

Career making practices at the opening of a solo exhibition: a network in action

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Résumé

"Networking" est considéré comme essentiel à la construction d'une carrière durable dans les industries créatives. La plupart des recherches qui soulignent l'importance des réseaux partent du principe que les individus sont d'abord des acteurs stratégiques qui utilisent les réseaux comme des ressources pour atteindre leurs objectifs, et puis que les réseaux sont des réseaux sociaux et donc composés de personnes. Cet article propose une approche moins anthropocentrique en incluant des acteurs non humains dans les réseaux. Il utilise Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) comme lentille théorique pour éclairer et comprendre le rôle des acteurs non humains dans les pratiques de développement de carrière et s'appuie sur des données empiriques recueillies lors de l'inauguration d'une exposition individuelle de l'artiste belge Berlinde De Bruyckere. L'article apporte de nouvelles perspectives à la littérature sur les carrières créatives en démontrant comment un réseau hétérogène met en œuvre des pratiques de développement de carrière - en montrant des œuvres, en racontant des histoires et en connectant le réseau.

Mots-clés : carrières, industries créatives, réseaux, actor-network-theory, ethnographie

INTRODUCTION

“Networking” is considered as crucial for building a sustainable career in creative industries. It has been studied as one of the three strategies used by the individual career actor to cope with the uncertainty, precarity and ambiguity inherent to creative work. Together with branding the self and portfolio working, “networking” enhances the employability and the chance to make a living out of creative work (Eikhof, 2013; Mao and Shen, 2020). Networks were also studied as a setting in which career actors are embedded enhancing and constraining career developments (Jones, 2010; McLeod et al., 2011). Both research streams, the one focusing on networks as a resource, the other on networks as a setting, focus on social networks (i.e. networks of people). Only a few researchers paid attention to symbolic networks (i.e. networks based on aesthetics or ideas) which are mostly created and certainly confirmed by others who symbolically connect actors.

Yet, social and symbolic networks do not fully explain career processes or how sustainable creative careers are established and maintained. Other research areas have been highlighting the role of material actors in organizing. Some sociologists of art confirm artworks’ agency in the organization of exhibitions and museums (Rubio and Silva, 2013; Rubio, 2014; Acord, 2010; Acord, 2014). This idea resonates with the “material turn” in organization studies that includes materiality or non-human actors to explain organizational processes in innovation, leadership and collaboration. It seems obvious to include artefacts besides people and aesthetics or ideas in the networks to better understand “networking” in career making in creative industries. However, the active role of heterogeneous networks in career making has not been fully conceptualized and investigated empirically. This paper investigates how non-human actors establish and maintain careers or how they perform career making practices.

To understand and explain how heterogeneous networks make careers, the paper uses three concepts from the early writings of Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) (Latour, 1987; Latour,

2005; Latour, 1999; Law, 1994), an approach that foregrounds the agency of non-human actors. The first concept “modes of ordering” (Law, 1994) - explains how careers as modes of ordering are told, embodied, performed and resisted and how orderings are established and evolve. The second concept – “actor-network” – articulates Latour’s (2005) idea that actors are always “actor-networks” and that action or agency is not owned by an actor, but is a temporal effect, emerging out of a heterogeneous network consisting of humans and non-humans. The third concept - “immutable mobile” - (Latour, 1987: :227) or an object that can travel (i.e. mobile) and maintain its shape (i.e. immutable) explains how materialising careers makes them sustainable. The concepts help to answer the research question “How does a heterogenous network establish and maintain a career”? We draw on a larger ethnographic case study in the field of contemporary visual arts of which we selected data gathered at the opening of the solo exhibition.

The findings of the empirical study provide new insights on “networking” in creative careers. First, it shows how career making practices are “an uncertain effect generated in a network and its modes of interaction” (Law, 1994) and thus decenter humans in career research and practice. Second, it highlights the importance of materializing careers. This is important for career research because a less human-centered approach leads to a fuller understanding of career making. It is important for practice because it pays attention to how space, artefacts and events contribute to showing work, telling stories and connecting the network.

The paper is structured as follows. First, it discusses what is known about networks and creative careers as well as the material turn in organization studies. Second, it presents the concepts from ANT which will be used in the analysis of the data. Third, it introduces the methods and the empirical setting of the study. Fourth and fifth, it presents and discusses the findings. It concludes with the implications for career theory and practice.

NETWORKING IN CREATIVE CAREERS LITERATURE

“Networking” is considered as crucial for building a sustainable career in creative industries (Blair, 2009). Networking has been studied as one of the three strategies to cope with the uncertainty, precarity and ambiguity inherent to working in creative industries (Blair, 2009; Blair, 2001; Haunschild and Eikhof, 2009; Eikhof, 2013; Coulson, 2012; Umney and Kretsos, 2013). Creative work creates uncertainty and precarity because it is organized in temporary projects which makes that the majority of creative workers works as freelancers and with fixed terms/short term contracts (Menger, 1999; Jones, 1996; Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009; Tarassi, 2018; Hennekam and Bennett, 2017). To cope with uncertainty and precarity creative workers use three strategies, namely “branding”, “networking” and “portfolio working” (Menger, 1999; Eikhof, 2013; Throsby and Zednik, 2011; Tarassi, 2018). Their identity, networks and portfolios are used strategically to enhance employability and a sustainable career (Mao and Shen, 2020). Creative work also creates ambiguity because multiple rationales are at work – especially art and market (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2007; Austin et al., 2018; Rowe, 2019; Banks, 2010). To cope with the ambiguity, creative workers use multiple identities, such as “bohemian entrepreneur” (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006; Banks, 2010; Menger, 1999; Lysova and Khapova, 2019; Gotsi et al., 2010; Taylor and Littleton, 2008).

A strategic of instrumental perspective on networks understand active networking as a conscious, dynamic process aimed at influencing further opportunities. Networking is a strategy because others can help (or hinder) the career actor to enter, to maintain, and to be successful in the field (Blair, 2009; Fuller, 2015; Granovetter, 1995). The others are manifold. They can be an individuals as well as a collectives and have been studied as peers (Accominotti, 2009; Skaggs, 2019; McLeod et al., 2011), mentors (Reilly, 2017), masters (Jones et al., 2016), parents (Umney and Kretsos, 2015), intermediaires (Mulkay and Chaplin,

1982; Giuffre, 1999; Franssen et al., 2015; Khaire, 2015), gatekeepers (Smits, 2016; Fuller, 2015), buyers (Sgourev, 2013), and audiences (Boutinot, 2012; Boutinot et al., 2017; Ertug et al., 2016; Cattani et al., 2014), organisations (Baia Curioni et al., 2015; Schüßler and Sydow, 2015), places (Oberlin and Gieryn, 2015; Quemin and van Hest, 2015; Gill et al., 2019; Forkert, 2013; Crossley, 2009), and fields (Sgourev, 2013; Kirschbaum, 2007; Komarova, 2018).

The dominant individualistic, managerial approach in career studies, which focuses on career strategies and competencies, can be attributed to its origin in the field of management and organisation studies (Arnold & Cohen, 2013). It explains why careers have been understood as a resource used to secure individual and organizational ends (Coupland, 2004). Modern organisations “invented” careers (McKinlay, 2002; White and White, 1965/1993; Savage, 1998). White and White (1965/1993) showed how dealers with the help of critics “constructed” careers for the impressionist painters in order to create a secure income for the painters and security and predictability in the art market. The concept of career was crucial for artists as well as buyers because by constructing a career or by telling and explaining the painters’ trajectories and outcomes, artistic production became more manageable and predictable. Whereas White and White (1965/1993) highlight the role of ordering as a resource for the different participants in the art world, critical career scholars highlight career’s role as a disciplinary mechanism ultimately serving the needs of the organizations (Grey, 1994; McKinlay, 2002; El-Sawad, 2002; Fournier, 1998).

Most researchers who study networks in creative careers actually study social networks or networks of people. A few researchers look at symbolic networks, i.e. networks based on aesthetics or ideas (Braden and Teekens, 2020; Braden, 2018; Braden, 2009; Lang and Lang, 1988; Jones, 2010; Accominotti, 2009; Lena and Pachucki, 2013). Symbolic networks are mostly created and certainly confirmed by others. Critics, curators or other people trace lines

between artists and establish boundaries or make categories such as themes or styles. The connected artists do not necessarily know each other, they even sometimes live in different times and places. Jones (2010) argued that architects' social networks are important for recognition during early stages in the career and their symbolic networks for recognition in late career and eminence after death.

However, some researchers include more than people and ideas in their analyses of career making (Jones, 2010; Jones, 1996; McLeod et al., 2011). Jones (1996) showed how prior work as previous films results in new project matches because it signals the identity, networks and skills of the filmmakers (knowing why, who and how). In an advertising agency monitoring each other's creative output steers careers (McLeod et al., 2011). This "peer regard" (Pratt, 2006: :1892) is the process in which peers constantly check, scan, and evaluate others' output as well as their career process. Jones (2010) indicated how buildings coordinate the profession of architecture and the careers of architects and explained the buildings' active role with the concept of "boundary object" (Star and Griesemer, 1989). Buildings enable people of different backgrounds such clients, constructors, and architects to work together. These studies show how the inclusion of non-human actors enable us to understand more deeply or differently career processes.

NETWORKING THROUGH THE LENS OF ANT

The idea of "active" artefacts is not new. Proponents of the New Sociology of Art show how artworks organize processes and outcomes in exhibitions and museums (Rubio and Silva, 2013; Rubio, 2014; Acord, 2010; Acord, 2014). The "material turn" in organization studies, shows and explains artefacts' role in organizational processes in creative industries such as innovation, communication, collaboration, and identity (e.g. Jones and Massa, 2013;

Boxenbaum et al., 2018; Naar and Clegg, 2018; Yaneva, 2009; Baum and Robinson, 2018; Blagoev et al., 2018; Gond and Nyberg, 2017; Endrissat and Noppeney, 2013). So, when conceptualizing artefacts as actors is widespread in organization studies, why not conceptualize them as actors in career studies?

Understanding how artefacts organize social processes is central to the thinking of ANT. This paper introduces concepts developed by ANT-scholars to theorise the active role of artefacts in career making. The early writings of ANT emphasize process, relationality and materiality in the understanding of social realities. Three concepts from these early writings are used to analyse the findings of this study: “modes of ordering” (Law, 1994), “actor-network” (Latour, 2005) and “immutable mobile” (Latour, 1987). Law (1994) observed how different ways of organizing or “modes of ordering” in Daresbury Laboratory – i.e. enterprise, administration, vision, and vocation - were told, embodied, performed and resisted in practices. We use this concept, firstly, because we understand the notion of career as a “mode of ordering” or an “organizing and regulative principle” (Grey, 1994; Savage, 1998; Fournier, 1998; McKinlay, 2002). Careers order working lives; careers are ordered in the light of the present and make a story of the past and future. Story based career research highlights the importance of stories in careers, stories that make sense for the career actors themselves, but also for others (Collin, 2000; Collin, 1998; Cohen and Mallon, 2001; Cohen, 2006). Secondly, we think the concept is useful because it not only helps to understand how artists’ lives are ordered, but also how they are told, embodied and performed.

The second concept is “actor-network” (Latour, 2005). Actors are embedded in heterogeneous networks consisting of human and non-human actors and are the effect or the result of these networks. “To be is to be related” says Law (2004:59). So, networks are not resources, but who we are. ANT overcomes the duality of agency and structure with the notion of actor-network because it considers agency as an effect generated in a network of heterogeneous

materials. An actor is not only a network, it is also a process. Agency is a precarious effect of a heterogeneous network. Translated into career studies it becomes: career actors are actor-networks, embedded in heterogeneous networks consisting of people, symbols and artefacts and careers are the effect of these networks. This concept makes us understand how career making is an ongoing process by a network and thus makes us focus on the practices of career making by a network.

The third concept is “immutable mobile”(Latour, 1987: :227), i.e. an object that can travel (i.e. mobile) and maintain its shape (i.e. immutable). This concept explains how films, ads and buildings not only signal or represent a career, but also steer career development. The creative output speaks for the maker and can even speak for the maker in his/her absence. As a spokesperson the artefact performs the career, it makes the career present, but can also at the same time resist the career. This concept makes us understand how materialising careers makes them sustainable.

To summarize, prior work on creative careers and networks dominantly focuses on social networks strategically used by the individual career actor. With the help of ANT, this paper investigates how non-human actors in the networks establish and maintain careers.

METHODS AND DATA

ANT not only provides useful theoretical concepts to understand the activity of artefacts, it also and perhaps above all provides methods to study artefacts. It has a longstanding tradition of ethnographic case studies which put non-human actors at the foreground (Callon, 1984; e.g. Bruni, 2005; Law and Mol, 2010; Mol, 2002). In line with Latour’s studies of “science-in-the-making” or “science in action” that reveal a network of humans and non-humans that collectively make science (Latour, 1987; Latour, 1999; Latour and Woolgar, 1979/1986), the

first author studied a “career-in-the making” or a “career in action” in order to reveal how a heterogeneous network is at work in establishing and maintaining a career.

The empirical setting for investigating career making practices by a network is the opening of a solo exhibition by Belgian artist Berlinde De Bruyckere (BDB) in Hauser & Wirth Gallery (H&W) in New York on the 28th of January 2016. Solo exhibitions are appropriate to study career making practices of visual artists for three reasons. First, at every exhibition, careers are (re-)constructed. Second, exhibitions present materials such as artworks, publications and documents and these materials play a prominent role in career making. Third, exhibitions and specifically openings of exhibitions make the network at work visible.

BDB (1964) is an “established” artist (Wohl, 2019; Martin, 2007) who had her year of consecration in 2015 with two retrospectives in major museums for contemporary art (SMAK in Ghent and Gemeentemuseum Den Haag in The Hague), a monograph and a scenography for an opera (Pentiselea for opera house De Munt in Brussels). She was mentioned as one of the “Venice Biennale: 10 of the best artists – in pictures” in 2013 by The Guardian. BDB has been represented by H&W since 2000. A representation involves organising solo exhibitions for each of the artists every couple of years, representing them on fairs, making books on their works, managing the loans of the artworks for exhibitions, and selling the works. In the words of the H&W Vice-President: “[We] try to get Berlinde a museum show, try to place it in the best possible collection, try to get the New York Times to review her show” and thus “a show is the tip of an iceberg”. H&W was founded in 1992 in Zürich (Switzerland) and is one of the biggest galleries in the world with exhibition spaces in Zürich, New York, London, Somerset, and Los Angeles. H&W belongs to the “top segment of the global art market” concentrated in art capitals such as New York, Berlin or London (Velthuis & Baia Curioni, 2015:24). In 2015 the owner of the gallery, Iwan Wirth, was nominated as the most influential person in the contemporary art world according to Art Review’s Powerlist.

Data were collected over 7 months between October 2015 - April 2016 for a larger ethnographic case study of creative careers for which the first author “shadowed” (Czarniawska, 2014; Czarniawska, 2007) an artwork. She gained access to the artist’s studio, in return for archival work which gave her the opportunity not only to work with the studio’s archive, but also to “be there” close to what was going. For this paper, we selected the data of a couple of days out of the 7 months and focused on the opening of the exhibition. We used three sources: observations (6 days or 44 hours), formal interviews (12 hours), informal interviews, and documents. During the days before and after the opening, and on the opening day and evening itself, she observed the network at work in the gallery. At night she further complemented her jotted notes of the observations with more details, comments, and interpretations. These full notes with detailed and textured descriptions of actions, interactions and conversations were the basis for narratives, one for each of the six days of observation. These narratives, or “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) are the fieldnotes we coded and refer to in this article. The nine semi-structured interviews were with three members of staff of the gallery in New York (Vice-President, Senior Director, and Project Coordinator), three members of staff of the studio (artist, studio manager, two assistants), and three collaborators of the artist (photographer, husband-fellow artist, technical support). The interviews lasted between 30 and 120 minutes each; the artist was interviewed three times (once during and twice after the exhibition). The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed ad verbatim in the original language (Dutch and English) and only translated when used as a quote in this article. After each interview, the first author recorded her first impressions and general feelings in a research diary. She had informal interviews with visitors, invited guests, the dancer, the photographer, staff members of the gallery and the studio, in sum everyone who was around in these days and whom she could ask specific questions arising from observations. We analysed the three documents made by the gallery for the exhibition (press

release, leaflet on dance performance, information sheet) and the press articles published by critics in newspapers and magazines after the opening. The observations provided access to what was done, the conversations and documents to what was said about what was done.

As an analytical approach, we moved iteratively between data collection, analysis, theoretical illustration and theory building (Islam et al., 2016). We transcribed the fieldnotes and interviews and coded the transcriptions in NVIVO. We focused on actions and processes rather than on themes and structures and therefore used gerunds as codes, such as “sharing a story”, “making documents”, and “installing” (Charmaz, 2011; Saldaña, 2016). Following Czarniawska (2007; 2014), We identified the actions, the actors¹, and their connections. We first coded the actions at the opening and focused on the non-human actors and how the actions and actors are connected. Secondly, we integrated the codes into broader, more abstract categories: the actors into space, artefacts and events, the actions into showing work, telling stories and connecting.

FINDINGS

We identified three career making practices at the opening of the solo exhibition - showing work, telling stories and networking. These practices were done by a network that consisted of people but also of non-human actors such as spaces, artefacts and events. Below we describe what was shown, told and connected (or not) and how this was done. In the description we foreground the non-human actors.

¹ For clarity we use the term “actor” and not the Latourian term “actant”, although we mean actant, because the potentiality and the non-essentiality.

Table 1 Findings: A network involved in career making practices - Space, artefacts, and events showing work, telling stories and connecting the network

	Showing work	Telling stories	Connecting the network
Space H&W Gallery in Chelsea in New York scenography	A huge space at the centre of the global contemporary art shows monumental and radical work The scenography – moonlight and spacious – shows radical work	H&W Gallery tells that BDB is one of the most renowned artists in the world The scenography is full of references and thus inscribes (new) artworks in the artist's oeuvre and European art history	The huge space enables the co-presence and proximity of many people and monumental artworks The scenography connects a network of people, artworks, places and times The scenography appeals to the senses and emotions, evokes a subdued atmosphere and raises questions
Artefacts exhibition views leaflets	Exhibition views are portraits of artworks in situ Leaflets show the work in the discursive context of texts	The press release inscribes the exhibition in an oeuvre and European art history Documents are a compromise between the studio and gallery Documents keep on communicating	Exhibition views connect the artworks to the exhibition space (artworks in situ) and the other artworks in the exhibition Leaflets connect the artworks, the exhibition and the artist to the artist's oeuvre, to other artists and artworks, to the gallery, to other places and times – a reference list
Events press tour dance performance food and drinks dinner	The press tour shows the work to critics The dance performance shows the work in the context of contemporary dance	The press tour explains the show to critics The dance performance tells the same story as the artworks in the scenography but in a choreography The exquisite and European food and drinks indicates the origin of the artist and the gallery	The press tour connects critics to the gallery, the artist and the exhibited artworks The dance performance embeds the guests in the shared inspiration of both artists and strengthens the network by giving them a shared radical experience

		<p>The formal dinner in an alternative restaurant aligns with the radical work by an established artist.</p> <p>The many shared stories of artist-gallery, artist-dancer, artist-collector, and European background highlight kinship.</p>	<p>The food and drinks in the bar connect guests in a celebratory atmosphere which incites interaction.</p> <p>The dinner connects invited guests in a celebratory, exclusive atmosphere which incites interaction.</p>
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SHOWING WORK AT HAUSER & WIRTH GALLERY AT CHELSEA NEW YORK

The exhibition “No Life Lost” was a radical show that took place at H&W Gallery at Chelsea NY, a huge space at the centre of the global contemporary art. The gallery space is a former warehouse, later converted into the Roxy discotheque and re-opened in 2013 as H&W’s Chelsea exhibition space. It is a single, vast, column-free venue, adapted for its new function by the architect Annabelle Selldorf, who has been acclaimed for her work in the art world. The exhibition space abuts the HighLine (a trendy walking promenade on an old train track) and is situated in the same street (18th street) as two recent buildings by architects Frank Gehry (IAC Building (2006)) and Jean Nouvel (100 Eleventh (2010)), architects with a renown in the artworld. The acclaim of all these architects radiates on the new exhibition space and on the artists that show their work in that space.

The size of the exhibition space of the gallery was something that stroke the first author when she first entered the exhibition space in the days before the opening. Critics as well mentioned the “increase in scale” in the artist’s works and how she has yet to be fully explored the treatment and manipulation of space (Kutsenkow, 2016). Size matters as the gallery’s Vice-President told me:

“... it is because of the size and importance of the gallery, size also in a pure square meter sense, it is very well seen in NY what we do. And so, when the show Berlinde De Bruyckere, although most of New Yorkers don't know the work, it will be seen, and it will be liked or disliked. So there will be a discussion around the work, and in that sense it could not be more important to really, that this is happening”.

This is confirmed by the artist’s studio manager:

“If of course you now put on a huge show, with Cripplewood from in Venice, which always is an incredible magnet, there's going to be more written about it, that's going to be brought out more. Normally, that should have more impact.”

Only very late (half October), the gallery had been able to decide that the new show would be shown in this industrial space. As BDB has the habit to make new work especially for an exhibition space (i.e. artworks in situ), it was important for her to know what the exhibition space would be. She moulded the space to her will in a scenography and the gallery's technical staff converted the large space into two dark rooms lit with artificial moonlight. The first room showed three new sculptures and four drawings together with a small older sculpture, the second room the iconic masterpiece “Cripplewood”, displayed for the first time at the 2013 Venice Biennial. This makes to BDB of H&W the "best gallery", namely the fact that she can display her work in the best conditions and that people are invited to see it in these conditions. A member of staff on the other hand experienced BDB as “meticulous” in the installation of the exhibition.

Not all the works that were produced in the weeks before the opening were displayed. Six smaller works (“glassdomes”) and one “Pentiselea” did not take part in the exhibition. The smaller works were installed in a small showroom that was not part of the exhibition space but to which people could be brought by members of the staff. When we asked BDB and the project coordinator of H&W why these works were not in the exhibition, they told us respectively that there was not enough space and that the artist wanted it that way. It was clear that the artist only wanted to show her work “in good conditions” and that the gallery wanted to safeguard the available small private showrooms for work by artists that pay more. So, in this case a couple of artworks (actually the most saleable) that were shipped from Ghent to New York, remained first behind closed doors and later in boxes and were not shown to the public. These works remained invisible.

The opening of the solo exhibition started at 11am when the exhibition was shown to a group of invited critics, followed at 12am with the first of a series of dance performances by Portuguese dancer Romeu Runa. An excerpt of the fieldnotes describes the performance:

“The press view was followed at 12 noon, first by a dance performance to which family, friends, assistants, artists and guardians of artists’ estates, curators and collectors were invited. In a semicircle, people were seated around a pile of salt, in which, at first sight, a wax sculpture of BDB could be noticed. After a while, the sculpture started to move, or rather the muscles of that piece of a human body started to move. Little by little the movements became more expansive. The body wallowed in the salt, made animal sounds, threw up the salt, urinated in the salt and left the room after 40 minutes, leaving a salt trace like a slug. The audience seated in the moonlight and in great silence left the room in a subdued mood. Afterwards, guests were invited for lunch in the bar”.

It was clear that the work and how it was shown raised questions and emotions among the visitors. The Vice-President said that it was “definitely within NY a very radical one”, unlike most of the shows in Chelsea which are nice paintings or photographs. BDB’s work is “dark, it's sculptural, it's complicated, it's, yeah, I don't think it is depressing, but it is dark”. He further told me that people either completely rejected or understood the exhibition

“I think for an American sensibility this is very extreme, it's very extreme and radical. And I have had reactions which were incredible positive, great collectors and curators really, who really understood and disturbed, the strength of the work, but I also had the exact opposite. Complete rejection.”

The gallery’s Senior Director experienced the same and explained it as following:

“... the relationship to the body, human, animal, plants, any of those things within Berlinde's work is something that, in my impression is particularly jarring and striking for Americans ... having such a, unexplicit relationship to the body, and to the body that in some cases feels like a body rejective ... is something Americans could super accustom to.”

BDB's entourage confirmed this. The photographer said “dead animals freeze them”. The artist's husband and fellow artist, said:

“... within 10 or 15 years [the Americans will maybe buy it], ... when the work will be consecrated and will be enough in museums ... That's the way Americans are, I think it's awful, but yes, this is different ... The sense of rawness of life, or how should we say this, is in Europe much higher than for the slick Americans.”

SHOWING WORK WITH DOCUMENTS – LEAFLETS AND EXHIBITION VIEWS

At different times BDB underlined the importance of making “something that lasts” or something that goes beyond the short exhibition of artworks for a small group of people. As the studio's temporary archivist, the first author got involved in the daily conversations about the role of pictures in artists' careers. The studio's manager taught her that “a work with good photographs comes easier in the picture and that this is not necessarily a good or a complex work”. From early on in her career BDB understood the importance of pictures due to her collaboration with photographer Mirjam De Vriendt (MDV). “Photographs are records, something remains, they feed you, they are benchmarks” said BDB. So, photographs play multiple roles in artistic practices; they are more than memories, they also create new possibilities, are tools for planning and installing exhibitions, and enable to make an overview of the body of works and an archive. The night before the opening MDV made the “exhibition

views” or what she calls “portraits of artworks in situ”. These photographs will make it possible for a lot of people to see the artworks and the exhibition in newspapers, magazines and books.

During BDB’s solo exhibition the gallery reception desk displayed a selection of publications about BDB’s work and offered the visitors three leaflets on the current exhibition – an information sheet, a press release and an announcement of the dance performance. The first document is a 2-page inventory, with exhibition views for each of the ten exhibited artworks, the title, size, used materials, and an H&W-database number. The second document gives background information about the artist, the artworks, and the exhibition and discusses the prominence of the artist, the inspiration for the show and the features of the exhibited artworks. The third document is an announcement of the dance performance Sybille, by Romeu Runa. All these documents kept on communicating, while the artworks returned and often stayed in crates.

TELLING STORIES

The network of space, artefacts and events not only showed work, it also told stories. The location and the scenography (space), the documents (artefacts), and the dance performance, the press tour, the refreshments in the bar, the dinner in Botanical Bouley (events) told different stories which could be shared, compromised or one-voiced stories and they could be implicit or explicit.

The location H&W Gallery at Chelsea NY embodies that BDB is a global artist and one of the most renowned artists in the world. It is embodied by the city (New York), the district (Chelsea) and the gallery (Hauser&Wirth). First, showing work in New York is showing work

at the centre of the global contemporary artworld (Crane, 1987; Velthuis and Baia Curioni, 2015). This was confirmed by members of the staff of H&W:

“...America, especially New York, remains the number one place for an artist’s career. That the artist is globally successful, has to be successful in New York. It’s a, it’s a turning, a market place which has to be taken seriously.” (Vice-President)

“[in New York] you have this incredible concentration of people, and of interests, and of activity, and of temptation, and enthusiasm, and energy, but it also means that you are in competition with hundreds of other people trying to do the exact same thing, which is to make the best advantage of that ... [this show will have] more visibility than she’s ever had on American soil.” (Senior Director)

Second, Chelsea is “the gallery district *par excellence* in New York, if not the world” (Fuller, 2015; Halle and Tiso, 2008) and the epicentre of the increasingly globalized art market (Wohl, 2019). With 400 galleries, Chelsea has the highest density of art galleries in the world which makes it possible for curators, collectors, and critics to combine several visits when visiting a new space or a new exhibition and creates a potentially large exposure for an artist.

“... the habits that people have in terms of viewing art in this neighbourhood, which is less destination focused and more neighbourhood focused, and involves repeatless acts, you know, some will come to the show three times. That doesn’t happen that often in a lot of spaces ... they do that often in Chelsea.” (Senior Director)

Third, the gallery H&W belongs to the “top segment of the global art market where the art of superstar artists is exhibited in a select number of the most consecrated spaces, promoted by a small number of powerhouse dealers such as Gagosian, David Zwirner, White Cube or Hauser & Wirth” (Velthuis & Baia Curioni, 2015:24). The gallery provides a “very global and

international network for the artist” (Senior Director) and makes that and artist “has the possibility to show everywhere ... it gives an enormous exposure” (Vice-President).

The scenography of the exhibition was designed for the exhibition space. BDB chose a moonlight effect as a reference to the painting “Agnus Dei” by Zurbaran in the Prado of Madrid, to the installation of “Cripplewood” in the Biennale of Venice and to the skin trade workshop in Brussels. The artificial moonlight inscribes the individual artworks in BDB’s oeuvre as well as in European art history. It evoked a subdued atmosphere in which the guests spoke softly, neared the artwork very closely to see some detail of the textures, and became invisible for each other. During a personally guided press tour along all the artworks, BDB “explained” the exhibition, the scenography, her oeuvre, her way of working, the installation of the exhibition, European tradition, outer world, new and old, and the long relationship with gallery. She explained for instance, how the masterpiece “Cripplewood” has been installed for the fourth time and how it is every time a different work and how it is now the best version. The tour ended with the artworks behind closed doors.

The dance performance translated the exhibition in another discipline. The leaflet explains the dance performance. The title “Sybille” refers to a shared inspiration source with BDB’s artworks – a slaughterhouse in Brussels. Sybille refers to one of Ovid’s myths in which Sybille ended as a lump of flesh in a jar. Some of the smaller works (limited visible in the private rooms) are named Sybille. The making of the leaflet revealed the tensions between the gallery and studio about what story they wanted to tell in the leaflet. The gallery wanted to highlight the dance performance whereas the studio wanted to highlight the relationship between the two artists. The excerpt of the fieldnotes below shows the back and forth process until a compromise was reached.

“1pm. Lunch with Katrien [studio manager]. [...] She [also] lets me read the text about the performance of Romeu. Katrien made the first version, the press service of H&W

the 2nd version, Katrien now the 3rd version. For Katrien and Berlinde, the history of the collaboration Berlinde-Romeu is important, for H&W less so. While I read the text, Katrien makes soup and a salad.”

After the first performance BDB was curious to know how visitors experienced the performance and if they felt the kinship to her work. As is clear in the fieldnotes, people experienced this performance as embarrassing. They were silent.

The refreshments in the bar as well as the gallery diner foregrounded the shared European roots of the gallery and artist: they were exquisite and European. At 8pm guests were brought in taxis to Botanical in Tribeca, an alternative restaurant conceived of as a laboratory or a breeding ground. Despite the restaurant’s alternative look, the dinner itself was a formal event with a dress code, an honorary table with the artist’s family, collectors, curators and gallery’s president, table setting, and speeches by the gallery’s Vice-President. The shared history of artist and gallery is explicitly mentioned in the speech by the Vice-President.

Whereas space and events such as the dance performance and the refreshments told stories in a rather implicit way, documents did it in a more explicit and controllable way. The press release inscribes the exhibition in BDB’s body of work and explains how the new work fits in an existing and evolving oeuvre. It also emphasises the artist’s embeddedness in European traditions – “Traditions of the Flemish renaissance ... legacies of the European Old Master and Christian legacies ... mythology and cultural lore” – which is important for a public not familiar with her work. The press release not only explains BDB’s work, it also explains her career and tells how visitors should understand the career. It introduces her with name, date of birth, and place of residence and work, and emphasises the longevity of a career – more than 30 years and still on-going (referring to a future exhibition). It presents BDB’s career path as a passage through institutions of contemporary art and introduces the new exhibition as a new and special entry on the track record, the first large exhibition in the US. The document

further embeds BDB in the gallery's family of artists by referencing Belgian artist Philippe Vandenberg, one of the estates represented by the gallery.

Like the leaflet on the dance performance, the press release was a collaborative work of the studio manager and the gallery's press office who both had a different interest that they wanted to communicate. The press release was a compromise between two interests: an artistic one with a focus on oeuvre (i.e. the body of work and its connections to other artworks and artists) and a commercial one with a focus on career (i.e. an abstract of achievements in (art) institutions). The studio wanted to frame the exhibition and the exhibited works within an artistic context and did it by telling the story of where the artworks came from, how they were produced and how they were inspired or influenced by other artworks and events. The gallery wanted to justify why an artist relatively unknown in New York deserves a solo exhibition in one of the largest exhibition spaces in town and used the longevity of career, her passage through major art institutions, and her collaborations with the family of gallery as justifications.

In sum, the most explicit stories were told by words - in the documents and in the press tour. Less explicit, but maybe more convincing, were the stories told by space and events. Space and events embodied and performed that BDB is at the top in contemporary art, that she is embedded in European art history and that she shares pasts and futures with the network present at the opening.

CONNECTING THE NETWORK

The spacious exhibition space with the bar in annex was able to accommodate the 700 people who came to the opening of the solo exhibition: artists, gallerists, collectors, curators, museum directors, critics, and friends. 70 of them were invited to the gallery dinner in

Botanical. It was a selection of the “very global and international network for the artist” (the Vice-President’s words) that appeared that day. The gallery tried to reduce the uncertainty about that network’s attendance by organising the exhibition in a period in which other things are organised. The exhibition was planned in a period in which the Armory Show took place, a yearly contemporary art fair and one of the moments for which institutional people come to New York (3-6 March in 2016).

The day of the opening followed a script of successive activities from 11am until midnight: the exhibition, the press tour, the dance performance, the drinks, and the dinner. The program alternated between activities in the exhibition spaces and food and drinks in the bar. It was a well scheduled coming and going of guests. Not all the guests were invited for the full programme. The dance performance at 12 noon, for instance, was a “friends & family performance”. Groups of people took turns. Press, family and friends, artists and guardians of artists’ estates, collectors, and curators, they all appeared one after the other. The script of the private opening made it possible for some groups to mingle – like the press and friends and family before the dance performance at the bar – and made it least likely for other groups – like the press and curators and collectors.

The space, the artefacts and the events connected the network. The huge space enabled the co-presence and proximity of many people and monumental artworks. The different actors in the network connected the network by highlighting shared histories, by providing a shared experience and by facilitating future plans. The scenography, dance performance, food and drinks, and documents highlighted a shared history of the network. They worked as reference lists that assemble people, artworks, times and spaces in the light of the present. The many shared stories helped to reduce uncertainty concerning the exhibition and confirmed the interdependency of the storytellers. The network connected by providing a radical and haunting experience – a radical exhibition framed in a radical scenography - that was shared

with the network. The darkness and smell in the exhibition space appealed to the senses and emotions and evoked a subdued atmosphere. Resulting questions, doubts and emotions among the visitors could be shared and discussed in the bar or later at dinner. The refreshments created a sphere of celebration and made people interact and stay longer. The network connected because the opening facilitated, accelerated or finalized future plans. The three career making practices created opportunities and constraints in the weeks and months after the opening. Encounters between BDB and curators resulted in new exhibitions, such as the group exhibition “Loss. In memory of Babi Yar” in Pinchuk Art Centre in Kiev (UK) and a solo exhibition BDB in the National Gallery of Iceland in Reykjavik (ICE), both from 21 May 2016 on. “Cripplewood” was sold to an American collector in Kentucky. A second exhibition for the monumental artwork “No Life Lost I” was planned in Aarhus (DK) in 2017.

In sum, the findings show how an artist’s career was established and maintained on that opening day. It shows how space, artefacts and events showed work, told stories and connected the network in practice.

DISCUSSION

The literature on creative careers focuses on individuals who strategically pursue visibility, tell stories about their work, and actively network in the hope to build a sustainable career. The findings of this study not only support and extend this knowledge, but also add some new insights (see Table 2).

Table 2 Discussion – Visibility, ordering and networking in creative careers

	Showing work - Visibility	Telling stories - Ordering	Connecting - Networking
Patterns	Solo exhibition in gallery is highest level of exposure	Solo exhibition is the moment and vantage point for (re)constructing past and future	Networking of professional artworld Monitoring each other's work
What was already known and what is supported in the findings?	1/ Visibility is critical for career development, recognition, reputation and eminence (Lang & Lang, 1988; Mao & Shen, 2020; Wohl, 2019; Zhang, 2019) 2/ "Established" artists link iconic work with new work (Wohl, 2019)	1/ Career stories are resources for sensemaking and job opportunities (Cohen, 2006; Cohen & Mallon, 2001; Eikhof, 2013) 2/ Multiple stories in art world (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006; Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007)	1/ Networking is critical to sourcing and gaining opportunities (Blair, 2009) "social co-presence in physical location and embodied networks" (Fuller & Ren, 2019) 2/ Peer-regard (McLeod et al., 2011; Pratt, 2006) 3/ Symbolic networks trace lines between artists (Accominotti, 2009; Braden, 2009; Jones, 2010; Lang & Lang, 1988)
What is new in the findings?	1/ Non-human actors establish and maintain visibility 2/ Practicalities of visibility unveiled while observing a career-in-the-making 3/ Exhibition views, documents, reviews keep on showing Visibility is a precarious effect of a network	1/ Non-human actors tell career stories 2/ Practicalities of story-making unveiled while observing a career-in-the-making (ongoing process of ordering) 3/ Career stories got materialised consequence: loss of control for artist: uncertainty if the story comes over 4/ Documents keep on communicating Career stories are precarious effects of a network	1/ Co-presence of a heterogeneous network (more than people alone) 2/ Co-experience of affective events Networking is a precarious effect of a network

Visibility is critical for artists' career development, reputation, and eminence (Zhang, 2019; Mao and Shen, 2020; Lang and Lang, 1988; Wohl, 2019). A solo exhibition is the highest level of exposure a visual artist can get. The show NLL was a typical show of an "established" artist (Wohl, 2019). It featured new work together with an iconic work ("Cripplewood") and thus linking new work to recognized work. Space made this compromise possible. The huge exhibition space was divided into two, so the gallery could show the iconic, the artist the new work. The findings highlight the role of non-human actors in establishing and maintaining visibility. A network consisting of people as well as spatial actors (e.g. location, exhibition space, and scenography), material actors (e.g. artworks, documents, and food and drinks) and events (e.g. dance performance, press tour, and dinner) contributed to the showing or not showing of the artist's work. Visibility or what work is shown to whom is a busy research area in art sociology investigating the role of gatekeepers, audiences, and funders in what is actually shown to the public (Bystryn, 1978; Baia Curioni et al., 2015; Alexander, 1996; White and White, 1965/1993). The findings demonstrate that what was shown, to whom it was shown and when it was shown, was the effect of a network, and not the accomplishment of people alone. The size and the prominence of the exhibition space made that a high number of visitors, as well as a highly selected group of arts professionals such as curators and museum directors, critics, collectors, fellow artists, came to the opening. What was finally shown to them differed from the initial plans made up by the artist and gallery. Space (and ultimately commercial considerations) defined what was finally shown to the public. The gallery did not want to release an extra private showroom in which expensive artworks were exhibited but not to the public. The practicalities of visibility or what was shown, to whom it was shown and when it was shown were unveiled while observing a career-in-the-making. Visibility is an empirical question: not all work that was shipped to the exhibition space was shown and one is never sure who will appear at the (opening of the)

exhibition. Visibility is a precarious effect of a heterogeneous network. The work was not only shown in the exhibition space, but also in/with documents. This is important because documents keep showing after the close of the physical show.

Stories are important because they order work and life and as “modes of ordering” (Law, 1994) they become resources for sensemaking and job opportunities. Stories order, explain and justify people’s work and life for themselves and others (Cohen and Mallon, 2001; Cohen, 2006). In art worlds, career stories signal coherence and predictability in a world of uncertainty (White and White, 1965/1993). Career stories are part of “personal branding” used to get in and on the job (Eikhof, 2013). A solo exhibition is the moment par excellence to present career stories; it is the vantage point for (re)constructing past and future. Career stories explain or justify how visitors should understand the work and career by telling how the work and career became what they are now. They weave a web of references between times and spaces, between artists and artworks, between the exhibition and the world and trace kinships and affinities. They position the artist in the artworld and the world. In artworlds - inhabited with multiple rationales - artists create multiple stories and multiple identities to cope with this ambiguity (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2007; Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006). The findings extend story-based career research (Collin, 2000; Collin, 1998; Cohen and Mallon, 2001; Cohen, 2006) by adding networks, non-human actors, and the practicalities of storymaking. They show that career stories are precarious effects of heterogeneous networks. First, the findings show that the stories were not only told by representatives of the gallery and the artist, but also by non-human actors from the network. Space, artefacts and events made up, told and maintained the stories. The scenography, documents and the dance performance are crucial in career making. They show the importance of materializing careers. Documents are discursive and material constructions of careers. They make the stories sustain; they keep on communicating. Latour’s (1987) concept “immutable mobile” explains

how this works: a leaflet or an exhibition view is an object that remains, but at the same time can travel. They are more than a signal or representation of humans' stories, they embody, perform and resist a story. The artist was curious if the stories told by the artworks, scenography and dance performance came across to the visitors. Second, the data revealed the ongoing process of how stories were made up, told and maintained. The process was most clear in the making of documents which was a collaborative effort between the gallery and the studio. Observations revealed that the documents end up in compromises in which two stories were told in one document. In sum, the findings made clear that the (re)construction of career stories is a relational process and a precarious and temporary effect. Making career stories is an ongoing process of ordering the past and the future in the light of the present.

Social networks and networking in creative careers have been studied extensively as a strategy which is critical for creative careers to sourcing and gaining employment (Blair, 2009). The huge exhibition space in which a sequence of events was planned was an excellent setting for networking. People also came to monitor each other's creative output (McLeod et al., 2011). The proximity enabled participants in the artworld to render themselves visible and to monitor the work of a fellow artist (McLeod et al., 2011; Pratt, 2006). The co-presence of the artworld created potentialities which lead to opportunities for exhibitions and sales (Buchholz et al., 2020; Fuller and Ren, 2019; Fuller, 2015). Symbolic networks got less attention in career research, although the few existing studies demonstrate how sharing styles, group exhibitions and institutions lead to eminence (Jones, 2010; Braden, 2009; Braden, 2018; Braden and Teekens, 2020; Accominotti, 2009; Lang and Lang, 1988). At the opening of the solo exhibition a dense web between BDB and other artists was present. The findings extend the literature on networks and creative careers. First, they show that co-presence was not limited to people and second, that we rather should understand the co-presence as co-experience. It was an embodied co-experience. People saw artworks, talked about the

artworks with each other, attended a dance performance, celebrated the exhibition and their togetherness and dined together. Food and drinks helped the visitors to digest (the radicality of) what they experienced. Although some studies suggest that affective events engender and intensify sensemaking and networking (Michels and Steyaert, 2017; Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004), little or nothing is known about how affective events impact career making practices.

ANT's theoretical lens and methodological approach revealed processes and outcomes that were not noticed and discussed in career research before. It enabled us to focus on process (reveal a career-in-the-making), on materiality (observe the role artefacts play in day-to-day practices), and on relationality (observe a network in action). It made us understand that careers are precarious effects of networks and that careers are done in practice and thus empirical questions.

CONCLUSION

This article focused on the role that non-human actors in a network played in career making. Adopting ANT's "sensibility to materiality, relationality and process" (Law, 2004: :157), the article revealed how space, artefacts and events perform three career making practices at the opening of a solo exhibition - showing work, telling stories and connecting the network. The article adds two new insights to career research. First, that a heterogeneous network rather than people alone perform career making practices and that we should therefore include non-human actors in studies of creative careers. This insight enriches a research field which has been dominated by a human-centered perspective that is not able to fully explain unexpected outcomes of career making practices. Career making should be understood as distributed among human and non-humans and thus as less strategic, less human-centered and less

individualistic than mostly suggested. Second, and related to the first insight, the article shows that the materialization of career making practices is important for sustainable careers in creative industries. Spaces, artefacts and events stabilize and maintain careers.

This explorative study based ethnographic data gathered at the opening of a solo exhibition raises new questions and directs to new theoretical possibilities. It shows that more research is needed that considers heterogeneous networks as actors in career making practices. Future research might investigate careers by other visual artists, but also careers in other arts disciplines, as well as in empirical settings beyond arts and creative industries. A variety of empirical settings and cases will deepen our understanding of the role of space, artefacts and events in career making. A longitudinal approach in which career actors are followed over time will enable to differentiate the practices according to career stages, locations, and institutions. The article also provides implications for practice in particular for artists' education and cultural policy. Knowing that heterogeneous networks perform career making practices can make artists, educators and policymakers more sensible and understanding for the non-strategic and collective processes and the unexpected outcomes of career making.

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