons’ multi-disciplinary approach has crafted solutions for dozens of issues such as their 1994 project *Endangered Meadows of Europe*. In this eco-collaborative artwork, the Harrisons’ along with a diverse team, transplanted a meadow onto the rooftop of the Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle Museum in Bonn, Germany (Ingram, 2013). This specific meadow was, as many European meadows are, at risk of destruction from urban development. As stated through the Harrison Studio website, two years later this meadow was replanted at the Great Rhine Park and re-titled, *A Mother Meadow for Bonn*. The project proceeded agriculturally by utilizing the seeds to produce other meadowlands, and it continued scientifically through the identification and typologizing of 14 different major meadow types that contribute to the European “meadow mosaic,” (Ingram, 2013).

The Harrisons’ artwork highlights Professor Hans Dieleman’s (2008) proposal that the arts can help society become more sustainable in a way that other routes may not. Dieleman indicates that mathematics and sciences focus on simplification through segmentation and dissection, which contrarily may not necessarily be the most successful method considering

sustainability's multidisciplinary nature. He also highlights that the arts, similar to the sciences, are based in a "process of inquiry," and exploration with the added benefits of creativity that "transcend traditional boundaries" of the traditional social behaviors and institutions. The reflexivity that the arts can provide ushers in possibilities of sustainability by looking inward at our conventional habits and exchanging them for more sustainable behaviors.

There are other artists who utilize this reflexive capital in their work to evoke a questioning of current non-sustainable behaviors. Artist Mel Chin's *Revival Field* challenges the current practices of costly and technology driven remediation of chemical loaded landfill sites. *Revival Field* located at Pig's Eye Landfill in St. Paul, Minnesota, introduces soil remediation through hyperaccumulator plants. These hyperaccumulator plants were introduced to a small fenced in section of the landfill with the hopes that the plants would accumulate and extract toxic chemicals such as Zinc and Cadmium from the soil (Blandy, Congdon and Krug, 1998:238). Mel Chin stated in an interview that the plants successfully stored the dangerous chemicals in their biomass, becoming 20-40% heavy metal, proving that toxic sites, like the Pig's Eye Landfill, can be purified through "green remediation," (Blandy, Congdon and Krug, 1998:238). The high concentration of heavy metal then makes it possible to ash the plant and sell the accumulated ore, which in return sustainably funds the continuation of the process. Chin describes his collaborative artwork with hyperaccumulation plant specialist Rufus L. Chaney, stating that "We had to make the artwork create the science."



Figure 8: *Revival Field* (Chin, 1991)

The examples of *Endangered Meadows of Europe* and *Revival Field* artworks demonstrate the ability of the arts to deepen sustainability science through the utilization of visual arts. In this way it helped to physically materialize the often-abstract concepts of sustainability, to effectively communicate the discussion of sustainable transition. In this way, we can prove how sustainability can work through the medium of visual arts to deepen the social-ecological discussion and research to create a more resilient form of sustainability (Connelly et al., 2016). Art institutions can promote and support these sustainability artworks and research endeavors like the Kunst - und Ausstellungshalle Museum had done for the *Endangered Meadows of Europe*. In return, they improve their corporate sustainability legitimacy, accountability, and further improve the societal knowledge of sustainability.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Foundationally, the visual arts stem from the natural world. Pigments and paints derived from the earth's plants, soils, and animals have been utilized for over 500,000 years (Leeflang and Dijkema, 2022). These pigments have been painted onto the earth's surface and sculptures carved from the earth's flesh since prehistoric times (Tedesco, 2007). The deeply rooted connection between art and earth is still inseparable even in today's digital age of ecological apathy. As overviewed, artists such as Agnes Denes, Hans Haacke, Mel Chin, Robert Smithson, and the Harrisons continue this longstanding tradition of ecological art, promoting a stronger earthly connection. Yet, visual art institutions and organizations have fallen behind, faltering with their steps towards ecological agency and responsibility. The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the current sustainability practices and respective accountabilities, to determine sustainable progress and therefore reveal viable options of sustainable improvement for the future.

As discussed in this work, visual arts industries and organizations have historically reflected the perspectives and emotions of a society or culture (Langer, 1966) and more recently acted as a moral compass fostering cultural understanding and education (McClellan, 2008:14). In a way, this makes the visual arts industry an ideal setting and medium to promote social issues, such as climate change. It would be in the best ethical interest of visual arts institutions to promote sustainability and incorporate it into their organizational practices. Additionally, the visual arts have proven to be an exceptional method of introducing sustainability into a society. This is because of its unique ability to tap into human emotion, therefore reaching human reflexivity, which enables us to look-inward at our thoughts, habits, and behaviors (Dieleman, 2008). By utilizing original and impassioned imagery, climate concerns can be communicated in a way which powerfully strikes the viewer towards reflection and contemplation (Thomsen,

2015). Furthermore, advancing the likelihood of our ability to exchange non-sustainable behaviors for sustainable ones (Dieleman, 2008).

This ability of artistic imagery has clear benefits to push forward the development of sustainability, however, it also can hinder the sustainable mission. The pursuing of sustainability through generic imagery and “pre-existing narratives” can create a stagnant and one-dimensional view of climate issues (Thomsen, 2015:3). These generalized images damage the dynamic nature of climate issues and make it more accessible to appropriation. Often this appropriation is found in the form of greenwashing. Corporate greenwashing has become a growing concern and has plagued many industries, including the visual arts industry. Visual arts industries utilize corporate greenwashing tactics through their corporate social responsibility activities. By implementing ecologically centered exhibitions, environmental charity events, and representing ‘green’-minded artists, while certainly these are good approaches, it enables avoidance of taking a looking deeper into their organization’s profound sustainability impacts and acknowledging how they could improve it. Thankfully, we have many organizations such as Gallery Climate Coalition, Galleries Commit, Julie’s Bicycle, and Decolonize This Place, which all work to hold visual arts institutions accountable for their climate action or lack thereof.

Through the analysis of 20 visual arts institutions and a more focused perspective of three organizations Christie’s, Gagosian, and Art Basel, a more in-depth understanding of the current sustainability practices in the visual arts industry was ascertained. Firstly, the visual arts industry is currently shifting to more sustainable methodologies and systems, including green construction, the implementation of sustainability teams, and more sustainability related information sharing. However, two main characteristics describing the sustainability practices of art institutions came to light: opacity and variety. Opacity describes the lack of clarity and transparency within the art industries sustainability disclosures while variation illustrates the range of sustainability commitment exhibited by the visual art institutions. All of the institutions analyzed displayed, on some level, an acknowledgement of the climate crisis. However, the range of reactivity through sustainable practices varied greatly. Some institutions, such as Christie’s, have reacted to the climate crisis by supporting and facilitating sustainable innovation that can be utilized industry wide. There is also a range of institutions who have or plan to implement sustainability reporting. However, these sustainability reports vary greatly on the type

and amount of data disclosed. Some institutions' reports release much less information than others. However, the trend appears to be leaning towards transparency through examples of how Christie's, MOCA, and Art Basel's sustainability reports have transformed, disclosing more information every year. Overall, the analysis of current sustainability practices revealed that many institutions were completing surface level changes such as installing LED lights, implementing recycling practices, and decreasing the amount of business-related travel. However, there is a lack of more profound and meaningful sustainable change that harnesses the emotion baring power of visual arts occurring at these institutions.

As mentioned, many organizations are beginning to hold the visual arts industry accountable for their lack of action in the climate crisis. They often exercise accountability through a variety of mediums such as protests, performances, petitions, and calls to action. This can be understood well through the case of the NGO Liberate Tate holding the Tate Museum accountable for their BP partnership (Cotter, 2016). However, some visual art institutions are also held accountable through governmental mechanisms, because often institutions such as museums and higher education art institutions rely on government funding. Therefore, they must participate in any governmental regulations regarding sustainability measures. This also applies to any governmental jurisdictions where visual arts institutions and organizations must follow any construction and energy guidelines as well as any right to information laws. Often this type of external stakeholder accountability is established through publicized activity such as reporting, press releases, and sustainability related CSR activities. However, internal accountability is also pertinent to sustainability management within a firm. By creating internal accountability, it provides clarity to the institutions' internal stakeholders, such as workers and board members, about their responsibilities and duties towards sustainability, eradicating doubt and confusion. This is often established through the designation of a 'green' team and sustainability policies. Through established internal sustainability accounting practices institutions can better facilitate reflexivity to self-monitor their progress towards sustainability (Schneider, 2015).

Yet, the current sustainability and accounting practices only scratch the surface as to what the visual arts can accomplish in the field of ecological sustainability. As a whole, this leaves plenty of room for improvement in the visual arts industry. As mentioned, the visual arts could be

an ideal method of sustainability implementation, because of its creativity and imagination that promotes the out-of-the-box thinking that sustainability change requires. Traditional methods of sustainability implementation such as science, politics, and mathematics are geared towards segmentation and simplification. On the other hand, art has the potential to nurture the multi-disciplinary nature of sustainability, because of its own inherent multi-disciplinary perspective (Dieleman, 2008; Galafassi et al., 2018). More profound methods of sustainability could be introduced through art-specific sustainability practices such as decolonization of arts and nature, a process that acknowledges Indigenous knowledge. By learning the perspective of Indigenous communities such as equality of man and nature, collaborative-place based sustainability, and the utilization of arts and crafts, society and institutions can move towards a more decolonized and sustainable mode of living (Demos, 2016). Visual arts institutions can also implement collaborative workshops which work towards education of sustainability through visual arts as well as sustainability science research performed through artistic intervention. These methods, although only executed occasionally, often prove to be successful in generating a deeper understanding of human connection to sustainability issues as well as strengthening the sustainability research process as a whole. Rather than simplistic and surface level sustainable change, the proposed methods have the ability to create a deeper systematic change of the currently binding social institutions and social behaviors which inhibit society from moving towards new sustainable habits.

The visual arts sustainability methods mentioned in this thesis are certainly not exhaustive and there is plenty more research to be conducted. This study utilized publicly accessible information from visual arts institutions and organizations. Naturally, its findings could be deepened through institutional participation and would develop over time as both sustainability practices and their subsequent publicizing expand. The continuation of this study would assist in the sustainability monitoring of the visual arts industry to see how their efforts develop over time, how rapidly or slowly, and through which practices. Following the introduction of place and community based visual arts interventions and their benefit to sustainability solutions, more projects and studies must still be conducted in a variety of economic, cultural, and social backgrounds as well as a variety of ecosystems. Ideally, these projects could be supported by visual arts institutions, who have many of the resources and

knowledge to conduct said studies. By conducting more diverse studies, one can more easily understand its applicability as a large-scale solution to the climate crisis.

Overall, this thesis has contributed positively to the claim that visual arts are a natural and necessary contribution to sustainability research and may facilitate the radical mentality shift that is necessary for a more sustainable future. The Sustainability Transition Networks states that looking into how the social sciences, such as culture, can contribute to the understanding and mobilization of sustainability (Köhler et al., 2019). Through studies, such as this, which investigate these cultural institutions sustainability efforts, deeper insights of how the multi-disciplinary visual arts industry can contribute to the sustainability field of study. Looking into the future, if more collaborative understanding can be generated through the arts and sciences, a more sustainable, inclusive, and innovative planet is possible.

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