

## Kunstmatrix: online platforms to support the art market

What are the real effects of this global crisis on art galleries and all of the art market players today? Is it prolonging their online activity by the use of platform and digital tools?

What we were expecting was perhaps a normal resumption of offline activity and a slow abandonment of digital, but it's not like that.

Art companies that once were in competition with each other are beginning to create new forms of collaboration.

Digital platforms are not seen as an enemy of the offline anymore. Indeed, many protagonists of the art industry are using them as engine tools to promote their offline activity and as a new path to have transparency, amplify the knowledge of art and get new targets. This is confirmed by the Art Market Reports 2020 highlighting how challenges in the art market are often supported by technology.

It's not a coincidence that technology is always been a very versatile medium with a fluid and creative component that is able to raise awareness and amplify the perception of users.

Online platforms are increasingly being used by artists, art galleries and auction houses as stagecraft solutions to create virtual exhibitions of their artworks.

Kunstmatrix it's a clear example of this digitalisation process.

Kunstmatrix is an online platform, founded in Berlin in 2010 by the architect Christoph Lauterbach, that builds connections and publishes works of art in order to create 3d exhibition spaces to impress art lovers and collectors.

It has grown exponentially during the lockdown and its targets have diversified and amplified: day by day, it increases its collaboration with artists, art galleries, art fair to support their activity. Even more, the company starts working with profiles and figures that it didn't expect to reach, such as embassies, universities and schools.

We decide to interview Christoph Lauterbach, co-founder and Ceo of Kunstmatrix, in order to know more about its current online dynamics and how it approaches with the art leaders.

**• Could you tell us more about the birth of Kunstmatrix and how it gets importance in the art industry today?**

We have actually been supporting artists and the art market for a decade already. We founded the company in 2010 and have been extending our platform ever since, always trying to incorporate better and easier handling of the tools to cater to all those unique and exciting art creators and art lovers out there.

Our founders come from an architectural background, so working in a field that combines architecture with art came rather natural.

Working with and for artists keeps our tool and our user community growing by the day now.

With increased digital processing of art, a trend that has been growing for the past years continuously, we already had many large art galleries among our clients.

They relied on our visualization services for the growing demand for visual presentations for art fair application and planning. Furthermore, they use our KUJO-App to get easier interaction with their

collectors as a virtual trial, hanging anywhere.

• **Since the beginning of the lockdown, who are the new users and how many profiles subscribed and signed up for uploading content on the platform?**

Our new members are coming from many areas in the field of arts: we had many professional artists and art galleries exhibiting on the platform before, and now these are increasingly joined by universities, schools and

smaller art venues who all can no longer exhibit publicly.

We also have auction houses among the users, artist-run platforms, global photography award showcases, embassies and large Asian stock exchange, just to name a few.

The growth of our online exhibitions is currently increasing rapidly. Last time we checked we had more than 2200 exhibitions published online for viewing. A number of exhibiting users increased by almost 1000% since March.

• **How did you deal with the new traffic on the platform?**

Traffic has increased even more than the number of exhibitions, as also more and more viewers come to visit each of these virtual shows. We had to revamp our entire hardware to accommodate the huge increase in traffic, and apart from a few maintenance windows, this has gone smoothly.

Overall, the traffic on the platform increased by roughly 2000% .

• **What is the approach you use with the art market players navigating on your platform?**

Kunstmatrix does not monitor or take an interest in sales. We rent out the space for artworks and the rooms on our platform for the monthly fees, and we provide some tools for the exhibitors that help with sales. We neither take a commission nor do we promote single works for purchase. We have a feature for the artist or exhibiting gallery to list a price in different currencies, mark each work as sold, reserved, available, or not for sale. From each artwork a link can be placed directly to the shopping cart on an artist's or gallery's website. We shorten the distance between the viewer and the exhibitor but we don't interfere there.

• **What is the art galleries' reaction to your online exhibition activity? Did you find the right solution to work on with them?**

As many art galleries were among our first customers, they seem to have mostly seen our tool as a great help to promote their artists to a broader audience than just those who visit their real exhibition.

For those galleries who had us re-create their actual gallery rooms, thanks to the floor plans and photographs of existing spaces that are provided to us, the virtual exhibitions serve as an expansion of their presentation program. They enable them to keep a certain exhibition on display for an extended period, when the actual gallery is already showing another artist with another exhibition. Also, many large art fairs demand a visualisation of the fair booth when applying for participation. We provide such previews for our gallery clients.

• **The dynamics on the platform can be seen as a new way of networking and as a future overview that can be crossed between the online and offline in the art world?**

With the current situation in the world, more and more of our daily life is adjusting to online solutions. The trend is continuing, even though we have already gathered publicly again. With the current necessity to present and to enjoy such virtual presentations of art, we are also welcoming a lot of users and viewers who have no prior experience in virtual worlds. This might be due to their age group, to their normal hands-on profession or because they had no prior incentive to use virtual presentations. If a proud grandmother is attending the virtual exhibition of a 4th -grade school to see her grandchildren's artworks –

our tool is easy enough for that – she might explore further and attend a photo show from another part of the world next. A trend that has been in existence for a while now, with younger art lovers and artists and their general digital abilities, is just given a lot more speed in development with the current global development.

• **Do you have new plans for the future on the Kunstmatrix platform?**

We are always expanding the tool for easier use. The latest feature to be introduced for a broader public were 3D sculptures last month.

In addition, we have the new project called Kunstmarix Artfair that will focus on the fair market and will provide much better access to the booths of an art fair and enable galleries and viewers to interact even closer in spite of ongoing distance in reality.

Our education only platform is in the last steps of publication: the increased demand in that sector was so steep that we had to set up an extra project just to accommodate all those requests.

This is a testimony of how companies operating in the art sector, have recently reinvented themselves to activate an online marketplace. This is not synonymous with replacing offline activity within art galleries with digital tools but rather as a way of improving.

The Art Market Report 2020 presented by Art Basel and UBS, shows interesting developments related to the online sector and the new technologies that are changing the ways art can be viewed, stored, and experienced. Moreover, the report underlines how online platforms offer to smaller galleries a forum to allow a preview works to collectors.

Online sales are mostly conducted by offline companies in the dealers in 2019, but the forecasts of an increase in third-party platforms is right. In these last months, many art dealers and art experts trusted online platforms and the lockdown period may have pushed the growth of these forms of web-based marketplace.

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