THE VISUAL ARTS MARKET IN MEXICO 2000-2013

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally art has been considered outside the scope of economy, and when is subject to economic analysis, it is considered an exception within their precepts of value, prices and markets. In this paper, we examine the main approaches that economic theory has generated about the characteristics of artistic production, and we apply them to the analysis of the visual arts market in Mexico during 2000-2013.

This paper contributes with an original analysis and understanding of economic aspects of the Mexican cultural market. It shows that this market in general and, in particular, the Visual Arts market, is relatively small, unstable, and with a high degree of informality. This situation is made worse by the weakness of the institutional frame and the existent cultural policy in the country. In addition, we raise a call for a reorientation of cultural policy and its institutions, in order to strengthen the art markets and establish greater links between art, culture and education.

Key words: Visual Arts, Culture, Art, Economy of Culture, Cultural Policy, Cultural Institutions, Art Markets.

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1 Introduction

The work of art, as in the field of economy, has raised deep debates regarding the definition and understanding of art as a merchandise. This stems, in part, from the fact that many subjective factors intervene in the production and consumption of art as well as other elements related to its exceptional nature within the economic theory. As a consequence, the definition of art from the field of economy has been complex and subject to conceptual problems, making it difficult to determinate its specific characteristics as merchandise.

In general, art has not been the object of study in economy, given that the characteristics of the artistic produce are not directly assimilative to common merchandise. For instance, its value does not depend on socially necessary work, it is not duplicatable, it is produced at small scale, and commonly it is considered an exception of the theory of value (Beech. 2015).

The discussion about art and economy was left aside for a long time, until Baumol and Bowen (1966) formulated the economic dilemma known as "the cost disease". In this dilemma, they propose the existence a problem in art, which derives from backwardness in productivity in relation to its cost. Thus, these authors consider it to be the estate, and not the market, who must guarantee the survival of cultural activities through subsidies specifically aimed and designed for this sector.

A new advance in the written discussion of art in economy is that of the creative industries. This concept comes about for the first time in Australia, on the Creative Nation Report in 1994, which became popular a few years later under the 2008 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Creative industries have been defined as a considerably wide group of activities related to art (UNCTAD, 2008). This discussion was implemented by Richard Florida (2002) and its polemic "creative class" concept, under which culture and art are seen as pillars of modern economic activity. However, for this author, the relevant discussion about creativity is centered upon specific occupations and not so much upon industrial activity.

The relevance of the link between culture and economy has been brought out lately by Lipovetsky and Serroy (2015), who go further than the discussion on creativity in the industry and its occupations, as they point out that it is capitalism itself which must be understood as “an artistic capitalism”. This position incorporated the point of view of aesthetics on mass production. They defend that the artistic work is therefore linked to the logic in production of merchandise, given that the latter utilize artistic elements like never before in the past, with the company Apple being a clear example of this type of creative industrial activity.

However, although the discussion on economy and art has taken off again at an international level, in Mexico the studies about it are uncommon and they are often received with skepticism by the economists.

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the discussion of the relevance of culture, and specifically, of visual arts in the economy.

For this, we will analyze the structure of the market of visual arts in Mexico and we will present a general panorama of the conditions and function that such market has had on Mexican economy.

For this investigation, we will develop an exploratory analysis, for which we will use the numbers of the *Cuenta Satélite de la Cultura de México* (Culture Satellite Accounts of Mexico) and the Encuestas Nacionales de Ocupación y Empleo (National Survey of Occupation and Employment) in order to analyze the market conditions of visual markets in Mexico during the 2000-2013 period.

One of the results of our analysis is that the art market in Mexico has been developed in a context of a fragile institutional structure and underperforming, unimportant cultural policies for the sector. Mexican market is two sided; on one hand a small, extremely privileged and dominant side, and on the other hand a more extended market, more independent but one which stands further from the formal structures of the market. For this reason its production is often self-financed, and it is not uncommon that they rely on different paths of self-promotion.

2 Art and culture within the economic theory

From a classic economy point of view (Marxism, to be more specific) arts, once they become merchandise, and therefore acquire a use value, they also acquire an exchange value, and that is unavoidably expressed as a price. However, given that the artistic products are singular in that they are not mass produced and they are unique and unrepeatable, its price cannot be directly linked to work as in the case of other types of merchandise (Smith 1958; Ricardo 1973; Marx 1979).

As a consequence, artistic production has got a different nature, being framed under exceptional conditions when compared to any other type of merchandise. This affects the price setting mechanisms in art.

It is in this sense that the exceptionality is seen by Smith as a price that depends on the existence of a monopoly, the fluctuations of which are affected by very specific conditions, such as the talent or virtuosity that only certain artists show. Or as in the case of Ricardo, where the explanation rests on the fact that work cannot increment the offer of such goods.

On top of the price problem, in art there is a peculiar relationship between work and capital; artistic work incorporates technology, administrative techniques and other forms of commercialization that are common to capitalism. However, at the same time those working relationships are established in an atypical manner.

Visual artists in general maintain non wage-earning relationships with the capital, which if we were to analyze under strictly Marxist terms, we would have to label their work as unproductive.

The market of art does show other peculiarities in the form in which capitalists perform. In this case they are intermediaries who operate differently to traditional capitalists as we know them, given that they do not buy the worker's work force, their product nor do they provide the means of production. So this intermediaries would be closer to a type of mercantile capitalist (Beech 2015).

The circuit market of the artistic merchandise is also atypical, so the step from production into circulation depends on the different routes that it can follow once it leaves the artists' workshop. This could be to be gifted as a present, its sale, its lend to a gallerist, or to become a part of a collection, among many diverse options.

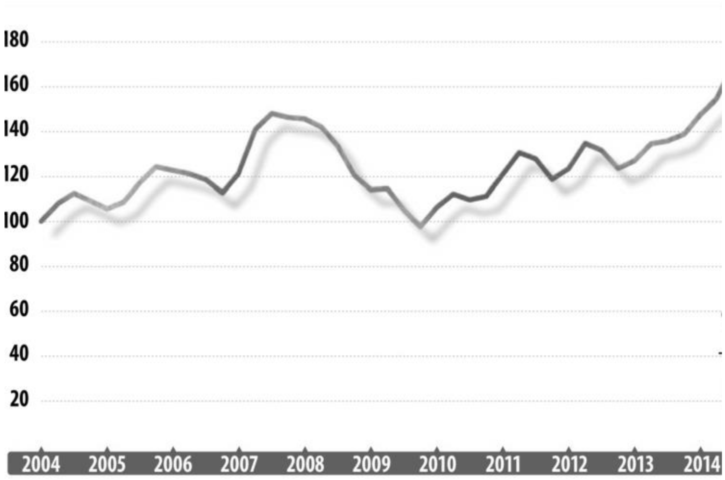
If the artist chooses to give its work as a present, the work of art transmogrified from a use value to a social use value. If it got sold, it would become merchandise, if lent to a gallerist, this metamorphosis would then be expressed simultaneously in terms of merchandise and capital. If it would pass on to a collector who keeps it, the same work would then become a store of value (Beech, 2015).

Strictly speaking, in the art market, the forces that operate on pricing are external to the artistic product and the artist itself. What this means is that it cannot be expressed in a conventional manner by the theories of value or offer and demand. This is because the price setting is complex and it involves factors like aesthetic value, artist trajectory, uniqueness of the work, type of link with the market, the work of the intermediaries as a means of attaining recognition, historical and social context and other institutional values such as relationship with the current State.

3 Mexico and the international contemporary art market.

International contemporary art market has been segmented since 2006, when China irrupts in the auction market. As an immediate consequence of this Chinese participation in the art market has been the rise in the prices of the main occidental artists, mostly in the period after the 2008 economic crisis. The rise in demand on the art market has generated a rise in 70% in the price index of contemporary art (Artprice, 2014).

Figure 1 World price index of contemporary art. Euros 2004=100



Source: artprice 2014

Currently, China represents 40% of the world market. This percentage is even higher than the United States' which stands at 38%. The rest of the relevant competitors are very distant from this numbers, ranging from the United Kingdom's 15% to France, which is slightly under 2%.

Table1 Top 10 cities-contemporary art (2013-2014)

Rank	City	Sales
1	New York	€ 541,331,656
2	Beijing	€ 299,642,537
3	London	€ 230,325,132
4	Hong Kong	€ 187,278,699
5	Shanghai	€ 39,386,327
6	Paris	€ 23,113,570
7	Guangzhou	€ 21,573,252
8	Nanjing	€ 19,047,333
9	Hangzou	€ 14,831,548
10	Taipei	€ 9,965,738

Source: artprice 2014.

The Chinese domination on the market has meant that 47 of their artists are in the Top 100, and together with the rest of Asian artists, they represent the 54% of the worldwide sales, in contrast with the United States', which stands at 19%.
We can observe only three occidental cities (New York, London and Paris) amongst the ten more important and dynamic cities when it comes to contemporary art sales. The rest are all Asiatic cities: Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Nanjing, Hangzhou and Tapei.
The forces that have operated to favour this rise of the Chinese market are the demand, which has caused the work art sales to multiply by five in the last ten years.
The engine of this demand has been the growing presence of high net worth buyers, which can be linked to the growing inequality that we have witnessed in the main countries since the economic crisis of 2008 (Pikety, 2015).
On the side of the offer of art production that are commercialized on these international markets, it is strongly concentrated in a reduced group of artists with Jeff Koons, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Christopher Wool, Zeng Fanzhi, Martin Kippenberger y Peter Doig being on the top segment.

Among them, only the first three show am increasing trend of 797% in their sales volume in auctions from 3003 to 2014. For this reason we consider that it is on this small segment of the market that feeds the hypermediatization and speculation of the whole sector. According to Artprice (2014) numbers, the top 100 most profitable artists of contemporary art make nowadays the by no means negligible sum of 1000 million euros a year, although in terms of general volume, they only contribute a 0.32%. To put these data in perspective, it is enough to consider that in a sole year, the auctions of Koons, Basquiat y Wool amount the same as a hundred times the annual income of the contemporary art market in Japan.

On this context, Latin America has a reduced participation of only 0.14% of world sales of contemporary art (Artprice,2014). Mexico is a small competitor; in 2011 would only contribute a 0.05% of the international market; also, it is characterized as being a weak, unstable and to a great extent, informal market.

Mexico can count on some artists that represent solid names with an unquestionable presence in the high segment of the international level, artists such as Rufino Tamayo, Frida Kalho, Diego Rivera or Francisco Toledo. However

The presence of Mexican artists is still reduced in such segment. According to available information, in 2011 the art market hardly reached the total value of 20 million dollars. Of that sum, 6.5 millions were operated through auction houses, 12 millions in galleries and 1.5 millions through art dealers. To get a global idea of these numbers, it should suffice to consider that in auctions in 2011, China operated 4,740 million dollars, U.S. 2,720 million, and Great Britain 2,240 million dollars (El Economista, 2015). So we can see an abysmal difference in the conditions of the art market in Mexico and on the scope of the most competitive markets in the world.

4 The Mexican market of visual arts

The cultural sector in Mexico contributes in a 2.6% of the Added National Value. To measure the weight of this activity, we shall remember that it is superior to the agricultural sector (1.3 times the agricultural Gross Domestic Product). It has a similar weight of the same sector in Spain with 2.7% in 2011, and it is higher than that of other Latin American countries, as the case of Chile with 1.3% in 2007 or Colombia with1.8% in 2007 (INEGI, 2015).

On their side, visual arts represented roughly the 0.38% of the added value of culture in the country, with a tendency on the rise of 0.19% during the 2008-2012 period, very much under the growth of the national cultural sector which was 1.86% (see table 2).

Table 2 Added value in creative activities

Concept	Millions of pesos, prices of 2008					Growth rate %
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2008/2012
Country	**11 941 199**	**11 374 630**	**11 965 979**	**12 435 058**	**12 935 715**	**2.02**
Culture	320 478	300 178	316 739	332 035	344 986	1.86
Visual arts	49 292	45 463	47 498	48 038	49 658	0.19
Draw	387	340	358	374	400	0.79
Photography	2 899	2 188	2 160	2 002	1 985	-9.03
Museums	276	254	259	267	306	2.62
Goods and auxiliary services	179	172	166	181	161	-2.71
Performance	19 579	18 275	19 846	20 391	21 289	2.11
Design:						
Architecture	6 025	5 329	5 543	5 748	6 145	0.49
Graphic	2 362	2 034	2 007	1 827	2 015	-3.90
Informatics	6 410	6 443	6 608	6 486	6 575	0.64
Interiors	415	380	375	379	419	0.27
Fashion	107	96	98	97	107	0.06
Other design	2 688	2 611	2 628	2 682	2 765	0.71
Creative services	7 965	7 342	7 451	7 606	7 491	-1.52

Source: Authors' calculations based on INEGI Cuenta Satélite de Cultura 2014 & 2015

On the following table we can appreciate the contribution to visual arts to the cultural employment of the country. The total sum of paid employment in 2012 in the sector of culture was 784,538 of which 9.83% correspond to occupations directly related to visual arts. However, during the 2008-2012 period we can observe that a decrease takes place in the number of people employed in activities related to visual arts, since in 2008 the number of jobs rose to 84,245 (10.69%), whereas in 2012 this number had descended to only 77,117 which means a loss of 7,128 jobs.

Table 3 Employment in visual art sector

Concept	Number of remunerated occupations					Growth rate
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2012-2008
Culture	788 094	743 341	776 106	775 740	784 538	-0.11
Visual art	84 245	76 261	75 341	75 171	77 117	-2.19

Source: Authors' calculations based on INEGI Cuenta Satélite de Cultura 2014 & 2015

The job market in the sector of visual arts comes characterized by the scarce presence of workers who are also union members. On the following table we can observe that only 3.87% of the workers had joined the Union in 2005, in relation to the whole of the creative activities[2], this percentage decreases in 2014 to the 1.26%. The workers of visual arts, together with artisans are the two occupational groups with a lower union percentage within the creative workers, which is a clear indicator of the deficient working conditions in which they operate.

Table 4 Percentage of unionized workers by creative occupation 2005-2014

	2005	2014	Growth rate 2005-2014
Architecture	11.71	8.02	-3.69
Handicraft	2.50	1.20	-1.30
Film Industry, Video, Photography	10.77	4.39	-6.38
Arts Management	33.73	11.08	-22.65
Handicraft Management	28.32	17.19	-11.14
Design and Visual Arts	3.87	1.26	-2.61
Management I&D	48.78	49.32	0.54
Music and Scenic Arts	9.25	2.87	-6.37
Publications and Edition	13.32	8.78	-4.53
Advertising and Marketing	4.57	3.46	-1.11
I&D	31.63	21.21	-10.42
Software, Electronics, Computation	16.52	12.73	-3.79
Television and Radio	34.29	34.79	0.50

Source: Authors' calculations based on INEGI Cuenta Satélite de Cultura 2014 & 2015

The low unionized rate, its decrease over time and the existence of a high number of workers in the sector that work as freelancers, without contracts or

[2] This creative activities are defined and classified according to UNCTAD (2010).

social benefits, indicate that there is a problem of informality in the cultural activity.

Within the creative activities, we can observe that the photographers (also associated with the activities of cinema and videos) represent the higher indexes of informality; in 2005 the 40.65% of its workers were informal and in 2014 it had risen to 41.64%.

On another side, the visual arts also show high degrees of informality, specifically, a 28.66% in 2005 and a 20.84% in 2012.

Without a doubt, the most defenseless segment of creative workers are the artisans, where the 73.15% operate under this informality, which contrasts with the managers and CEOs in the same sector, where informality is merely at 11.73% or the sector of radio and TV where informality is almost inexistent.

Table 5 Percentage of informal workers in creative occupations 2005-2014

	2005	2014	Growth rate 2005-2014
Architecture	17.60	11.13	-6.47
Handicraft	66.30	73.15	6.84
Film Industry, Video, Photography	40.65	41.64	0.99
Arts Management	0.93	9.21	8.28
Handicraft Management	4.60	11.73	7.13
Design and Visual Arts	28.66	20.84	-7.82
Management I&D	0.07	0.56	0.50
Music and Scenic Arts	63.09	67.46	4.38
Publications and Edition	15.97	6.06	-9.91
Advertising and Marketing	6.80	2.95	-3.85
I&D	4.52	5.35	0.83
Software, Electronics, Computation	18.22	7.95	-10.27
Television and Radio	0.00	0.00	0.00

Source: Authors' calculations based on INEGI Cuenta Satélite de Cultura 2014 & 2015

Another aspect worth looking at in the creative occupations in general and in those which mean the visual art in particular, is the gender difference. Since in both cases, the presence of men is overwhelmingly majoritarian. This situation could come for different factors, like the fact that in Mexico the occupational structure has been discriminatory towards women. In the sector of visual arts a tradition which considered the job as a masculine one has prevailed. So much so that for years the same activity, when taken by a woman was seen as mere entertainment for her; as a consequence her participation represented only the 36% of the jobs in during the period of study.

Table 6 Percentage of female and male in creative occupations 2005-2014

	2005		2014		Growth rate 2005-2014	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Architecture	14.57	85.43	12.86	87.14	-1.72	1.72
Handicraft	47.51	52.49	46.46	53.54	-1.04	1.04
Film Industry, Video, Photography	20.01	79.99	23.43	76.57	3.42	-3.42
Arts Management	37.42	62.58	44.14	55.86	6.72	-6.72
Handicraft Management	9.722	90.28	33.78	66.22	24.06	-24.06
Design and Visual Arts	36.38	63.62	36.86	63.14	0.48	-0.48
Management I&D	43.16	56.84	46.35	53.65	3.19	-3.19
Music and Scenic Arts	14.18	85.82	20.24	79.76	6.06	-6.06
Publications and Edition	42.59	57.41	56.09	43.91	13.50	-13.50
Advertising and Marketing	42.99	57.01	33.73	66.27	-9.26	9.26
I&D	36.21	63.79	38.66	61.34	2.45	-2.45
Software, electronic, computation	11.7	88.30	15.94	84.06	4.23	-4.23
Television and Radio	15.44	84.56	50.73	49.27	35.29	-35.29

Source: Authors' calculations based on INEGI, ENOE

If we analyze the sector on the basis of average years of experience, we observe that in the visual arts workers do not have more than seven years of experience, and are the least experienced within the creative activities. This situation could indicate that the visual arts incorporate people who are relatively younger.

In contrast, the jobs with people with more years' experience are the directors of I&D with more than 15 years of experience and after that, the artisans with more than 12 years of practice.

Table 7 Average experience years, 2005-2014

	2005	2014
Architecture	9.22	9.10
Handicraft	10.92	12.03
Film Industry, Video, Photography	9.88	11.36
Arts Management	9.91	8.58
Handicraft Management	8.45	7.84
Design and Visual Arts	6.98	6.79
Management I&D	13.28	15.29
Music and Scenic Arts	11.19	10.01
Publications and Edition	7.23	7.56
Advertising and Marketing	6.41	7.37
I&D	11.91	10.24
Software, Electronics, Computation	7.72	6.52
Television and Radio	10.62	9.55
National	8.77	8.96

Source: Authors' calculations based on INEGI, ENOE

Table 8 shows the average age of the creative workers in the country, this data allows us to confirm that visual artists are the youngest, with an average of 34.4 years old, which means four years younger than the national average and even younger than architects, photographers and art directives.

Table 8 Average age, 2005-2014

	2005	2014
Architecture	37.9	39.6
Handicraft	39.1	42.2
Film Industry, Video, Photography	35.2	38.4
Arts Management	39.1	37.2
Handicraft Management	34.1	36.1
Design and Visual Arts	33.9	34.4
Management I&D	41.6	44.8
Music and Scenic Arts	35.8	35.6
Publications and Edition	38.8	36.5
Advertising and Marketing	38.5	39.8
I&D	41.9	40.7
Software, Electronics, Computation	34.3	34.4
Television and Radio	36.0	39.5

National	37.0	38.7

Source: Authors' calculations based on INEGI, ENOE

When it comes to annual intake of creative workers, architects and I&D workers stand out with the highest income in the sector. Even when we observe a generalized fall of monthly income, this tendency is more pronounced in the activities of design and visual art; between 2005 and 2014 their income fell in a 7.83% annual average rate. This cause that they were earning $6,432 pesos a month in 2005 (about 478 euros), but they earned only $3,088 pesos in 2014 (about 175 euros) in real terms. In comparison, only the artisans have a worse situation in their salary, with an average monthly income of only $2,389 pesos a month (approximately 135 euros).

Table 9 Monthly real income (2010=100), 2005-2014

	2005	2014	Growth rate
Architecture	7637.75	6285.40	-2.14
Handicraft	2756.40	2388.71	-1.58
Film Industry, Video, Photography	5648.84	3215.84	-6.07
Arts Management	7644.07	5548.04	-3.50
Handicraft Management	6317.87	4059.76	-4.80
Design and Visual Arts	6431.64	3088.19	-7.83
Management I&D9	9951.36	8082.96	-2.28
Music and Scenic Arts	5643.76	3575.78	-4.94
Publications and Edition	6986.96	5525.27	-2.57
Advertising and Marketing	7649.40	5871.35	-2.90
I&D	9304.98	5913.65	-4.91
Software, Electronics, Computation	6973.30	4416.63	-4.95
Television and Radio	4021.13	3234.79	-2.39
National	4031.71	3238.69	-2.40

Source: Authors' calculations based on INEGI, ENOE

The data that we have analyzed has allowed us to confirm that the sector of visual arts in Mexico has an exceptional character in a theoretical sense, but also it is exceptional in its relative behavior in relation with the rest of the creative sectors. In a way, the informality of the sector and the low income are the outcomes of a weak and very segmented art market, but also it can take place given a limited institutional design, as we will show on the sext section.

5 Cultural policy in Mexico

In 1988, during the period in which Carlos Salinas was president, fundamental modifications to the prevailing model of the cultural institutions in the country took place.

The main change came to be with the creation of a National Council for Culture and Arts (El Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, also known as the CONACULTA). This organism represents a change in the governmental cultural strategy, as it goes from a nationalist model to a model that could be called neoliberal.

An important happening that marked the nature of the Council was that it was created through a decree, without autonomy and born from a limited consultation with a group of intellectuals linked to the presidential campaign of the time and which, for that reason, did not incorporate a wide analysis of the cultural sector.

This situation gave place to a lack of definition of the areas of Competency and to the overlapping of functions related to tasks that were previously under the competence of the National Institute of Anthropology (Instituto Nacional de Antropología -INAH-) and the National Fine Arts Institute (Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes -INBA-).

Currently, Peña Nieto's government is operating in a similar way to that of Salinas. It is working on the creation of a new Culture Secretary (Secretaría de Cultura) which has also been created without a deep and inclusive conversation with the cultural sector.

This has given place to opposing views from the cultural community, where some consider that with the creation of this Secretary the possibilities of cultural promotions would raise, both in the country and abroad. Or, on the contrary, there are those who consider that it will not imply an advance for the cultural sector in Mexico.

Although it might appear that the creation of a new Secretary of Culture is not a bad idea, since the artistic and cultural community have been waiting on transformations which would allow for the development of the sector, its main weakness is founded on its presentation, which emphasizes a new reorganization of the areas of administration and budgeting, and not so much as a solid cultural proposal for the country.

On top of the weak form in which the main cultural institutions in the country have been conceived, they also face strong restrictions of budget.

In the last decades, the State has counted on two big systems designated to administer the budgets for education and culture. The first one is the National System of Research (Sistema Nacional de Investigadores -SNI-), created in 1984, which has dealt with the support for the academia. This system was designed and directed at High Education, so primary and secondary teachers have been excluded from of this scheme. The second one is the Found for the Culture and Arts (Fondo para la Cultura y las Artes -FONCA-), created in 1989, which has been assigned the tasks of supporting high quality creativity, artistic and cultural production, fostering and promoting culture, boost cultural heritage and to preserve and maintain Mexico’s cultural heritage.

The visual artists can benefit from the Young Creators Program, scholarships to study abroad, funding of projects and joint investment in cultural issues, also scholarships for creators in Ibero-America and Haiti in Mexico, and in the National System of Creators of Art (Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Arte -SNCA-).

However, when we analyze the differences between the two main systems (the SNI and the FONCA), we can observe important divergences. Taking the number of support that they gave until 2013; the SNI had 19,000 members, whereas the SNCA had only 600 (Academia Mexicana de las Ciencias 2014).

We can also observe a very different behavior when it comes to new admissions in both systems; the SNI takes 1000 new beneficiaries and at the same times the SNCA takes only 100.

The distance between the two systems increases if we consider that also, the SNI members have a right to continue to receive the support that they have been awarded for an unlimited amount of time, as long as they continue to fulfil the requisites, whereas the support that the SNCA awards are temporary. For this reason some think that its nature is closer to an artistic yearly tendering

process, which would be apt for a national system of support for the artistic creation (Flores, 2013).
From our perspective, culture’s finance mechanism reflects the deficiencies in the cultural policy of the State, which favours that public funding is clearly insufficient for the particular case or visual arts. At the same time, given that this support is temporal, it does not provide for the continuity that would allow the artist to consolidate his or her work.
For these reasons, the new Secretary of Culture must be strengthened and legitimated socially and it cannot turn its side on the problems that it inherits.
Its main objective should be to drive a cultural policy through an adequate and inclusive institutional design, which can impact substantially on the development of the cultural sector, in such a way that art in Mexico, the audience and its markets come out stronger.

6 Final Considerations

The art market in general and particularly in the visual art market, have expanded their influence on the economy and have become a revitalizing element in the economic activity. Their aesthetic perspectives have been considered in the production and design of food, dress and entertainment amongst many other activities that incorporate in its design an aesthetic vision to produce in the consumer an experience and illusion that goes further than the object itself**;** it is in this way that the fantasies and illusions of power, success and wellbeing have become attributes associated with merchandise and the services that we consume.
At the same time, the market of contemporary visual arts, has become a vigorous economical phenomenon. Its importance comes from some deep changes in the structure of this market, which have coated it with a competitive and speculative characteristic. The two big poles that dominate this market at an international level are the Chinese market and the United States' market, which are immerse in a profound competency which has caused the loss of prominence of the occidental markets; this is why currently more than half of the total of the most sought-after visual artists are from Asiatic origin.

Far from the dominant markets, the Mexican market is characterized for being small, unstable and highly informal.

It is still complicated to characterize the cultural and visual arts sector, given the lack of information, although the INEGI, through the Culture Satellite Accounts, is working on this issue, the information and the way in which it is classified is still insufficient to study this sector in depth.

In order to understand the importance that visual artists have and have had in the development of Mexico, it should be enough to remember the impact and the historical relevance of artists such as David Alfaro Siqueiros, Clemente Orozco, Frida Kahlo y Diego Rivera, who among others and from a contemporary art market perspective represent international brands. But, who, in their time represented something else than a market brand, they really were a tradition that linked education and culture as the pillars of the construction of a national identity. That link has now been broken since the 80s, with the implementation of neoliberal policies from the Mexican State, and in the scope of culture are expressed as a lack of a cultural policy. In the particular case of visual arts, that has cause that public support has been clearly deficient and at the same time are short term, which does not allow for the necessary continuity that the visual artists need in order to consolidate themselves.

To sum up, we can assert that in Mexico we can find different sources of funding which impact on the conditions under which the visual artists develop their work and join the merchant's markets. The most immediate and frequent is the personal effort, which is illustrated in many histories full of perseverance; the second, following the same natural course, corresponds to the artists that are supported with their families income and their near social network, which sometimes brings about patronage which gives the artists the economic base to develop their projects.

Although on one hand, one important part of the production of contemporary art is located far away from the extra-artistic reality, on the other hand, art continues to be a generator of diverse symbolic representations that are still linked to the social, political and economic transformations of its society.

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