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# Governing the Future of Art

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*Networks, Infrastructures, and Living Collections*

A series of encounters with scholars, curators, technologists, and artists who have studied, built, or resisted the structures through which art circulates today.



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## **PART V — FROM GEOGRAPHY TO PRACTICE**

# Introduction

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*This book does not set out to predict the future of the art world, nor to defend its past. It proceeds more modestly—and, we hope, more usefully—as a series of encounters with people who have spent their lives building, studying, or resisting the infrastructures through which art now circulates. Each conversation is a prism. Tilt it, and the same field looks different: as a network of unequal nodes, a laboratory for experiment, a site of exhaustion, a data problem, a question of governance.*

*The dialogues gathered here press on insights, blind spots, and contradictions alike. What happens to a collection when value is understood as a network effect rather than an intrinsic property? How do you transmit meaning in a digital condition that remembers badly and accelerates quickly? What does responsibility look like when museums, markets, and publics are all under structural stress?*

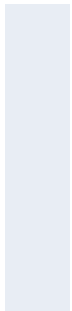
*If there is a single claim that binds these voices, it is that collecting is no longer a private activity, nor is the museum a neutral backdrop. Both are forms of governance. The question is not whether we stand inside or outside the system—but whether we can inhabit it lucidly enough to keep meaning transmissible when the architectures around it are shaking.*

PART I

# Networked Value and the Architecture of the Field

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*The first part maps the architecture of the field: the measurable structures—networks, markets, fairs, museums, belief systems—that decide who is visible and who disappears.*



# Before the Voices: A Question of Position

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*This book does not offer advice. It offers a series of encounters—conversations with scholars, curators, technologists, and artists who have studied, built, or resisted the structures through which art circulates today. Each dialogue becomes a lens through which collecting practice can be refracted and tested.*

*The voices that follow are not testimonies to anyone's success. They are instruments of lucidity. They name what the art field has become: a network of unequal nodes, a bifurcated marketplace, a site of institutional exhaustion and digital transformation that no single actor can redesign.*

*We begin where most collectors prefer not to look: at the hidden architecture of value itself. Not the mystery of taste, but the measurable structures that decide who is seen, who is remembered, and who quietly disappears.*

CHAPTER

1

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# Networked Value: The Age of Barabási

1

Artistic value, we are often told, is mysterious—an alchemy of genius, taste, and chance. Albert-László Barabási's work dismantles this myth with empirical precision. What presents itself as mystery is, to a large extent, the visible surface of an invisible network. Artists, institutions, exhibitions, and collectors are not isolated actors; they are nodes in a system whose structure helps determine who is seen, who is remembered, and who is quietly forgotten.

A work acquires meaning because of where it has been, who has shown it, which histories it extends or contradicts—but also because of structural patterns that no individual collector can fully perceive from the inside. Collecting, in this sense, is not accumulation, nor is it pure authorship. It is the attempt to construct a network of meaning while being entangled in networks we did not design.

*Barabási's research shows that the art world behaves like a scale-free network: a small number of hubs—leading museums, galleries, biennials—concentrate disproportionate attention, while most actors remain in peripheral clusters. Once an artist enters a major hub, visibility compounds over*

*time. The system is structurally selective, not naturally open.*

In Barabási's terms, museums, biennials, and galleries do more than validate quality; they actively produce the canon. Canonical status emerges not from an abstract hierarchy of excellence, but from repeated institutional selection over time. This obliges us to abandon the comfortable idea that collections merely "reflect" art history. A collection is not a mirror; it is an instrument. It does not simply document what matters. It helps decide what will continue to matter—and it can also misjudge, overlook, or prematurely discard.

To collect is to exercise a form of historical authorship while knowing that authorship will be partial, biased, and sometimes wrong. The criteria should not be the prices reached at auction or the density of social media attention. What matters is coherence across time, resonance with the structural transformations of the global field, and the ability of works to sustain interpretation beyond the present moment of visibility.

Barabási's work also highlights an obvious yet underleveraged fact: the art world lacks a shared, open data infrastructure. Exhibition histories, curatorial patterns, philanthropic flows,

and career paths are dispersed across proprietary databases, tax forms, archives, and private records. Opacity is not a side effect; it is structural.

*A collection is a form of governance. Its task is to transform some part of complexity into clarity, some portion of visibility into understanding, and some moments of access into durable transmission. In a world shaped by acceleration and algorithms, discipline over scale, coherence over accumulation, and meaning over noise represent the path forward.*

CHAPTER

2

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# Olav Velthuis and the Sociology of Belief

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Olav Velthuis approaches the art world not as an insider singing its praises, but as a sociologist dissecting its structures. His foundational work, *Talking Prices*, established a framework that remains essential: prices in the art market are not neutral signals of supply and demand; they are symbolic devices that express and stabilize social agreement. A high price may indicate quality, but it also communicates the identity of earlier collectors, the gallery's reputation, and the artist's position in a complex hierarchy of validation. Prices talk—and what they say is far from unequivocal.

This insight sits within a broader theoretical architecture. Following Pierre Bourdieu, Velthuis understands the art world as a relatively autonomous field with its own rules, hierarchies, and rituals. Value is not intrinsic to objects; it is collectively produced through belief, consensus, and the elaborate ceremonies of consecration—exhibitions, reviews, museum acquisitions, auction results—that make one object "art" and another merely a thing.

Against the breathless rhetoric of disruption, Velthuis insists that the art market has not grown dramatically in real terms over the last decade. The true structural boom occurred in the

early 2000s, driven largely by China's emergence. What is genuinely new is the degree of global integration: the same gallery experiences replicated worldwide, the same biennials and fairs setting the calendar, and a small set of institutions retaining strong symbolic authority over what counts as legitimate.

*One of Velthuis's most striking observations concerns why the art world has resisted the digital disruption that transformed music, film, and publishing. His answer is sociological: the art world has become a physical leisure ecosystem for elites. Fairs, openings, biennials, dinners, and travel are not incidental to the system; they are its substance. Elite sociability cannot be digitized.*

On private museums, Velthuis has led the most systematic research to date. He has documented nearly five hundred private museums of modern and contemporary art globally, most founded in the twenty-first century. Two forces drive the boom: the explosion of private wealth since the 1980s and the art world's success in attracting that wealth as a destination for elite identity formation.

Yet Velthuis is clear about the structural fragility of these institutions. Since 2000, more than seventy private museums have closed. They face a peculiar philanthropic problem: why would other wealthy individuals donate to a rival philanthropist's monument? With rare exceptions, private museums are structurally more fragile than their public counterparts.

His deepest anxiety is political, not economic. The rise of radical right-wing governments and the delegitimization of arts and sciences threaten cultural infrastructure at its roots. But the stress test is real, and its outcome is not guaranteed; belief can shift away from the very institutions that depend on it.

CHAPTER

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# Noah Horowitz and the Fair as Cultural Infrastructure

3

Noah Horowitz arrives with a profile that is already a theory: a scholar of art as an asset class who became an architect of its infrastructures. From Art of the Deal to VIP Art Fair, Sotheby's and now Art Basel, his path traces the shift from asking how much a work is worth to asking how, where, and for whom value appears. At the core of his thinking is a simple but decisive intuition: art is not an object but a system, and value is created through context, circulation, and networks, not price alone.

In his account, the modern art fair is not a neutral container but a highly engineered device: time-limited, network-dense, built on the shared reputational capital of galleries. Since the mid-2000s, however, the explosion from dozens of fairs to hundreds has reversed the equation: what is rare is no longer the event, but the capacity of artists, galleries, and collectors to sustain the rhythm.

Horowitz answers saturation with a change of dimension rather than mere growth. Art Basel's successive moves to Miami Beach, Hong Kong, and Paris signal a strategy of embedding the fair into cities, institutions, and private collections so that it becomes a cultural platform rather than a

marketplace alone—moving from an "art world" organized around professionals to a "world of art" addressed to culturally curious publics.

*Contrary to some digital myths, Horowitz does not predict the disappearance of intermediaries. The art market still runs on galleries, fairs, auctions, and advisors as trusted context builders. Online viewing rooms, data, AR, and wearables are treated as integrations that will reshape the interface, not as replacements for the underlying relational fabric.*

His outlook is cautiously optimistic: the future lies in more diverse geographies, generations, and genders, in artists shaped by new tools, and in expanded touchpoints between art and society, but not in endless quantitative growth. Diversity without coherence becomes noise; technology without governance erodes meaning; expansion without memory dissolves value.

CHAPTER  
**4**

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# Yoram Roth and the Museum as Engine

# 4

Yoram Roth enters this book from a different angle than most of its protagonists. Where many of the dialogues orbit ethics, history, or politics, his contribution is unapologetically managerial. Fotografiska is conceived not as a museum that happens to have a café and a bar, but as a business whose medium is culture. Hospitality, nightlife, food, social life—these are not peripheral amenities; they are structural components of the model.

The key word he borrows from hospitality is not "premium" but "guest." At Fotografiska, visitors are not abstract publics to be managed; they are guests with whom one wants an ongoing relationship. That means staying open when people are free—late evenings, after work. It means treating the museum as a third place after home and work: somewhere to meet friends, form habits, and attach identity.

*Where Roth is most specific is on economics. He argues that membership is the most misunderstood lever in museum finance. Institutions still treat it as a side product rather than as the backbone of a long-term relationship. The classic funnel—visitor, repeat visitor, member, donor, trustee—no longer*

*works for younger generations who do not recognize themselves in the rituals of the old patriarchy.*

Hybrid models, in this view, are not a deviation but the future. The nonprofit/for-profit distinction is largely a tax construct. Fotografiska itself combines a charitable foundation in Stockholm with a nonprofit counterpart in the United States and a commercial operating entity. Roth expects most institutions to converge toward such hybridity.

On technology, Roth is skeptical of fashionable lifelines. The deeper problem is not artificial intelligence but image inflation: the sheer volume of images in circulation risks flattening meaning. Museums should help people slow down and relearn attention, not mirror the acceleration of feeds.

CHAPTER

5

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# Marc Spiegler and the Future That Might Get Boring

5

Marc Spiegler describes an art world that has never been more global, more visible, or more professional—and rarely more fragile. From his vantage point, the ecosystem looks small but intensely networked: artists, galleries, collectors, and institutions moving around the same fairs, biennials, and cities, while the map has expanded without necessarily deepening its structural resilience. Geography grew; complexity did not.

Digital acceleration is at the center of his diagnosis. Instagram and screens have become the default point of first contact; most collectors, curators, and viewers now meet works as images before they ever see them in person. This produces what he calls a kind of "digital affluenza": overexposure, rapid saturation, and shortened attention cycles that push artists to produce faster and galleries to show what reads well in a feed. Out of this comes an "International Style" of art fair art—portable, decorative, quickly legible, optimized for booths and timelines.

*Spiegler connects this aesthetic homogenization to deeper economic shifts. He echoes Harald Falckenberg's inverted proverb—bad markets make*

*good art, good markets make bad art—as a reminder that liquidity is not the same thing as vitality.*

The gallery system mirrors these tensions. The ecosystem is shrinking and consolidating: fewer new galleries open, more close, and mega-galleries now dominate the upper tiers. The "squeeze in the middle" leaves emerging galleries precarious and mid-sized galleries existentially fragile.

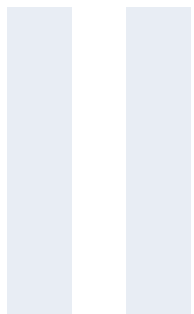
Looking ahead to 2050, Spiegler sketches two possible futures. In the best case, galleries adapt to millennial and post-millennial expectations: privileging performance, installation, immersion, and experience over object accumulation. In the worst case, consolidation continues, risk disappears, and galleries become hobbies for the ultra-rich. The danger is not collapse but boredom: an efficient system that has forgotten how to surprise.

PART II

# Immersion, Memory, and the Digital Condition

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*Part I traced how value is structured through networks and hierarchies. Part II asks what happens when those networks harden into platforms, when exhibitions become data, and when memory itself becomes code. The art field does not face an innovation crisis; it faces a memory crisis.*



## From Structure to Condition

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*Understanding the field is not enough. We also have to reckon with the fact that the field itself now operates under a different condition: the digital.*

*This is not simply a matter of adding screens to galleries or posting images on Instagram. It is a matter of memory, preservation, and encounter. Digital culture has transformed how artworks are produced, circulated, archived, and experienced. Yet institutions still tend to treat "digital art" as a niche rather than as the default environment in which almost all contemporary practice now unfolds.*

CHAPTER

1

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# Digital Condition, Institutional Memory: Michael Connor / Rhizome

1

Digital culture is no longer a fringe activity; it is the default condition under which images, stories, and relationships are produced and received. Yet institutions and markets still tend to frame "digital art" as a niche, a specialism, or a communication layer rather than a structural reality.

Michael Connor's work at Rhizome names the core problem with unusual clarity: not innovation failure, but memory failure. Digital art grew through clubs, blogs, festivals, and online communities that rarely left a stable archival trace, making it difficult for museums to integrate these practices into their historical narratives.

For Connor, the history of digital art is cyclical rather than linear. Milestones such as the personal computer, the Mosaic browser, social media platforms, NFTs, and AI models matter because artists reinterpreted them, not because of the hardware or software alone. Each wave has been misunderstood in its own time—alternately hyped or dismissed—before slowly entering (or failing to enter) institutional memory.

*Rhizome positions itself as a hybrid institution devoted to memory, community, and experimentation:*

*preserving networked art, supporting digital-native artists, and making fragile practices legible before legacy institutions can fully accommodate them.*

Connor insists that digital preservation is a governance problem rather than a storage problem. The challenge lies less in file size than in software dependency and environment: operating systems, browsers, plug-ins, hardware aesthetics, and network conditions all shape what a work "is" at any given moment.

Connor anticipates that institutions will persist, but with less structural stability and more need for daily reaffirmation. Endowments and buildings are no longer guarantees; only ongoing commitment is. The art world moves from an era of institutional permanence into one of institutional practice: each day, one must decide again to do the work.

CHAPTER  
**2**

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# Immersion as Care: Ana Brzezińska

# 2

Immersive art entered the institutional conversation under suspicious terms: too popular, too entertaining, too close to the language of attractions. Ana Brzezińska's work cuts through this noise by proposing a simple yet demanding insight: immersion is not a genre, but a methodology. It traverses fine art, film, theater, performance, and entertainment. What unites these practices is not technology, but the primacy of the audience's embodied, spatial experience.

Brzezińska distinguishes between two principal modes of immersion: world-augmenting environments that overlay the existing physical world, and fully synthetic worlds accessed through headsets or spatial interfaces. In both cases, the work does not fully exist without the audience. The experience is observer-dependent, structured around presence rather than mere viewing.

*Brzezińska reminds us that immersion predates its technologies. Ritual, theater, oral storytelling, and collective performances long preceded headsets and projection mapping. Contemporary immersive art often repackages ancient communal forms under new*

*technical vocabulary.*

Brzezińska also addresses a paradox at the heart of immersive culture: the promise of collectivity. In a time of social atomization, immersive venues offer shared spaces and synchronized sensations. Yet much of this togetherness is contemplative rather than active. People stand side by side, but their actions remain individualized. The result is a facsimile of community, not its reconstruction.

Her final prescription to museums is clear: if a major institution embraces immersive art, it must choose artists carefully, commission serious practitioners, and think beyond the white cube. Success is best measured in revisits and in the depth of conversations that follow, more than in peak numbers.

CHAPTER

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# Calum Sutton and the Architecture of Trust

3

Calum Sutton starts with a reminder that sounds almost counter-intuitive in our data-driven age: facts do not change behavior; feelings do. In times of crisis—war, climate breakdown, social fracture—art remains essential not because it delivers information, but because it translates the unbearable complexity of the world into felt experience.

The art world has moved from a rhythm of stable, year-round continuity to a landscape of high-intensity "moments"—fairs, art weeks, openings, galas. Frieze in London or Art Basel in Miami now restructure entire city calendars. This acceleration has forced institutions to become their own media houses. Major galleries now publish magazines, produce films, and run editorial platforms that rival traditional art press. The result is an explosion of discourse by volume, but a fragmentation of authority.

*In this noisy landscape, trust becomes the scarcest commodity. Sutton argues that as AI begins to mediate information and generate summaries, the value of credible, human-authored sources will rise. He also notes a counter-movement: the return of "slow thinking" in the form of small, print-based, long-form*

*magazines. Depth is becoming a luxury product.*

Sutton points to the Rijksmuseum's handling of The Night Watch restoration—turning a technical process into a transparent public event—as a model of how to adapt without losing rigor.

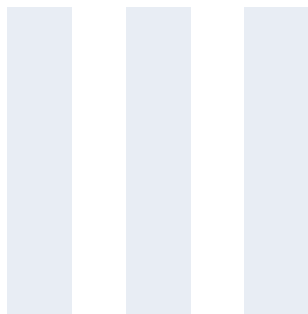
Sutton ends on a hopeful note: the goal is not just more consumption, but deeper relationships with art and ideas. Institutions should be gateways to thought, combining intensity and access with time and reflection. By refusing the race for scale and the addiction to moments, it becomes possible to construct models where art can do what Sutton says it must: translate complexity into experience.

PART III

# From Condition to Crisis

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*If the digital has become the default condition of cultural production, institutions have not yet fully adjusted. Part III confronts what many prefer to euphemize: institutional exhaustion—the slow erosion of authority, resources, and coherence that leaves institutions caught between bureaucratic inertia and market capture.*



CHAPTER

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# Mia Locks and the Museum from the Inside Out

1

In 2020, while most art institutions were drafting public statements of solidarity, Mia Locks and a group of museum colleagues were doing something quieter and more structural: they were starting a clock. Museums Moving Forward (MMF) was not founded to exist forever, but to complete a mission by 2030 and then dissolve. This decision alone signaled a departure from the logic of the museum world, where survival is usually the primary goal.

MMF's premise was different: the crisis of the museum is not just about who is on the walls, but about who is burning out in the offices. Real change must start inside the machine—in the invisible friction of governance, pay, and culture—or it is merely performance.

*The data MMF has since produced exposed what prestige had long concealed. Entry-level cohorts in US museums are already the most diverse in history; the problem is that this diversity evaporates at mid-management. It is not a recruitment crisis; it is a retention crisis, driven by low pay, blocked mobility, and a culture that trades on the idealism of its workers until they are exhausted.*

This diagnosis reveals a broken economic model. When nearly three-quarters of museum workers cannot cover basic living expenses on their salaries alone, the math simply does not work. Museums have become institutions that celebrate radical art while relying on conservative, risk-averse, and often extractive labor structures to keep the lights on.

Ultimately, MMF warns that not all museums will survive the coming transition. The future belongs to institutions that are clear about their values and willing to make hard, sometimes shrinking choices to align their operations with their mission. Survival will depend on coherence, not just scale.

CHAPTER

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# Fatou Üstek and the Institution as Portal

2

Fatou Üstek begins not with optimism but with diagnosis: art institutions are facing an ontological crisis, not a temporary slowdown. They no longer know what they are for, whom they serve, or how to justify their authority in a world that has become radically plural, digitally saturated, and politically turbulent. Growth—more biennials, more fairs, more players—has not strengthened institutions; it has diluted their gravity.

Üstek's core proposition is that institutions must move from cultural authority to cultural humility. Museums and kunsthallen were built—physically, socially, emotionally—as pedestals. They curated, they named, they decided. But culture no longer belongs to specific geographies or to singular institutions. Knowledge is not fixed or canonical; it is cumulative, contradictory, and dynamic.

*This transformation requires structural changes, not just rhetorical ones. Hierarchical, top-down governance is no longer viable. Institutions must move toward decentralized, self-managing, and distributed models where decision-making is delegated based on trust and clarity of values, not on status or seniority.*

*The metaphor she reaches for is ecological, even permacultural: institutions as living systems, not as machines.*

Üstek also insists that digital must stop being treated as a translation tool and start being understood as a language. Most institutions still think of digital as something that happens after the physical: a photo of the exhibition, a recording of the talk. True digital maturity means thinking natively in digital terms—developing metaphors, poetics, and forms that exist nowhere else.

CHAPTER

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# Alain Servais and the Refusal to Play

3

Alain Servais begins where many in the art world prefer not to linger: with the numbers. Art, he insists, is structurally a bad financial investment, with high transaction costs, illiquidity, wide bid-offer spreads, and returns that rarely beat a simple equity index over the long term. To treat art as an asset class is not just naïve; it is a category error. If collecting is to mean anything, it must free itself from the fantasy of rational financial performance.

*This refusal of art as investment is the foundation for a broader claim: that art is "the best defense against annihilation by standardization." In a world where late-stage capitalism and social media compress attention into meme logic and lowest-common-denominator taste, the art system too often responds by manufacturing sameness—gallery to gallery, fair to fair, feed to feed.*

Servais notes that the global art market, at around sixty billion dollars, is smaller than the US pet food industry and has been broadly stagnant for more than a decade. In this environment, risk aversion becomes systemic. Income inequality ensures that talent is widely spread but opportunity is not.

Against this, Servais calls for institutions that behave as laboratories, not endpoints. Museums should be protected spaces for experimentation, supporting artists before market validation and providing places of gathering where judgment is suspended long enough for new forms to emerge.

*Servais's credo—"make people think again"—is a mirror for any serious collecting practice. Treating art not as a financial instrument but as a way of thinking, a means of resisting standardization, and a fragile medium for keeping complexity alive: this is the difficult task he sets for all of us.*

CHAPTER

4

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# José Kuri and the Gallery After Growth

4

When José Kuri says that galleries write the first draft of art history, he is not flattering his own profession; he is naming a responsibility that many galleries have tried to forget. A gallery, in his view, is not a sales apparatus or a real estate proposition, but a web of relationships—a precarious architecture of conversations between artists, collectors, critics, curators, writers, and institutions. When the people disappear, the gallery disappears. There is no brand to save it. Kurimanzutto was born from this conviction. Before it was a gallery, it was the echo of a workshop: Gabriel Orozco's Taller de los viernes, a weekly gathering where artists in Mexico City tested ideas, argued, and imagined structures that did not yet exist. Out of this came the proposal to build a gallery without a fixed space—a nomadic entity that would adapt itself to the needs of each project.

*The twentieth-century gallery model—growth, globalization, more square meters, more fairs—surfaced under conditions of rising prices and expanding collector bases. That cycle, Kuri suggests, has ended. Excess capital produced a proliferation of fairs, biennials, and venues, but also saturation and*

*fatigue.*

Kuri is skeptical that digital disintermediation—direct artist-to-collector connections—can replace galleries. What disappears in that fantasy is not only context and conversation but the slow, cumulative writing of art history that happens when artists interact with each other over years within a shared framework.

When Kuri imagines starting a gallery today, he pictures a non-expensive city, strong community life, low structural constraints, and a form that grows organically from conversation and experimentation rather than from a predefined business plan.

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# After Legacy: Joshua Citarella

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Joshua Citarella's diagnosis of the contemporary art system begins with a generational fault line. Millennials were the first cohort to experience both pre-internet life and full digital immersion, yet they entered an art world already professionalized, financialized, and credentialed. The classic path—MFA, gallery representation, institutional recognition—had become narrow, costly, and risk-averse.

In most cultural domains, digital platforms enabled disintermediation: writers on Substack, musicians on streaming services, video creators on YouTube and Patreon. The art system, however, resisted similar shifts because its production of value remains heavily dependent on institutions and collectors. The result is a structural mismatch: progressive cultural tastes and digital-native practices coexist with conservative curatorial authority and slow-moving institutions.

*In response, a "post-institutional" art world has emerged: online-native collectives, para-institutions, and small, idea-driven micro-communities that operate partially or entirely outside capital-A Art. These entities build their own canons, references, and legitimacy systems. The art world becomes an archipelago rather*

*than a unified continent.*

Citarella is cautious but not apocalyptic about institutions. He anticipates erosion of authority rather than sudden collapse: underfunded museums, branding-driven programming, minimal artist compensation, and increasing reliance on private wealth. Ultimately, the question is whether institutions can reinvest in artists rather than optics, renew authority without abandoning rigor, and adapt infrastructures without surrendering their core missions.

PART IV

# From Crisis to Geography

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*Institutional crisis is not evenly distributed. Globalization promised convergence; it delivered asymmetry. Part IV shifts from institutional structures to territorial conditions: what does it mean to build art infrastructures in regions historically excluded from the international canon?*

IV

CHAPTER

1

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# Mariët Westermann and the Grammar of Globalism

1

Mariët Westermann brings to the conversation a rare combination: a scholar of Dutch Golden Age art who spent years directing grantmaking at the Mellon Foundation, and who now leads the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation. Her perspective is shaped by this double vantage: the historian's long view and the administrator's daily reckoning with budgets, boards, and publics.

She begins with a distinction that sounds simple but carries deep implications. Universities serve intentional learners within structured, time-rich frameworks. Museums serve inadvertent learners: families, tourists, first-time visitors, people who wander in without a syllabus or a deadline. The museum's task is not instruction but staging the possibility of learning within limited attention spans.

*As a historian of the Dutch Republic, Westermann offers a model of globalism that predates the modern nation state. The Dutch Golden Age was built on federated cities, maritime openness, immigration, and knowledge institutions. Tolerance was not moral idealism but survival strategy—and good economics. Global cities, then and now, are the true engines of*

*cultural exchange.*

Museums, Westermann argues, remain essential to the defense of globalism. This means moving from an export model to a partnership model. The Guggenheim's outposts—Bilbao, Abu Dhabi—are framed not as "satellites" but as mutual education projects, each locally rooted, each pushing back against homogenized, Western-centric narratives.

Looking ahead, Westermann predicts evolution, not collapse. Consolidation is likely, and funding precarity in the West will coincide with heavy investment in China, the Gulf, and Asia. The future favors networks of unlike partners, not identical institutions.

CHAPTER

2

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# **Tokini Peterside Schwebig: Building an Ecosystem**

2

One of the quiet threads running through this book is that what looks like a "moment" is often the visible crest of decades of work. Tokini Peterside Schwebig insists on this when she speaks of Africa's cultural momentum. The apparent surge of visibility around Lagos, Accra, Dakar, Johannesburg, or Kampala is not an accident and not a trend; it is the delayed recognition of infrastructures laid down by artists, thinkers, festivals, schools, and biennials since at least the mid-20th century.

ART X Lagos, which Peterside Schwebig founded in 2016, is one of those new forms. Officially, it is an art fair; structurally, it behaves like something else. Only around 40 percent of its program is devoted to galleries; the rest operates as a pop-up museum and festival: curated exhibitions, talks, music, film, youth programs, and civic platforms that turn a market format into a cultural engine. The model is "local first, global second."

*The demographics of Africa make this experiment even more pointed. With a median age of about nineteen and projections that by 2050 one-third of the world's youth will be African, the continent is not simply another "region"; it is the future profile of global*

*cultural publics.*

In Peterside Schwebig's long-term view, success is not measured by a single dominant institution but by the strength of the ecosystem around it. ART X Lagos is conceived as a catalyst, a case study, a transferable inspiration, not as an apex.

CHAPTER

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# Sheikha Al Mayassa and the Infrastructure of Meaning

3

Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani has become one of the most consequential figures in global museum building, not through a single spectacular gesture, but through the patient construction of a 25-year cultural masterplan that treats museums as national infrastructure—equivalent in seriousness to hospitals, universities, and energy networks. Qatar Museums operates from a conviction that culture is not a luxury add-on to development; it is upstream of everything else.

The plan unfolds in deliberate phases. The first focused on identity and heritage: the Museum of Islamic Art (2008), designed by I. M. Pei; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art (2010); the National Museum of Qatar (2019), Jean Nouvel's desert rose structure. The third phase, now underway, looks outward: the Lusail Museum, the Art Mill Museum, and the Qatar Auto Museum.

*What distinguishes this vision from many other state-led cultural projects is its explicit refusal of mimicry. The goal is not to build replicas of MoMA or the Louvre, but institutions that could exist nowhere else.*

Art Basel Qatar, scheduled for 2026, arrives only after nearly two decades of institutional building. The sequence matters: culture first, market second. Power follows those who invest in meaning early, patiently, and responsibly.

CHAPTER  
**4**

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# Atsuko Ninagawa and the Archipelago of Art

# 4

Japan has long been a paradox in the global art world: a country with every attribute of an art superpower—economic strength, education, museums, collectors, and generations of extraordinary artists—yet without the structural centrality of New York, London, or even Hong Kong.

Ninagawa reminds us that there is no single "art world" in Japan. The very term "art" is historically imported and contested, coexisting with nihonga, yoga, academic painting traditions, and a host of quasi-professional associations. The result is not a unified field, but an archipelago of parallel art worlds.

*Against this backdrop, Art Week Tokyo appears as Ninagawa's most ambitious structural intervention. It is decentralized, city-wide, and non-hierarchical: there is no main venue, no VIP core, no central pavilion. Instead, a network of free hop-on, hop-off buses connects more than fifty galleries and museums, giving them equal infrastructural footing.*

Ninagawa's contribution is not the celebration of a national scene; it is a proposal for a different geometry of art: networks instead of monuments, circulation instead of extraction, time

instead of acceleration, care instead of scale.

CHAPTER

5

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# Carol Yinghua Lu: The Art of Living in Collapse

5

To write about Chinese contemporary art today is to write inside a long, unfinished sentence. Since the 1980s, the country's art world has expanded at a speed that left even its protagonists breathless. That phase has slowed. China is no longer the "next big thing"; it is a permanent presence whose question is no longer how much but toward what.

Inside Out stands almost as an anti-museum within the museum boom. While private institutions chased visibility with blockbusters and commercial rentals, Lu and her colleagues turned in the opposite direction: long-term research, careful historical reconstruction, and exhibitions that connect art to the structural conditions of Chinese society since 1949.

*Lu is clear-eyed about the costs of the last decades. From Beijing, what was once imagined as a universal, morally superior arena now appears as another system: over-capitalized, over-bureaucratized, and incapable of thinking at the speed at which it grows.*

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of Lu's analysis concerns the erosion of critical thought. In an environment where even coded language becomes risky, self-censorship seeps inward; eventually, she warns, it is not just speech that is constrained,

but thinking itself.

And yet, for all the diagnosis, Lu insists on what must not change. Art is fundamentally a practice of humanity—a way of thinking, feeling, and imagining that cannot be delegated to markets or states.

CHAPTER

6

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# Pablo León de la Barra: The Museum Without Latitude

6

Pablo León de la Barra belongs to a generation for whom the Global South is not a new territory to be "included," but the ground from which thinking starts. His trajectory—between independent scenes, artist-run spaces, and roles such as Guggenheim UBS MAP Curator for Latin America—embodies a bifocal position: one foot inside major institutions, one foot firmly anchored in fragile, inventive ecosystems across the continent.

"Latin America" itself is not a stable object. It is a construct shaped by colonial history, elite narratives, and institutional convenience—an umbrella that hides as much as it reveals. León de la Barra describes the art world as a fragile ecosystem where balance among its elements is constantly at risk.

*Latin America has cultivated a counter-model: low-budget, artist-led and curator-led structures that survive on commitment rather than capital. Through the Guggenheim UBS MAP initiative, he has worked to double Latin American representation in the collection, not by adding a decorative "South" to an intact Western core, but by inserting works that rewire*

*the narrative.*

The future museum will be defined less by the authority of its building than by its capacity to sustain democratic culture through art.

CHAPTER  
7

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# Mona Khazindar and the Saudi Turn

# 7

Mona Khazindar calls lateness a privilege: freedom from inherited models. In her dialogue, she describes a Saudi Arabia not trying to catch up with Europe, but to start differently, to build art worlds grounded in social purpose rather than legacy.

Khazindar insists that Saudi museums must feel like "extended homes." Not temples of culture, but social rooms for learning and belonging. The architectures being imagined—historical buildings reactivated as civic vessels—extend art's territory beyond the spectacular.

*When the Saudi Museum of Contemporary Art (SAMoCA) opened, it formalized a new typology—part kunsthalle, part learning platform. China and Saudi Arabia, each building institutions on compressed timelines, understand that the challenge lies not in imitation, but in invention. They are rewriting the DNA of art infrastructure: pragmatic, fast, and culturally specific.*

At the heart of this new cartography, the collector becomes a connector—translating artistic vocabularies between different modernities. The goal is not to display, but to decode.

CHAPTER

8

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# Jonathan Crockett: Asia as Mirror, Not Frontier

8

Asia is no longer the place where the global art world goes to expand; it is where the system goes to confront its own contradictions. For twenty-five years, the region absorbed capital, speculation, and institutional fantasies at a speed the West could neither match nor fully understand. Now that the momentum has slowed, Asia ceases to be a promise and becomes a mirror.

*What we see there is not the failure of a "new market," but the exhaustion of a model that mistook growth for culture, liquidity for conviction, and visibility for transmission. Asia's greatest fragility lies not in demand but in transmission. A generation of collectors entered the scene with unprecedented speed, armed with capital and access but often without a lineage of collecting behind them.*

The traditional theater of auctions shows clear signs of fatigue. The power of an evening sale relied on physical confrontation, body language, and time pressure concentrated in a single room. Remote bidding and online formats have quietly eroded that charge.

The question is no longer whether the system will change, but

who is structurally prepared to inhabit that change without losing their core purpose.

CHAPTER  
**10**

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# Field, Not World: Larissa Buchholz

# 10

Larissa Buchholz offers the structural map of the contemporary art field. Her key intervention is conceptual but transformative: we should speak not of an art world, but of an art field. Where "world" suggests shared conventions and cooperative ecosystems, "field" foregrounds hierarchy, unequal access, and competition for recognition.

Buchholz shows that the global art field has bifurcated into two relatively autonomous subfields: a commercial pole dominated by mega-galleries, fairs, auctions, and financial logic, and a non-commercial pole shaped by curators, biennials, critics, and museums. Success in one is neither necessary nor sufficient for success in the other.

*Globalization has not abolished centers. Buchholz warns against two naïve interpretations: a flattened cosmopolitanism that ignores hierarchy, and a rigid cultural imperialism model that denies any agency to actors outside the centers. She proposes a framework of "asymmetric interdependencies."*

Buchholz is particularly critical of "performative globalism": symbolic inclusion that confuses visibility with sustained recognition. Artists from outside dominant centers are often

exhibited as tokens of diversity, only to vanish once the cycle of visibility moves on.

The distinction between "art world" and "art field" becomes more than vocabulary. It is a compass. If the field is structured by power, inequality, and asymmetric interdependencies, then any serious collection must decide how it positions itself within that structure.

CHAPTER

11

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# Ecosystems of the Not Yet: Diana Campbell

11

Diana Campbell describes herself as a curator of the not-yet-existing: someone who works with artists, communities, and infrastructures to create the conditions in which works, institutions, and even publics can come into being. Her practice is field-based and oriented toward regions historically excluded from the international art map.

The Dhaka Art Summit, founded in 2012 with the Samdani Art Foundation, is not a standard biennial or a touring exhibition brand. It is a non-commercial hybrid—part exhibition, part festival, part symposium and think tank—where around two-thirds of the works are newly commissioned.

*Campbell also insists on understanding the art world as an ecology: artists, galleries, collectors, institutions, logistics, governments, education systems, and publics intertwined. If one link is missing, the system stagnates. True internationalism requires abandoning the Western canon as the default frame of reference.*

For Campbell, the future lies not in universality but in coalitions: alliances of institutions, communities, and practitioners who share responsibilities and resources without erasing difference.

PART V

# From Geography to Practice

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*Structure, condition, crisis, geography—these are the lenses through which we have examined the art field. But the field does not exist in the abstract. Part V returns to practice: the concrete gestures through which meaning is produced, preserved, and passed forward. Collecting is not accumulation. It is a practice of transmission.*



CHAPTER

1

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# Dustin Yellin and the Social Sculpture

1

Dustin Yellin is an artist who builds worlds inside glass—stratified sculptures composed of thousands of collaged images, pigments, and found materials layered into vertical timelines. But he is also the founder of Pioneer Works, a 24,000-square-foot cultural center in Red Hook, Brooklyn, that brings together artists, scientists, musicians, technologists, and community organizers under one roof.

Pioneer Works operates in the in-between space that traditional museums and universities struggle to inhabit. It is not a gallery, not a science lab, not a school, not a concert venue—and yet it is all of these. The majority of its programs are free and open to the public. Physical proximity is essential to the model: ideas collide organically, not through forced collaboration.

*At the heart of Yellin's vision is the conviction that art and science are cognitively aligned—curiosity, experimentation, iteration, failure—but institutionally separated. Pioneer Works exists to undo that divide, not by engineering outcomes, but by creating shared environments where ideas seep in subconsciously.*

Looking to 2050, Yellin imagines a plural future: canonical

museums and experimental spaces, objects and experiences, art and science and poetry and observatories and AR. What persists is the desire to encounter the spirit of the object.

CHAPTER

2

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# Miranda Massie and the Climate of the Museum

2

To speak of the future of the art world without speaking of climate is to describe the furniture of a house whose foundations are already cracking. Miranda Massie starts from this blunt premise: climate change is not one issue among others, it is the condition that will determine whether any of our institutions—and the slow forms of attention they host—can continue to exist at all.

The Climate Museum was born of a specific catastrophe: Superstorm Sandy's flooding of New York in 2012 and the shocking realization that no major cultural institution treated climate as its central subject. Massie's answer was not another biennial theme, but a new kind of museum—a place where art, science, and civic action are woven together so that visitors leave not only informed, but enabled.

*Massie is careful not to confuse means with ends. Reducing emissions in museums is necessary, but it is not where their real power lies. The art world's specific capacity is symbolic and social: to create images, narratives, and spaces that help people feel their own agency rather than drowning in abstraction or despair.*

The most important thing any art institution can do is to place

its power to shape better futures at the center of what it does.

CHAPTER

4

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# Simon Denny: Plural Worlds

4

The future of the art world is not a single highway but a mesh of parallel roads, side paths, and provisional bridges, each built on different definitions of technology, value, and community. What we still call "the art world" is in reality a cluster of art worlds, each with its own rules, tempos, and currencies of prestige.

Seen from Simon Denny's lens, the first step is to stop treating technology as a neutral, universal force and to recognize how different cultures encode it. Email, websites, and the social web did not simply introduce new tools; they reorganized time, access, and authority. Blockchain and NFTs entered through another door—auction houses and speculation—generating a hyper-visible debate where price mostly obscured questions of format, conservation, and meaning.

*AI now arrives as a deeper infrastructural shift, changing how we search, learn, and make. Denny insists that, despite the rise of screens and networks, we still live in a hybrid reality where bodies move through space, where bits and atoms cohabit, and where object grammar remains a foundational language.*

For the next generation, the lesson is simple and difficult: art is created by communities, not individuals alone, and no community is permanent. The question is not how to master a single system once and for all, but where one can add value now, with full awareness that this position will have to change.

CHAPTER

5

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# Ophelia Deroy: Attention, Not Treatment

5

The new fashion is to justify art through well-being. Funding applications, museum strategies, and public policies no longer speak primarily of beauty, education, or tourism; they speak of impact on stress, loneliness, and mental health. But as Ophelia Deroy warns, once art is framed as a medical tool, the logic changes: what cannot be measured becomes suspect, and what cannot be prescribed becomes secondary.

From Aristotle's catharsis to contemporary neuroscience, art has been understood as a form of emotional regulation. Yet Deroy adds another layer: art's distinctive power lies less in producing certain feelings than in training how we attend to them.

*In a digital environment of fragmented feeds, museums have a crucial but fragile role as anchors of shared reality. When people stand together before the Mona Lisa, the point is not only the painting; it is the inference "we are seeing the same thing," a basic ingredient of social cohesion.*

Art contributes to well-being, in Deroy's sense, by training attention, restoring agency, and creating shared meaning, not by soothing or prescribing.

CHAPTER  
**7**

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# Souleymane Bachir Diagne The Labyrinth of Universality

# 7

There are encounters that do not simply add a new voice to one's thinking, but re-tune the entire orchestra. Souleymane Bachir Diagne is such a voice. In his words, one recognizes an echo of what many have tried to do in the art world, but articulated with a philosophical depth that gives the intuition a name: lateral universality.

Diagne's trajectory moves between Dakar, New York, and Paris. The question he asks is deceptively simple: what does it mean to call a museum "universal" after colonialism, after the violence that has shaped collections, in a world that is both globalized and fractured?

*The traditional universal museum claimed to speak for humanity from a single, elevated vantage point.*

*Diagne proposes something else: a universal as a process, not a throne. Following Merleau-Ponty, he imagines cultures placed side by side, not stacked in a hierarchy, projecting themselves together toward a shared horizon instead of converging into one dominant narrative.*

Two words are key to Diagne's thought: relation and reciprocity. Ubuntu gives this poetics of relation an ethics: "I

become human by helping others become human." A museum that claims to speak of humanity must be a space where this reciprocity is practiced, not just proclaimed.

Diagne's most beautiful image is that of the museum as a labyrinth: playful, surprising, where works "talk" to one another across time and cultures. We lose the straight line of a master narrative, but we gain the joy of unexpected encounters.

CHAPTER

8

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# Thomas Girst

8

It starts with a paradox. A car company that calls itself a cultural brand. Thomas Girst insists on one principle: absolute creative freedom for the artists with whom BMW works. This sentence, in the mouth of a corporate executive, is not banal; it is a wager. It implies accepting that the work produced under your logo may not "sing your song," may even disturb your clients. The brand does not buy consent; it buys risk.

*Girst is a reader of Duchamp. He remembers that Duchamp envisioned a time when artists would go underground, away from expectations and fashions, in order to remain truly free. In a sense, the underground is no longer below; it is inside the machine. The real underground is a discipline: the refusal to confuse recognition with value.*

Corporate engagement with the arts is measured not in units sold, but in reach, resonance, visibility, and the capacity to give something back to society.

Underneath the technological debates lies a more ancient concern: censorship. Girst fears not only state censorship, but also the soft censorship of branding—the pressure to avoid controversy, to produce works that "fit" the corporate identity.

The future of artistic freedom will also be negotiated in terms of use, in content policies, in contracts between brands and artists.

CHAPTER

9

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# Holly Herndon & Mathew Dryhurst: Architecture of Transmiss

9

Herndon and Dryhurst argue that we are witnessing a shift from "platforms" to "protocols"—from visible stages to the invisible rules that govern them.

The anxiety surrounding Artificial Intelligence often centers on the fear of replacement—that the machine will usurp the human impulse to create. Herndon and Dryhurst dismantle this fear with precision. They argue that creativity is not a productivity metric; it is an "irrational need" to communicate and endure. The machine can solve problems, but it cannot replicate the human need to project meaning into the void.

*The most consequential innovations are invisible protocols, not visible platforms. Tim Berners-Lee did not build a website; he wrote the rules for how information moves. Those who write the rules shape the culture. For too long, museums and collectors have obsessed over the "platform"—the physical building, the gala, the Instagram feed. They have neglected the "protocol"—the underlying logic of access, ownership, and transmission.*

AI is not just a tool; it is a governance test. It forces us to ask ethical questions: Who owns the training data? Who consents

to the output? We must use these technologies to deepen our humanity.

CHAPTER  
**10**

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# Isaac Julien and the Architecture of Freedom

# 10

There are artists whose work quietly rewires the way one thinks about art altogether. Isaac Julien belongs to this second category. His films—or rather his film architectures—do not simply tell stories; they construct situations in which image, sound, and space re-negotiate what we mean by seeing together.

Julien insists that his choice of film was never a rejection of painting but an expansion of it: film as a composite medium where painting, photography, music, performance, and architecture meet.

*What is particularly lucid in his thinking is the distinction between technological expansion and true innovation. The art world loves to congratulate itself each time a new device, platform, or format arrives, as if novelty of hardware guaranteed novelty of language. Julien reminds us that most technological "advances" in art simply reproduce existing habits.*

Freedom, he says, cannot be secured once and for all; it is a process that lives in the autonomy of form—how works are made, how they are shown, and who is allowed to participate in their worlds.

Museums that will matter in the future are those willing to embrace criticality and risk. Their role is not to provide comfort or to validate existing hierarchies, but to look systematically at what is missing.

CHAPTER  
**13**

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# **Agnieszka Kurant and the Afterlife of the Signature**

# 13

There are artists whose work does not simply anticipate the future, but exposes that the very idea of "the future" has already begun to malfunction. Agnieszka Kurant belongs to this family. She does not illustrate crises of authorship, value, or technology; she treats them as raw material.

Kurant's practice shows that we no longer live in a time where the future is a distant horizon promising improvement. We live inside recursive loops where social media, markets, and algorithms continuously harvest our imaginaries of what is to come and convert them into present governance.

*Nowhere is the convergence with broader questions about collecting clearer than in her project *The End of Signature*. By averaging thousands of individual signatures into a single illegible mark, she stages the erosion of the modern fiction of the solitary author.*

Kurant speaks of how platform capitalism turns collective creativity into an extractive resource: our images, words, and gestures become fuel for systems that predict, monetize, and sometimes weaponize our behavior.

The crucial question is not whether we can preserve the museum forever, but whether we can preserve the social

function of art—its capacity to reorganize perception, redistribute attention, and generate new forms of intelligibility—when the building is gone.

*Will the art system transform itself—its remuneration models, its distribution of risk and reward—or collapse under its own contradictions? This is not a rhetorical question. It is a governance question, and therefore a collector's question.*

## Disclaimer: On Method and Position

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*This publication assembles voices rather than arguments. It is not a survey, not a manifesto, and not a history. It is an editorial act—and editorial acts have limits worth naming.*

*On uniform density: each dialogue occupies roughly the same space on the page, regardless of the structural weight, institutional power, or scholarly depth of its subject. This formal equality is a fiction of presentation.*

*On the circularity of vocabulary: words such as "ecosystem," "governance," "transmission," "network," and "field" circulate throughout these pages with a regularity that may suggest consensus where disagreement remains.*

*On the position of the collector: this book was conceived and produced from inside a private collection. Its editors own works by several of the artists and align with several of the institutions discussed here.*

*All selections, interpretations, and paraphrases remain the sole responsibility of the editors. All errors of emphasis, omission, or reading are ours. — DSLcollection, 2026*

# Governing the Future of Art

*Networks, Infrastructures, and Living Collections*

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Co-founder, DSLcollection

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