ARTIST'S PERSPECTIVES ON ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITY AND SUCCESS

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Introduction

The practices of artists involve many similarities with traditional business practices. The nature of both artist’s work and their mindset is strongly entrepreneurial. Schumpeter defines the entrepreneur as a savior to business (Schumpeter 1911). In his book *Art Entrepreneurship*, M. Scherdin states, “The aura of the Entrepreneur is linked to the mystical and mythical perceived ability to see things before others, of doing something new, that cannot be described or measured with existing value scales” (Scherdin 2011). The artist is often thought of as a forward and outside thinker, bringing new life to our business practices.

In considering artists as entrepreneurs, this study questions whether artist’s perceptions of entrepreneurial opportunity and success differ from those published in current entrepreneurial literature. The concepts of both entrepreneurial opportunity and entrepreneurial success have been researched and defined by scholars. This study intends to use these published entrepreneurship theories to assist in explaining and understanding the behaviors and motivations of artists. In turn, this understanding may enrich the art world’s confidence in the value of artists as competent and valuable entrepreneurs. In addition, artist’s perspectives on opportunity and success could prove valuable to the entrepreneurial discussion.

The literature review will consider current business publications on the topics of opportunity and success, as well as publications relating to current thoughts on opportunity and success in the art world. Research by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) as well as the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project...
(SNAAP) will be particularly valuable in advocating the case for artists as entrepreneurs. For the purpose of this study, a broad definition of “artist” will be considered, including craftsmen, actors, illustrators, fine artists, dancers, designers, photographers, architects, and everything in-between.
Literature Review:

1 The Artist

Our world of commerce has many ideas of “artist” and of “art.” There is a very broad spectrum of who one might consider an artist, making them, as a group, very difficult to define. Most artists wear many hats, not only jumping borders between multiple art forms, but also often working random jobs in other sectors in addition to their art. The articles and research presented below are respected opinions on who artists are, what they make, and their position in the market.

1.2 Defining “Artist”

A. Davidson draws attention to the lack of market information we have on artists in an article in Entrepreneur entitled “Artopolis: The State of our Creative Nation.” Davidson points out the difficulty in clearly defining the artist’s place and role in the market. The US Department of Labor places art into a group labeled "Arts, Entertainment and Recreation." Arts are only a small portion of this group, which includes ventures from ballet to fitness centers to casinos. This makes any published studies regarding this labor group virtually irrelevant when solely considering artists (Davidson 2011).

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) recognized this void of information on artists in business and published a study on the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of artists. NEA identified 1.99 million Americans who consider an artist occupation as their primary occupation. The NEA defines 11 different
occupations as artists: actors, announcers, fine artists and animators, dancers, designers, entertainers, musicians, photographers, producers and directors, writers, and architects (Bradshaw 2008).

1.3 Artists as an Asset to the Business World

Research by the National Endowment for the Arts wishes to compel the market to regard artists as more than lofty thinkers, but as beings who create products and perform services of value. Part of the purpose of the National Endowment for the Art’s study was to illustrate artists’ significant contributions to the economy. Their research isolated artists, understanding them independently from any other occupational group. (Bradshaw 2008).

Companies are recognizing the weight and relevance of an artistic mindset to strategic thinking. K. Atkinson in a Huffington Post article entitled “Artist-Run Businesses Matter” stated, “MFA is the new MBA,” citing the immense value of creativity in running a business. Innovation tops the list of leading business’s agendas today, a practice artists engage with on a daily basis (Seifter 2012). Artists look beyond precedent and think of new strategies (Atkinson 2010). Recognizing this, there has been a move in business from valuing knowledge to valuing creativity, imagination, innovation, and entrepreneurship (Fillis 2010). These desired skills of businesses are skills that are deeply rooted in the artistic tradition. Businesses are reaching out to the arts community, asking that artists lead workshops with businessmen (Seifter 2012).
1.4 Artist’s Competence in Business

Artists do not only play a role in the traditional business world, but run a world of business all their own. Artists engage in collectives, sidestep dealers and sell independently, open their own art galleries, and engage in direct contact with customers. The arts thrive due to the involvement of the artists themselves (Eger 2011).

The National Endowment for the Art’s research has shown artists are a capable and intelligent sector of society. Artists are twice as likely to have a college degree. A number of studies have shown artists as significantly brighter than the rest of the population. Despite this, in general, artists earn less than people with the same level of education. The nature of their occupation makes them 3.5 times more likely to be self-employed. One in three artists is self-employed as opposed to only 10% of the rest of the workforce (Bradshaw 2008). Recent research by SNAAP, the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, has surveyed more than 13,000 arts alumni. They found that 6 in 10 artists are self-employed and 14% have founded their own company (SNAAP 2011).

1.5 The Artist as Entrepreneur

Authors of entrepreneurial literature fundamentally define entrepreneurship as the pursuit of an innovative venture that faces genuine uncertainty. Entrepreneurship is marked by individuals who are courageous, visionary, inventive, innovative, and flexible, all generally considered qualities of artists. Seifter defines artists as lifelong
learners who are constantly experimenting with new approaches to challenges (Seifter 2012).

Scherdin particularly pinpoints arts entrepreneurship as “how artists and people engaged in artistic activities perceive of new art ideas, how these ideas are transformed into tangible objects of art and artistic expressions, and how they are ultimately accepted or rejected by the general public.” Scherdin defines three ways that the arts diverge from traditional entrepreneurship: (1) the arts are specifically focused on creativity and novelty (2) artists remain interested in novelty production, regardless of utility or profit creation (3) because of this, artists must win the consumer on bases other than utility and profit potential (Scherdin 2011).

Artists are in a great position to be competent entrepreneurs. Despite this, artists have historically hesitated to embrace an entrepreneurial label. Scherdin states, “Only rarely has there been interest in the entrepreneurial aspects of artistic work, perhaps because many artists remain fundamentally suspicious of anything that has to do with commerce and business.” Despite this hesitancy, the contemporary circumstances encourage and somewhat necessitate this entrepreneurial approach (Scherdin 2011 p. 1).

Because of this changing current, Scherdin cites an emerging interest in entrepreneurial research and the boundaries of art and entrepreneurship (Scherdin 2011). A great deal of research has been done on the role of creativity in entrepreneurship, as it is widely recognized as central to entrepreneurship. Seifter casually defines creativity as accepted innovation. Innovation is an extreme
competitive lever in the business world. (Seifter 2012).

1.6 Conclusion

If exercised successfully, arts related businesses are in a position to make great profit. "The core issue," C. Tiger in an Entrepreneur article says, "is that tons of people don't buy art because no one has ever tried to sell it to them." Artists who leverage business skills can break down this barrier. Technology has brought artists and consumers closer, assisting in art sales. While historically the art world has seemed to keep the teeming masses at arms length, today we are seeing a democratizing of the buying and selling of art (Tiger 2011).
2 Opportunity

2.1 Introduction

Literature abounds on the subject of entrepreneurial opportunity. Opportunity is an entrepreneurial topic that has been researched and redefined time and time again. Researchers have drawn many conclusions about just what it is that compels an entrepreneur to pursue a particular venture. Beyond explicit definition, there are many facets of opportunity that leave room for debate. The research presented below attempts to clarify not only the meaning of opportunity, but also the additional elements affecting it.

2.2 Importance of Opportunity

Opportunity is recognized as the starting point for all entrepreneurial efforts. The beginning of Short, Ketchen, Shook, and Ireland’s article states, “Without opportunity there is no entrepreneurship” (Short et al. 2009 p. 40). Baron also references a quote by Krueger in his research that says that the “heart of entrepreneurship is an orientation towards seeing opportunity” (Baron-Ward 2004 p. 556). Opportunity is central to entrepreneurship.

2.3 Defining “Opportunity”

Research by Hansen, Shrader, and Monllor focuses on making sense of the many definitions of opportunity floating around our world. Their goal in this publication is to consolidate the mass amount of fragmented conclusions surrounding opportunity
They created a set of composite definitions, five of which were found to be particularly relevant to this research:

1. An opportunity is the possibility of introducing a new product to the market at a profit.
2. An opportunity is an idea that has developed into a business form.
3. An opportunity is an entrepreneur’s perception of a feasible means to obtain/achieve benefits.
4. An opportunity is an entrepreneur’s ability to create a solution to a problem.
5. An opportunity is an entrepreneur’s ability to serve customers differently and better (Hansen et al. 2011).

2.4 The Nature of Opportunities

The nature of opportunities involves whether opportunities are thought to be created or discovered. Short et al. assist in attributing the meaning to these terms: A discovered opportunity would indicate one that already existed, available for an entrepreneur to find or stumble upon. A created opportunity requires action on the part of the entrepreneur to bring it into existence. Short et al. question whether opportunity recognition is a “eureka” moment or a process of discovery over time (Short et al. 2009).

Short establishes that it is market imperfections that lead to opportunities. In other words, Short et al. do not believe that opportunities are generated from the cognition or imagination of any one individual, but rather generated from cultural
influences and market desires. "Opportunities," Short furthers, "are imagined judgments, not created or discovered" (Short et al. 2009).

2.5 Opportunity Dependence

The dependence of opportunity is an additional issue of debate in the entrepreneurial discussion. This, Short explains, means whether opportunity is dependent on the individual entrepreneur, or if any and every opportunity is available for any given entrepreneur to exploit. This question naturally leads to discussions on what it is that would make one entrepreneur more likely than another to recognize a given opportunity (Short et al. 2009).

2.6 Opportunity Alertness

The conclusions of Baron and Ward as well as those of Short, Ketchen, Shook, and Ireland shine particular light on the discussion of opportunity alertness. They research the cognitions of entrepreneurs, debating whether different personalities are any more prone or alert to any given opportunity. Short’s review of the opportunity literature establishes that personality, social networks, and prior experience are all factors that can affect our alertness to different entrepreneurial opportunities. Short terms these elements antecedents to opportunity (Short et al. 2009).

2.7 Opportunity Cognition

Baron and Ward’s research considered the cognitions of entrepreneurs. They
wanted to see if the cognitions of entrepreneurs differed from those of other individuals. They proposed that entrepreneurs generally have arranged cognitions, willingness cognitions, and ability cognitions. Arranged cognitions are mental structures that allow individuals to process information in a systemized manner. Willingness cognitions are those that encourage a person to engage in a new venture. Ability cognitions indicate skills, knowledge, and capacities necessary to be successful in entrepreneurship (Baron and Ward 2004).

Entrepreneurs were thought to have a hyper alertness and a cognitive framework that makes them more likely to think outside the box. They were also proposed to engage in more heuristic, rather than systematic thinking. This means that as opposed to analytical thinking, they are more prone to think on their feet, make quick decisions, and prefer action to reflection (Baron and Ward 2004).

Entrepreneurs also possess a belief that it is desirable to start a feasible venture. Entrepreneurs are subject to the same biases and errors as anyone else, such as overconfidence and illusions of control. Entrepreneurs tend to be more intuitive and less analytic than non-entrepreneurs (Baron and Ward 2004).

2.8 Moderators of Opportunity

Short’s review assists in clarifying some of moderators that can affect the existence or attractiveness of a given opportunity. Context plays a big role in opportunity perception. The culture or social arena in which an opportunity exists can greatly affect how it is seen (Short et al. 2009). Since creativity’s definition is stated as the
creation of not only novel, but also valuable ideas, it establishes a connection with culture. A given idea cannot be separated from the culture in which it appears, as its value depends on the value perceptions of the given culture. It must not only be a new and original idea, but also one that the given cultures perceives as valuable (Ward 2004).

Risk can also affect opportunity. If investment in a given opportunity carries with it great risk, it is going to be perceived as less attractive and the entrepreneur will be less likely to exploit it. Similarly, if an opportunity involves a minimal opportunity cost, it is going to be perceived as more attractive than one that requires heavy investment (Short et al. 2009).

Lastly, timing can moderate opportunity. Opportunity involves a strong temporal dynamic. An opportunity is only available to be taken advantage of for a limited period of time. Short mentions a certain element of creative destruction to opportunities. When a new opportunity is pursued, an old one is often killed. Short states that entrepreneurs must recognize the momentary quality of opportunities and exploit them while they can (Short et al. 2009).

2.9 Creative thinking in Opportunity

At its core, entrepreneurship is creation. Ward focuses his research on the vital role creativity plays in entrepreneurship, specifically focusing on the vital role creativity plays in opportunity generation. Creativity is defined as the generation of novel and valuable ideas. Ward establishes that the entrepreneurial challenge rests in
generating or recognizing ideas. Ward states that "creativity is more than problem solving- it is problem contrition" (Ward 2004 p. 182). It is showing the market a need that they didn’t know they had.

Creativity is the generation of ideas. Innovation is the implementation of creative ideas. To be an entrepreneur you must both envision and implement. Entrepreneurship requires both creativity and innovation (Ward 2004). Not only must you think of an idea, but you also have to think of creative ways to exercise the idea effectively.

Ward focuses his research on cognitions, but with a specific focus on the mental structures and processes that underlie novel idea generation. These include knowledge, cognitive processes, motivation, personality factors, and environmental influences. Ward cites that historically we have needlessly constrained our thinking. He argues that exploratory activities lead to incredible creations of great quality. (Ward 2004).

Ideas and dreams often stand as a precursor to entrepreneurial opportunities. The root of all entrepreneurial ventures is in an idea. Short defines ideas as a function of creativity and learning. Dreams are best defined as aspirations and often center on non-economic goals. The more creative one's imagination, the more apt an individual is to recognize an opportunity (Short et al. 2009).

2.10 Opportunities for Artists

Mesce establishes that the creative life requires a precarious balance that allows the
artist to take advantage of unplanned opportunities it presents (Mesce 2004). An artist can stand ready to exploit a market desire. Mesce cites that artists are finding out that what you can do does not seem as important to people as what they want you to do (Mesce 2004). Scheridin says artists “must balance innovation with acceptance” (Scheridin 2011).
3 Success

3.1 Introduction

Success is an evasive topic in any discipline. The discussion of success is one without conclusion. Much debate surrounds both the definition and measurement of success. While there will never be a global resolution to the definition of success, it is essential that each individual terms success for themselves. The following research presents thoughts on the many perspectives on success.

3.2 Defining “Success”

Defining success is essentially a decision of on what we individually and uniquely base success. It is a topic that is extremely subject to opinion and is therefore a topic with a broad range of accepted definitions. It is important to recognize that whichever definition of success an individual accepts as true is imperative to the functioning of the company. Buffet points out the influence of success in other areas of our lives, stating that “our self-esteem and peace of mind are inevitably connected to the version of success we accept as true” (Buffet 2010). Similarly, a positive or negative perception on the business is inevitably tied to the version of success promoted.

Mannes interviewed management thinker Clayton Christensen in Money on Christensen's philosophy of success. Christensen states, “once you articulate how success will be measured, everybody tries to game the system so that they are measured in the best possible way. If you judge schools based on test scores, every
school will start teaching to the test.” He then cites how this can often lead to the
detriment of a business, as they are no longer focusing on what is truly important.
This establishes the importance of choosing the right thing off of which to base your
success (Mannes 2012). Effort will be put where you put your measuring stick.

Buffet says we have two essential options: We can base success on what we are or
what we have (Buffet 2010). Generally, we could define success as equal to any
positive outcome (Toledo-López 2012). Alternatively, survival is often noted as the
most basic measure of business success (Toledo-López 2012).

It is important to recognize that there cannot be a universal definition of success. A
measurement of success that is relevant to one organization may not be relevant to
another. Not all business can be measured using the same indicators. Each business
must define success before they can achieve success. Entrepreneurs must establish
what the specific goals of their business are in order to establish the standards
against which to measure themselves (Toledo-López 2012).

3.3 Small businesses and success

Toledo-López’s research particularly focused on defining success in subsistence
entrepreneurship, but is relevant across all disciplines. In subsistence businesses, it
is important to recognize their contributions to emerging economies in terms of
standards of living and job creation as a key point of success. These rather
untraditional things to point to as illustrations of the success of a business illustrate
the endless number of ways success can be defined and measured (Toledo-López
Their research goes beyond just subsistence entrepreneurship, engaging in a general discussion of success perspectives and measurement in small business. For small businesses, commercial goals are often secondary, while achieving the goals of the business are primary. Toledo-López’s research explains the goals for a business might depend on the personality, motivations, attitudes, and perceptions of the entrepreneur but could also be affected by social or cultural context (Toledo-López 2012).

The article lists some financial and non-financial intricacies off of which a small business might measure success. Financial measures of small business could include profits, income, sales, number of employees, new customers, or market growth. Non-financial measures include customer satisfaction, adherence to tradition, pride in work, expressions of creativity, or a sense of responsibility to the community (Toledo-López 2012).

### 3.4 Financial Success

In business literature, success is most often associated with profit. In terms of measurability, the easiest definition of success is financially based. The Western world in particular is increasingly associating success with wealth and prestige. Much research has focused on evaluating the relevancy of financial measures as an indicator of success.

Aknin, Norton, and Dunn published an article in the Journal of Positive Psychology
entitled “From wealth to well-being? Money matters, but less than people think,” researching the relationship between money and happiness. They said that the amount of time spent at work has increased, requiring a sacrifice of family and leisure. Their study exclusively examined the extreme ends of the income spectrum to examine the link between income and happiness (Aknin 2009).

Their method was to survey a national sample of Americans on whether they associate higher income with increased happiness. They reported their income and rated the happiness of their life. They were also presented with a list of different incomes and asked to predict the happiness of the individuals with those incomes. The respondent’s answers showed that they believe income to have a greater effect on happiness than it actually does (Aknin 2009).

3.5 Non-financial success

Buffet argues that we should base our success on things that are in our control. He explains that financial measures are largely out of our control, while non-financial factors we have the ability to play a part in. We should not rely on things that could be taken away by circumstance. He furthers that we should look at what we accomplish, not focus on what the world does or does not reward us (Buffet 2010). Non-financial success measures are often theoretical, ranging from things such as achievement, recognition, happiness, and betterment to things such as assisting a team or constant growth. Certainly, theoretical measures of success are more subjective than the objective numbers based measurements. Despite this, they recognize the importance theoretical perspective of success play in analyzing a
business’s success, rather than simply looking exclusively at economic achievements (Toledo-López 2012).

There are important factors to consider beyond merely those rooted in finance. Businesses can also hold great social importance, achieving successes in contributions to the well-being of society. In fact, for some businesses, this is the most appropriate indicator of success. (Toledo-López 2012).

3.6 Success in the Arts

Bill Mesce wrote a book entitled “Artists on the Art of Survival,” helping us to understand success in the world of the arts. Success in the arts is often an achievement attributed to and associated with the big breaks and massive success of the lucky few. These are the stories that are publicly known and therefore are what come to mind when the public considers the idea of a “successful artist.” Despite this widespread idea, most artists understand this high-visibility success to be a statistical anomaly for artists. While a great deal of artists may still chase after this, they nevertheless understand that there is more to artistic success than high profile sale and publicity. Most artists seem to recognize that it is the circumstances, not their lack of talent, lack of drive, or lack of self-confidence, that keep them from this storybook definition of success (Mesce 2004).

Mesce points out that the art’s definition of success is not something that fits well with our American understanding of success. Our culture is engrained to believe everything must serve some utilitarian purpose. “It is not the function of art,” Mesce states, “to do anything. It may entertain, enlighten, or inform, it may even impress,
but its primary purpose is simply to exist. It’s value is not what is fetches at an
auction, or how much it awes guests when they see it on a pedestal in our living
room, but how it enhances our lives by its existence” (Mesce 2004). Here we see the
issue with evaluating success in the arts, and how it presents a fundamentally
different set of circumstances than any other entrepreneurial venture.

3.7 Monetary Success and Art

Often the end goal of entrepreneurial ventures is tied to profit and wealth-creation.
An article by K. Winger shows that art diverges from this, in that art is not often a
career bound towards great sums of money. Artists who set themselves up to base
their success on financial gain are likely setting themselves up for failure. Scherdin
points out that often the end goal of entrepreneurial ventures is tied to profit and
wealth-creation. This is a strong divergence from the arts, whose utopian pursuit
opposes any monetary-based motivation (Scherdin 2011). Winger questions if
money is truly what gives art value or if there are indicators of greater concern
(Winger 2011).

The meeting of commerce and the arts presents a fundamental debate. What is
important to understand in the arts industry is that money is essential but not
primary. Regarding the art of film, Bill Mesce states, “money is the oxygen that
allows movies to be made and careers to flourish” (Mesce 2004). Money sustains the
arts, but is not the sole driver.

The National Endowment for the Arts published the median salary of artists to be
$34,800, measured from data taken from 2003-2005. SNAAP’s research also detailed that very few professional artists were happy with their current income (SNAAP 2011). Considering the National Endowment for the Art’s comments that artists with the same level of education as individuals in other occupations most often earn significantly less, this is understandable (Bradshaw 2008).

3.8 Alternative Measures of Success

SNAAP identified career satisfaction as a potentially relevant indicator of success for artists. SNAAP's research identified strong differences in satisfaction depending on what type of art the artist pursued. Of those that were actors, craftsmen, dancers, fine artists, musicians, photographers, and writers, 2/3 reported being generally happy to be able to exercise creativity and pursue what they loved. Of those that were art directors, graphic designers, and web designers, only 1/3 reported the same level of satisfaction. SNAAP hypothesized that this may be due to the high levels of stress in the client-driven rather than self-driven work (SNAAP 2011).

The creative career can take on many different forms. Goals greatly vary from career to career. The clearest distinction is that between commercial artists and fine artists. Mesce asserts that the main difference between fine art and commercial art is in the message. “The fine artist- the sculptor, the painter, etc.- endeavors to communicate some message from within. For the commercial artist, the message comes from the outside.” Mesce draws light to this divergence in goals by stating, “the commercial artist does not explore self-expression to the same degree allowed by the fine artist. But they can- and often do- share the same desire to see their
creativity successfully connected with an audience, and take pride in using their creative gifts to the best of their ability” (Mesce 2004 p. 170).

SNAAP reports that 47% of artists surveyed said they were satisfied with the opportunities to be creative in their work (SNAAP 2011). Mesce believes that an artist often creates beauty “simply and solely for the sake of creating beauty, and whatever satisfaction may be gained in the act of creation may be the only reward.” Here, Mesce also asserts that success in the arts could be defined as satisfaction in work.

Another possible indicator of success in the arts is the steadiness of work, leading to income and job security. Laura Barnett of the Guardian brings up the extreme instability of an artistic career. They have no job security, no pension, no benefits, and often times very low earnings (Barnett 2010). SNAAP reports that only 1/3 of artists indicate they are content with their job security (SNAAP 2011). The Equity actor’s union in London recently published a survey stating that 2/3 of actors are out of work at any given time (Barnett 2010).
Conclusion

Schumpeter’s statement that entrepreneurs are the saviors to businesses, bringing new life to stale thinking could equally be applied to artists. Business leaders today recognize artist’s great skill and expertise and are reaching out to the arts community. Artist’s out-of-the-box thinking and unique perspectives present great value to business strategy. This competence and unique mindset also poises artists as entrepreneurs with great potential. The nature of their self-created and self-run businesses translates into the structure of an entrepreneurial venture. This venture necessitates a recognition and understanding of basic entrepreneurial principles if it is to be successful. Two propellants behind the success of an entrepreneurial venture are the concepts of opportunity and success.

Artist’s concept of opportunity can greatly affect what possibilities they perceive in the market. Their understanding of success can greatly alter their perception of achievement. While opportunity and success have been defined by business scholars and discussed in arts-based literature, few studies on artists have been conducted. Results of these studies could offer insight into what artist’s strength are and how this expertise could translate into the traditional business world as well as where artists may be weak and where business expertise could be valuable to their successful practice. The research conducted through this study is only a starting point, but draws attention to the opportunities and needs for further study and discussion.
4 Research

4.1 Purpose

Assist in developing the school of thought and understanding of artists as entrepreneurs.

4.2 Methodology

Participants were interviewed concerning their perspectives on opportunity and success in relation to their art practice. Interviews were offered to be conducted in person, over the phone, and by email, according to the preference of the participant. Phone interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed while email interviews remained in their typed format.

As soon as audio recordings were transcribed, the audio recordings were destroyed. All interviews and notes were kept in password-protected files on the researcher’s computer. Participants were all asked to sign an informed consent form prior to participating in the interview.

In total 3 interviews were conducted. These interviews were then used to hypothesize potential results of future interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes.

4.3 Recruitment

Inquiries for recruitment were sent by email to a number of South Carolina arts organizations including the South Carolina Arts Commission, the Charleston Regional Arts Alliance, the Charleston Artist Guild, and Redux Contemporary Art
Studios studio renters. The researcher also worked with the College of Charleston Office of Alumni to contact College of Charleston School of the Arts graduates who now work as full-time artists.

The recruitment email offered a brief description of the intent of the research and the requirements for participation.

4.4 Interview Procedure

Participants were interviewed concerning their perspectives concerning opportunity and success in relation to their art practice.

Participants were asked the following 12 questions:

1. Please describe your occupation.
2. What does the word “opportunity” mean to you as an artist?
3. What opportunities do you see for artists?
4. What obstacles do you perceive as preventing you or other artists from pursuing these opportunities?
5. What is your goal as an artist?
6. What would make you consider a project a success?
7. What would make you consider a career as an artist a success?
8. How important is it to you to be successful?
9. How do you feel when you sell your art?
10. What are your thoughts on the concept of artists as entrepreneurs?
11. What type of artists are the most entrepreneurial?
12. Is there anything you’d like to add?
4.5 Subjects

Participants recruited were individuals who consider an artist occupation their primary occupation.

The researcher interviewed 3 artists of varying occupations. The first artist interviewed is a children's book author and illustrator. The second is a painter. The third is a bookbinder.
4.6 Findings

Defining Opportunity

Presented in Table 4.1 below are definitions of opportunity, derived from interview answers. In the left column is the definition. In the right are quotes from the interviews taken as evidence of the definition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Quotes from Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create wealth</td>
<td>• “The opportunity to sell my artwork and make money”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share ideas</td>
<td>• “The opportunity to share my work with students”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “Opportunity is any chance I get to share my passion with other people”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn/Improve</td>
<td>• “Opportunity is any chance I get to learn any new thing about the practice”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a place to work</td>
<td>• “Opportunity is having a place to work, a studio.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government funding</td>
<td>• “There is some grant money available, but it is competitive”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1

When compared with the definitions of opportunity presented in the literature review, some overlap is noted. Wealth or profit creation is cited in both. This is a definition with a strong market focus, relating to financial motives. In contrast, the other definitions make no mention of market, of profit, or of the buy and sell world. The literature review also noted that one potential definition could be “the ability to serve customer’s differently or better.” One of the artists saw opportunity as the
chance to learn something new about their artistic practice, likely leading to serving their customer differently or better. Multiple artists noted opportunity as the chance to share ideas with others. This is a definition of opportunity not presented in the literature, but one that seems relevant to the practice of art. This definition does not focus on product creation, but rather on the world within.

The review of current literature on entrepreneurial opportunity recognized opportunity as the starting point for all entrepreneurial ventures. Entrepreneurs are oriented towards recognizing opportunity and forming their venture around it. While this may sometimes be the case for these artists, the opportunity did not seem to always be central. The “venture” or the “art” could very well come first. Many of these definitions present opportunity as the opportunity to make, with no mention of need for a market desire to motivate the product created. In other words, in entrepreneurship it is said that without opportunity, there is no entrepreneurship. In the arts, it might seem that without opportunity, there very well may still be art.

**Moderators of Opportunity**

In the review of current published literature on opportunity, we noted that scholars have defined creativity as the creation of not only novel but of valuable ideas. This establishes a connection with culture in that its value perception depends on the value perceptions of the given culture. The artists interviewed were asked if they perceived of any particular opportunities for artists. Their answers all related back to the current culture, discussing trends that could be particularly advantageous. The cultural context in which these artists create their art may very well moderate
the opportunities they perceive for their art.

- New Market: “The current market offers opportunity to practice something that a previous market might not have”
- Internet and Social Media: “The internet has provided a useful forum with sites like Art Critical, Facebook, and You Tube”
- Artisan Movement: “The recent talk of the digital age threatening objects has spurred a big increase in valuing things made my hand”
- Diversifying Art World: “The art world has never been more diverse and full of possibility.”
Defining Success

Success of a Project

Presented in Table 4.2 below are definitions of success in relation to a particular project, derived from interview answers. In the left column is the definition. In the right are quotes from the interviews taken as evidence of the definition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Measure</th>
<th>Quotes from Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>• “I feel success when a painting is sold”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td>• “I feel success when what I am feeling deeply is also true for someone else”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other’s valuation</td>
<td>• “I rely on third party opinions. I rely on others reactions to what I have made”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “People spending their money on something I’ve created”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>• “When people learn something from it”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2

As can be seen in Table 4.2 above, the art world seems to operate under the same range of diverse opinions on success as any other field. The three interviews occupy quite a spectrum, with answers ranging from the commercial to the utopian. Success for one artist has nothing to do with wealth-creation while success for another has everything to do with it. Despite their differences, all of the measurements were measurements reliant on the customer in one way or another.

SNAAP’s research detailed that only 1/3 of artists whose artwork is client-driven were satisfied with their work. The research group hypothesized that this could be
due to the added stress that comes with reliance on another’s opinion. The bookbinding work of one of the artists interviewed certainly fits this client-driven category. The artist recognizes their reliance on third party opinion as they define the success of a given project based on the client’s reaction to the finished product.

Even when basing success on sales, the artists interviewed do not seem to appreciate the sale for the sake of money, but rather for the sake of assurance that they have made something of value. It is this feeling of value that offers the feeling of success. This would indicate that their feelings of success are dependent on a third party.

The success measurements that diverged from sales-centered were still equally third party based. One artist feels a project is successful when his work is able to connect with another. Another artist measured success based on if the work educated or informed the viewer.
**Success of a Career**

Presented in *Table 4.3* below are definitions of success in relation to an artist’s career as a whole, derived from interview answers. In the left column is the definition. In the right are quotes from the interviews taken as evidence of the definition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition of Success</th>
<th>Quotes from Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longevity</td>
<td>• “Longevity”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment/Satisfaction</td>
<td>• “As long as I still love doing it, it is still successful”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of stagnancy/constant improvement</td>
<td>• “I hope to be constantly improving, every project better than the one before, learning as I go.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth creation</td>
<td>• “To get filthy rich and not have to work past the age of 50.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.3*

As can be seen in *Table 4.3* above, there seems to be a time aspect to how these artists gauge the success of their career. It is not success based on producing x number of works or profiting x amount of money. It is success based on sustained practice, sustained improvement, and sustained love for the art.

The artist who answered, ““To get filthy rich and not have to work past the age of 50” presents us with a key debate. Research indicates a tricky line between art and commerce. Another artist answered, “If the client is excited, the paycheck doesn’t even matter. But it certainly is awesome to also have the paycheck.” Since most
artists can find success in multiple ways, the key thing to define is what the artist sees as primary and what they see as secondary.

The research of Toledo-Lopez stated that often time for small businesses commercial goals are secondary while achieving the goals of the business are primary. Contrasting this concept, the artist wishing to get rich by 50 seems to place commercial success over any other. Another artist interviewer fits Toledo-Lopez’s idea better, detailing, “I don’t think making money should be the primary reason.” In the literature review Bill Mesce was noted as stating, “money is the oxygen that allows art to be made and careers to flourish.” I believe this artist would agree. This artist later furthered, “I am getting paid a salary to do what I love doing, so it is easier for me to have these idealistic feelings because I have a steady paycheck. To an outsider, my opinions may be nullified by my situation.”

Integrity seemed of central importance to one artist and is perhaps the utopian mediation between art and commerce: so long as the artist maintains integrity, there is no issue over making money. This artist said, “It is important to reassure myself that I am doing it because I want to be doing it and not to just be making money. My goal is for the materials to have integrity, for the work to have integrity, and for the message to have integrity.”
Artists as Entrepreneurs:

One of the artists interviewed mentioned time as the largest obstacle to pursuing an opportunity. As a children's book author and illustrator, the artist interviewed is not only responsible for making the art, but also for securing a publisher and actively promoting the work to achieve sales. This is perhaps an obstacle that is extremely relevant to the artist occupation, as an artist's role requires that they wear many hats. They are involved in everything from creation, to promotion, to sales, managing all aspects of their self-run business. This immense output requires a great deal of time and energy.

When asked about their feelings on artists as entrepreneurs, all offered unique answers. One artist was in full support of the idea, viewing entrepreneurship as a pure business venture tied to efficiency and profit potential. He wants to use his experience in business to help other artists in the same position as he once was. Another artist noted the inherent “think outside the box” mindset of artists. He seemed to think that an entrepreneur is not something an artist makes a choice to be or not to be, but rather something an artist simply is by nature of their practice. The last artist hesitantly embraced the entrepreneurial idea, stipulating that an artist should pursue a successful practice for the sake of the art, not for the sake of money.

One artist spoke of the importance of artists having a grasp of business skills. “If you just plan to practice art part time, I don’t think any artist has to have an entrepreneurial mindset. If you want to sustain yourself, you have to have some knowledge of business. It has been a learning curve for me: How much should I
charge? Am I charging enough? Too much?” This artist also spoke of the importance of marketing their art: “I think that a lot of people assume if you make it by hand, everyone else will see value in it,” he said. “You really do have to work very hard and be active in your local art community to get your name out there,” he followed. If we are to recognize artists as entrepreneurs, actively engaging in all aspects of business, we must also recognize how important it is that artists have a firm understanding of these skills.

The self-employed nature of many artist’s careers necessitate that they handle their business well. One artist interviewed noted, “If I am not out there selling books, nobody pays me anything. It is up to me to do.” SNAAPs reported statistic that only 1/3 of artists indicate that they are content with their job security is relevant here. A firmer grasp on their business could translate to a stronger feeling of job security.
Conclusion:

The three artists interviewed all worked in different mediums and different markets, but seemed equally informed in their particular field. The children’s book author mentioned the promotional opportunities within schools and book fairs, the painter mentioned the relevance of social media dialogue with artists, and the book binder brought up the artisan movement encouraging his practice. Their awareness of opportunities within their own market would indicate some basic understanding of practical business affairs, an important asset to any artistic practice.

It is important to recognize that artistic skill does not always mean business skill. It is the possession of both that can arm an artist with great advantage. If they have practical and basic knowledge of business, their artistic perspective is likely to advantage them with a unique take on this knowledge. Their think-outside-the-box and creative nature offers an aptness to utilize traditional business skills in new ways. As one of the artists interviewed put it, “Artists are by nature entrepreneurial. We see things that other overlook and find circles when others find angles. Our job is to be resilient and think differently.”

Recognizing that artists do, in fact, think differently than the rest of the entrepreneurial population was one of the strongest promptings behind this study. The study stems from a curiosity to discover how artists view the concepts of opportunity and success. Identifying both differences and similarities offers valuable insights and a deeper understanding of artists in business.
The literature review detailed 3 ways in which the arts are thought to diverge from traditional entrepreneurship:

1. The arts are specifically focused on creativity and novelty
2. Artists remain interest in novelty production, regardless of utility or profit
3. Because of this, artists must win the consumer on bases on the utility and profit potential

The interview responses illustrate these differences, but also illustrate the immense overlap between the artistic world and the traditional business world. While the definitions of opportunity and success derived from the interviews offered some new perspective, similarities were also noted with those published in entrepreneurial literature.

The business of artists seems to occupy the same spectrum as any other business: a spectrum between financial and non-financial concerns, between opportunity recognition and opportunity creation, between what the artist has the ability to do and what their audience wants them to do, and between personal desires and market desires. While opportunities for artists and achievements sought after may differ from those in the traditional entrepreneurial world, the over-arching principles seem to transcend the borders. As with any entrepreneur, artists must keep their sights set on their ultimate career goals, exploiting or creating any opportunities that may lead to success.
**Limitations of study**

Although the research has achieved its purpose, there were some unavoidable limitations. First, due to time constraints, only three artists were interviewed. To generalize the results and apply them to a larger group, the study would have needed to involve more artists. A longer time span for research and greater access to bases of artists would provide a more sound base from which to draw analysis and conclusions. While offering valuable answers, these three artists alone cannot offer a representative sample. Second, the qualitative nature of the study does not provide hard and fast data, but rather exploratory discussion and prompts for future research. Third, the current market for art and business economy could play into the answers of these artists. Given this, future research asking the same questions could very well be met with different answers. Fourth, the analysis of the interviews was conducted by only one research. This would indicate a certain degree of subjectivity that could have been avoided with multiple examiners.

**Future Research**

One of the interviewers mentioned lack of research as an obstacle to pursuing opportunity. While that is one of the purposes of this study, this study alone does not succeed in overcoming that obstacle. Future research should involve a more expansive and inclusive survey of artists, offering a broader look into their perceptions. Just as with this study, these perceptions may prove valuable to increasing the effectiveness of an artist’s practice. Recognizing the importance of an understanding of business to the productive career of an artist, it would be relevant
to research how firm artist’s understandings of business affairs are. A study of this nature could lead they way towards appropriate educational measures to help artists better achieve their purpose.
Appendix

Interview 1: Children’s Book Author and Illustrator

1. *Please describe your occupation.*

I write and illustrate children’s books. I then spend a year or two traveling around and promoting the books by going to schools, book festivals, book fairs, and art festivals.

2. *What does the word “opportunity” mean to you as an artist?*

Primarily, the opportunity to sell my artwork and make money. The first thing that comes to mind is simply having the opportunity to go to schools and share my books with students.

3. *What opportunities do you see for artists?*

I definitely think there is room for growth and for people to do their own thing with their art. What you put into it is what you get out of it. You have to make people aware of what you do and make them interested in it. For some artists there is help with grants, offering state and federal money to help out.

4. *What obstacles do you perceive as preventing you or other artists from pursuing these opportunities?*

The biggest obstacle for me is time. I have worked 19-hour days every day for a month straight. There is not enough time in the day to get everything done.

5. *What is your goal as an artist?*

Mine is to get filthy rich and maybe not have to work past the age of fifty. I also of course want people to enjoy my writing and my books. I want people to learn from them. I want to make a better life for myself through my art.

6. *What would make you consider a project a success?*
People actually spending their money on something I’ve created. I’m not really big into recognition or awards. It means a lot when people spend their money that they have worked hard to earn on something that I have created.

7. **What would make you consider a career as an artist a success?**

Being able to retire at that age of fifty that I was talking about. I would like to see the books I make be something that is not forgotten. I would also like to sell a ton of them.

8. **How important is it to you to be successful?**

It is very important because it is how I make a living. If I am not out there selling books, nobody pays me anything. It’s up to me to do.

9. **How do you feel when you sell your art?**

I actually feel a little bittersweet. My artwork takes 30, 40, or 50 hours to make per illustration. I sold all of the original artwork for my first book I ever did. It was cool to see people buying it and it was good to get the money, but it was bittersweet to know that I would never see it again.

10. **What are your thoughts on the concept of artists as entrepreneurs?**

I am all for it. I meet a lot of people and spend a lot of time trying to help people that do the same kind of thing that I do. I want to pass on information that I’ve learned.

11. **What type of artists are the most entrepreneurial?**

I think graphic design is something that is pretty easy to freelance. There are low startup costs, as you basically just need a computer and an apartment to be a graphic designer.

**Interview 2: Painter**
1. **Please describe your occupation.**

Painter.

2. **What does the word “opportunity” mean to you as an artist?**

   In my opinion opportunity for an artist is having a place to work, a studio. In 1993 I won a grant from the Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation and their primary directive is to give free studio space to artists for a year. That allowed me the space to make my first solo show in New York City and that show put me on the map. There is some grant money out there but it is getting competitive. I got a Fulbright Scholarship and a NYFA Grant both of which were wonderful. Bottom line: artists are not owed anything. We are survivors.

3. **What opportunities do you see for artists?**

   The art world has never been more diverse and full of possibility however this is not always desirable. There is a disconnect among artists, there is less dialogue. The internet has provided a useful forum; sites like Art Critical and Facebook are useful to me. I am also fascinated by YouTube and have a series of studio visits which have gotten an overwhelming response. There are a lot of painters out there who feel a lot of what I do.

4. **What obstacles do you perceive as preventing you or other artists from pursuing these opportunities?**

   Lack of research.

5. **What is your goal as an artist?**

   To be true to myself.

6. **What would make you consider a project a success?**
When what I am feeling deeply is also true for someone else. Also I feel success when a painting is sold. Any artist who says they don’t care about sales is lying.

7. *What would make you consider a career as an artist a success?*

   Longevity.

8. *How important is it to you to be successful?*

   Success is very important but, now that I have kids, it is not critical. This knowledge is so liberating.

9. *How do you feel when you sell your art?*

   Content and scared that I won’t be able to paint again.

10. *What are your thoughts on the concept of artists as entrepreneurs?*

    Artists are by nature entrepreneurial. We see things that others overlook and find circles when others find angles. Our job is to be resilient and think differently.

11. *What type of artists are the most entrepreneurial?*

    Sculptors and filmmakers because they have to rely on others to make their work. As a painter I stay behind a locked door all day and don’t work well with others. Compromise is part of entrepreneurship and I don’t do that well.

12. *Is there anything you’d like to add?*

    If you can maintain a connection to the richness of the past and still make vibrant, original work then I think you can contribute to the history of art.

Interview 3: Book-Binder

1. *Please describe your occupation.*

   I am in charge of the bindery space for the Charleston Library Society. Anyone can bring a book in off the street and pay to have their book fixed. On top of that I offer
classes and workshops.

2. *What does the word “opportunity” mean to you as an artist?*

   I guess it would be centered around education. An opportunity is any chance that I get to learn any new things about the practice or any chance I get to share my passion with other people.

3. *What opportunities do you see for artists?*

   In recent years, everybody likes to talk about the digital age threatening objects. Due to this, I have noticed there has been a big increase in doing things by hand. A sort of grassroots movement. I think there is a lot of opportunity there. There is also an audience of people who want to see that. Websites like Etsy are thriving. I know I was hired right out of college doing something I wasn’t officially trained to do but the current market offered me an opportunity to do it.

4. *What obstacles do you perceive as preventing you or other artists from pursuing these opportunities?*

   I think that a lot of people assume that if you make it by hand, everyone else will automatically see value in it. While there is an increase in interest in handcraft, you have to still work your ass off to get yourself out there. I was spending every moment of free time that I could developing my skill. You really do have to work very hard for it and be active in your local art community and get your name out there. You must be willing and eager to learn from someone who has been doing it longer than you and exercise humility in that. It’s just about busting it out and doing as much as you can.

   With my generation we were fed that we were unique and beautiful snowflakes. And we are all individual, but I think it is foolish to expect that everyone will notice that you
are an individual over everyone else.

5. **What is your goal as an artist?**

I suppose I have a general and specific goal. My general goal would be to have integrity penetrate every aspect of what I am doing. The whole idea of bookbinding is that you are creating a physical house for a non-physical thing—an idea. My job is to make the housing as permanent as possible. For that to happen I have to be careful with the materials I am selecting to make sure the way I am binding the book is going to hold and have integrity. So basically my goal is for the materials to have integrity, for the work to have integrity, and for the message to have integrity. A more specific goal would be to have a hand printed version the Lord of the Rings trilogy all hand bound in leather.

6. **What would make you consider a project a success?**

I guess I would have to gauge it off of how the client views it. I rely on third party opinions. When I view a project all I see are all of the little mistakes glaring at me. I have to rely on others reactions to what I have made.

7. **What would make you consider a career as an artist a success?**

As long as I still love doing it, it is still successful. Even if I wasn’t employed doing it, so long as long as I still did it and enjoyed doing it, I would consider it a success. I would also hope to be constantly improving, every project better than the one before.

Learning as I go.

8. **How important is it to you to be successful?**

Well I guess it depends on how you define success. But going on the previous standards I just set, I want to constantly be improving. I don’t really care as much
about people wanting to buy what I’ve made and my making money off of it.

9. **How do you feel when you sell your art?**

It is always very satisfying to see someone else excited about something you’ve done. It’s a pretty big thrill when the client gets to see something you’ve been working on for hours and hours. There is great anticipation. If the client is excited, the paycheck doesn’t even matter. But it certainly is awesome to also have the paycheck.

10. **What are your thoughts on the concept of artists as entrepreneurs?**

I don’t think that making money should be the primary reason. Sometimes people really are just in it to get famous and I think that defeats the whole point of it all. It blows my mind when I meet those people. I definitely started out doing bookbinding just for fun, making journals and selling them around town just to make money off of them. After awhile I realized I wanted to be doing it because I wanted to be doing it not just because I could make money off of it. So I guess I have taken the darker side but realized it wasn’t what I wanted. I am more of a pureist now. I am getting paid a salary to do what I love doing so it is easier for me to have these idealistic feelings because I have a steady paycheck. I feel like I have these opinions but to an outsider they are nullified by my situation.

11. **What type of artists are the most entrepreneurial?**

It really just depends on if they plan on practicing their art full time. If you just plan to do it part time I don think any artist has to have an entrepreneurial mindset. If you want to sustain yourself to have to have some knowledge of business. It has been a learning curve for me. How much should I charge? Am I charging enough? Am I charging too much? No matter the type of art, you have to have some knowledge of
how business works in order to have food on your table. I will do work for no charge sometimes. It's important to reassure myself that I am doing it because I want to be doing it and not to just be making money.
References:


