

GRAYLING

Brands & the Arts: Making Creative Partnerships Work

Trends, best practices,
and insights into
successful
collaborations

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Special Thanks For Sharing Their Insights To:

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Cecilia Dean,

co-founder and editor-in-chief of art and fashion magazine **Visionaire**

Carlo Giordanetti,

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Andras Szanto,

art writer and cultural strategy consultant who has advised such brands as **Absolut, Audemars Piguet, Davidoff,** and **BMW**

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Introduction



Introduction

If you are visiting an international art fair or a biennale, the chances are that along with art, you will be seeing lots of corporate projects. They can be integrated into the event itself or presented on the sideline to engage with the international crowds visiting the city where the art event is taking place. Many corporate sponsors are no longer satisfied with just having their logos printed on marketing materials and prefer to go a step further, launching new art support programs, commissioning artworks, and creating their own cultural spaces.

I have always had passion for the arts and I have worked with brands for some time. My interest in collaborations between the two was sparked with the need to develop a communications program around a client's engagement with an art fair. That is how this research project started and it involved visiting many art events, reviewing brands' art strategies and programs, and finally speaking to people working on these. The overall goal has been to identify major types of creative partnerships, to understand what makes them successful, and to determine the key trends driving their future.

Brands are no strangers to art collaborations. The creative and the commercial spheres have turned to each other many times throughout history. For example, the first bank art collection has its roots in the 15th century Italy where artist Benvenuto di Giovanni del Guasta was commissioned to paint a fresco for Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena. In 1875, the Paris department store Bon Marché opened an art gallery displaying the works by artists rejected from the Salons. In the 1930's, Elsa Schiaparelli produced many of her famous fashion designs in collaboration with artists Salvador Dalí, Jean Cocteau, and Alberto Giacometti. Yves-Saint-Laurent referenced Dutch artist Piet Mondrian's works in his signature Mondrian collection in 1965. Andy Warhol used the images of many iconic brands in his paintings.

There are opposite examples when artists took a critical stance towards corporate involvement in the art world, with one of them being German-American artist Hans Haacke. In his works, he aimed to expose the real nature of relationships between the business and the arts. Presented in 1975, Haacke's installation *On Social Grease* was made up of 6 plaques with quotes from business executives and important public figures (Robert Dillon, Robert Kinsley, Richard Nixon, David Rockefeller, Nelson Rockefeller, and Frank Stanton) showing that companies were largely driven by self-interest in their engagement with the arts.

Introduction

There are also examples when collaborations that happened out of coincidence. In 2005, the Norwegian-Danish duo of Elmgreen and Dragset created the Prada Marfa installation in the middle of the Texas desert. It was a fake store where you could not buy anything, and Prada did not commission it. The artwork was supposed to disintegrate overtime, and it was more of a reference to the humanity's powerlessness against the forces of nature and, to a certain degree, to today's culture of consumerism. The irony, however, was that when Miuccia Prada, the art-loving head of the fashion house, was informed of the project, she eventually supplied it with real shoes and handbags. For its spring 2017 collection, the US retailer J.Crew enlisted street artist Michael De Feo (aka @theflowerguy) to create a line of T-shirts featuring his signature floral work. In 2015, De Feo got a key to New York City bus shelter ads from a guerrilla art collective. With the goal to challenge corporate messaging, he took down fashion ads, painted atop, and installed them back. A team at J.Crew spotted the picture of the brand's touched-up ad on the artist's Instagram, and this later led to the collaboration between the company and its challenger.

Today's brands and arts collaborations are becoming more and more complex. As an increasing number of companies are launching creative partnerships and consumers are becoming savvier and more demanding, mere 'logo' sponsorships are no longer as impactful.

Brands need to look for more meaningful ways to engage with the arts and to invest into building long-term programs based on a deeper understanding of the art community and its needs. In fact, to be effective from a marketing and PR perspective, such programs have to go beyond a traditional marketing and PR approach. They need to focus on the content and to be based out of respect for the arts as part of the brand's DNA. Otherwise, these can just become promotional tools that bring more risk than benefits, as such initiatives can seem shallow, tactical, and lacking in substance.

The power of art collaborations lies in their ability to engage different stakeholders – potential clients, partners, and employees. In addition, such projects can also energize the team working on the brand. They can excite, inspire, and give opportunity to experiment and take unexpected routes. So, at the end everything could be "infected with an art virus", as the edgy Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan once said in his interview talking about his iconic publication Toiletpaper's partnerships with brands.

Introduction

This report aims to inspire companies to initiate more meaningful collaborations with the art community. On the other hand, it also encourages them to be prepared for scrutiny from more informed and demanding consumers and activists as many of them question what sort of businesses should be allowed to become sponsors of art institutions.

The paper is based on my interviews with managers and consultants who worked on art initiatives for such brands as Absolut, Audemars Piguet, BMW, Cadillac, Davidoff, Dior, Hennessy, Louis Vuitton, Swatch, and Visionaire. It also includes comments on brands and arts collaborations from media interviews with artists, creative directors, and designers. Another source of inspiration was some of the literature covering the topic of creative partnerships including “Art + Fashion: Collaborations and Connections Between Icons” by E.P. Cutler and Julien Tomasello (2015) and “Taken by Surprise: Cutting-Edge Collaborations between Designers, Artists, and Brands” by R. Klanten and S. Ehmann (2012). Although “Culture Incorporated: Museums, Artists, and Corporate Sponsorships” by Mark W. Rectanus presents quite a negative view of the public relations and marketing aspects of corporate art initiatives, the book provides a great overview of how relationships between business and culture have developed over time and provokes challenging questions on the nature of brands and arts collaborations.

“The biggest trend nowadays is the shift from sponsorships to partnerships.

It’s a shift to a creative dialogue based on the fact that both sides bring something to the table.

You can agree with this. You can disagree with this. But the reality is that although the people in decision-making roles in companies are often on art institutions’ side, they have to justify and argue for art expenditures. So, they can’t just come and say “Hey, we’re going to come and spend XX million dollars on being an invisible and non-creative partner.”



Andras Szanto,
art writer and
cultural strategy
consultant

Why choose Arts for Brands? Is your Brand ready for a Creative Partnership?



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Why choose Arts for Brands?
Is your Brand ready for
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Evolution in consumer expectation

Welcome to the experience economy. Consumer expectations are on the rise. Just providing a good product or a service will no longer suffice. Brands need to create memorable experiences, and engaging with the arts is one of the opportunities to do just that. Back in 1992, German sociologist Gerhardt Schulze introduced the concept of the Experience Society (Erlebnisgesellschaft) based on the analysis of cultural behavior in different social strata in Nurnberg. In 1998, Joseph Pine and James Gilmore coined the term of the Experience Economy, which implied a new way of establishing relationships between brands and consumers, and today it is becoming more and more relevant.

“We are not as object-driven anymore. We are idea-driven, and that is what will resonate,” says **Cecilia Dean**, co-founder and editor-in-chief of art and fashion magazine Visionaire, which specializes in collaborations between brands and the creative community. “Brands need to offer unique experiences, which then become meaningful memories. This elevates the relationship with the brand to a different level. I think this is a rather new approach that wasn’t as common in the past.”

Based on exhibition and museum attendance data from The Art Newspaper’s annual survey, public interest in art is growing. If in 2010, the top ten museums by attendance attracted 46,664,983 visitors, in 2016, this figure increased to 63,088,756. According to some experts, this is partly due to the greater number of blockbuster shows with brand-name artists that draw crowds. Social media, especially Instagram with its focus on visual content, also play a role as art experiences become sharable and attract new audiences.

Meanwhile, as brands are facing pressure to stand out and to offer more substance to consumers, they are turning to the arts as a way to do that. There is a growing trend in so called “cultural brands”, which put visual art, music, and design at the core of their value system and use it as a way to connect with their consumers.

The Financial Times (November 2016) quotes Jonathan Anderson, creative director and designer at the Spanish leather goods house Loewe: “The idea of luxury no longer exists. It is a bygone word. You can go to Tesco and get luxury sausages. We need to articulate luxury differently.” According to him, the only way to find depth in today’s “like” culture is “by presenting the unknown” and “throwing the curve ball.” “So, when I started, I decided that Loewe was going to be a cultural brand,” he adds.

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Three reasons why brands engage with the arts

By introducing art support initiatives brands usually pursue a mixture of goals – to give back to the community and to demonstrate their social responsibility, to highlight their values and creative side, and to engage internal and external stakeholders such as employees, clients, and partners on a deeper level.

Social Responsibility: intersection between the needs of art world and brand goals

For many brands art support falls into the CSR realm. “Some companies view their art activities as a way of contributing to the quality of life of their communities and of their employees who value working for a company that is involved in such programs,” says **Andras Szanto**, a New York-based art writer and cultural strategy consultant who has advised such brands as **Absolut**, **Audemars Piguet**, **Davidoff**, and **BMW**. “Many art initiatives, especially the ones that include art residencies and commissions, are often filling the gap in the areas that have weak art infrastructure,” he adds.

However, the success of collaborations is often determined by the company's ability to find the intersection between the needs of the art world and the interests and goals of the brand.

Thomas Girst, Head of Global Cultural Engagement at BMW Group, explains:

“It would be negligent to say that our engagement is based on altruistic reasons or is done for philanthropy only. It's clearly done for the reputation of the company and its brand. It's clearly done for the positive visibility of a company operating outside its core business to return something to the society it is successfully doing business in.”

Projects that are appreciated in the art community but don't have a strong connection to a brand and its communication risk becoming a one-time thing rather than a long-term engagement. “You can also imagine that some things that brands do might have very little credibility in the art world, and they go unnoticed by it. But there is a kind of a sweet spot where interest from the brand and credibility in the art world overlap, and the success of your collaboration depends on whether you operate in that zone of mutual interest,” says **Andras Szanto**.



BALDESSARI

M Power

19
WeatherTech

BMW

The 19th BMW Art Car by renowned American contemporary artist John Baldessari.
Photography by Chris Tedesco. © BMW AG.
Sourced from press.bmwgroup.com

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Davidoff Art Initiative, which focuses on emerging artistic talent in the Caribbean, is one of the examples of such a program at the intersection of business and art world interests. It was created because of the company's intention to go beyond just sponsoring and to develop a deeper long-term engagement in the region where most of its production is based, explains **Albertine Kopp, Davidoff Art Initiative Manager**.

Brand positioning

Art has the power to bring creative energy to a brand and to influence its positioning. Studies (i.e. by Henrik Hagtvedt and Vanessa M. Patrick, 2008) have shown the so-called "art fusion" phenomenon. It is a kind of spillover effect, in which the presence of visual art has a favorable influence on consumer perception and evaluations of products as art is generally associated with a heritage of culture and has connotations of luxury and prestige.

Art can also become a way to express a brand narrative in an unconventional way though its interpretation by an artist. There is a great quote on this in the book "Taken by Surprise: Cutting-Edge Collaborations between Designers, Artists, and Brands" by R. Klanten and S. Ehmann (2012): "Every successful brand has a glorious story to tell. Sometimes it takes someone on the outside to tease it out."

Collaboration with contemporary artists highlights the brand's connection with the present. "If we partner with an art of the 21st century, that's a way for us to be connected to the 21st century," explains Jean-Claude Biver, president of the watch division at LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, in an interview to **The New York Times** (November 2016) commenting on **Hublot's** collaboration with the tattoo artist Maxime Buchi. "I want the young generation to dream about my brand," he adds.

New way of communicating and the rise of a cultural brand

Art can help the brand start a conversation with its target audiences beyond its core product area and to establish more meaningful connections.

"Traditional ways of reaching audiences have dried up, especially for luxury brands. Brands need to understand where their target groups are, to go where they are, and to engage them with stories that are authentic and interesting," says **Andras Szanto**.

Art also provides the brand with an opportunity to communicate with its stakeholders around their passion points and to create a community of interest.

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“Consumers are smarter these days and they can see when they are being overtly advertised on. They don’t like that approach,” says **Eneuri Acosta, Marketing Communications Manager at Cadillac**. “Art provides an opportunity to engage consumers on their own terms and within their interest areas.”

“At Swatch, we really see the power of art to engage customers in a passionate relationship. Art is an inspiration, a source of oxygen, a wonderful way to open one’s mind,” says **Carlo Giordanetti, Creative Director at Swatch International**. “We believe in art, and we think we have created a real relationship both with the world of art and the world of art lovers. Taking time for art is a real luxury, and for us bringing it to people is a way to contribute to making the world a better place.”

According to **Thomas Girst**, BMW is a cultured brand, and its target audiences are interested in arts, which can serve as a starting point in establishing relationships with them. “When it comes to participation in international art events like Art Basel, it’s about visibility beyond branding, about being where your potential clients are, about storytelling and creating meaningful experiences,” says **Thomas Girst**. “It is no longer about taking them into our world, but being a trustworthy player in a world they are involved in.”

Art also allows the company to engage its clients directly. “For many high-end luxury and financial services companies it is a great way to meet their clients in person,” says **Andras Szanto**.

In addition, art events organized by brands help to bring clients together and to give them a platform to network with like-minded individuals. It is an added value that the affiliation with the brand provides and it might be highly appreciated by its clientele.

Not every brand is ready for art collaborations. **Eneuri Acosta** from **Cadillac** finds cultural relevance and credibility to be important for creative partnerships, which gives the brand “a natural reason to interact with these communities because it is a brand they are already embracing.” “Speaking of Cadillac, many artists like Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat turned to it for cultural relevance in their works as the brand has always been seen as a status symbol for success.”

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Art engagement: for strong brands only

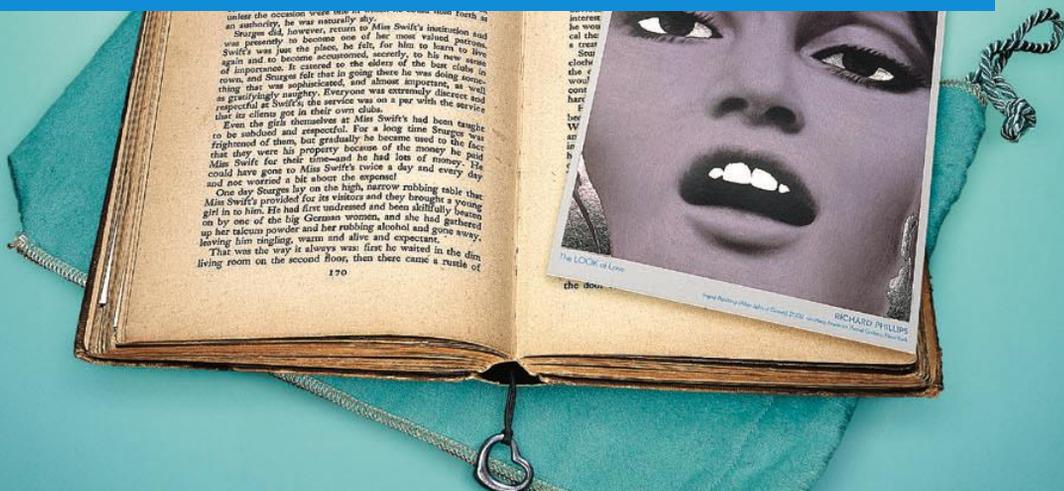
Saskia Neuman, Global Art Manager at Absolut, sees the reasons for the brand's strong focus on the arts in its "deep and enduring bond with the creative community it has developed through its past collaborations, which started back in 1980s" "Art is part of Absolut's DNA, and we've been an important participant of the cultural conversation" she adds.

Even if a brand doesn't have much history in the art world, there is still opportunity for it to establish a successful creative partnership. However, the brand should have a strong identity, which can resonate and be interpreted within the art community.

"We have collaborated with Hermes, which is a symbol of exclusivity and luxury, and we have collaborated with Gap, which is a mass brand. However, both these companies have such strong identities, and that is what makes it interesting to us," says **Cecilia Dean** from **Visionaire**. "When we engage with brands, we really want to use them as a source of inspiration."

Visionaire + Tiffany

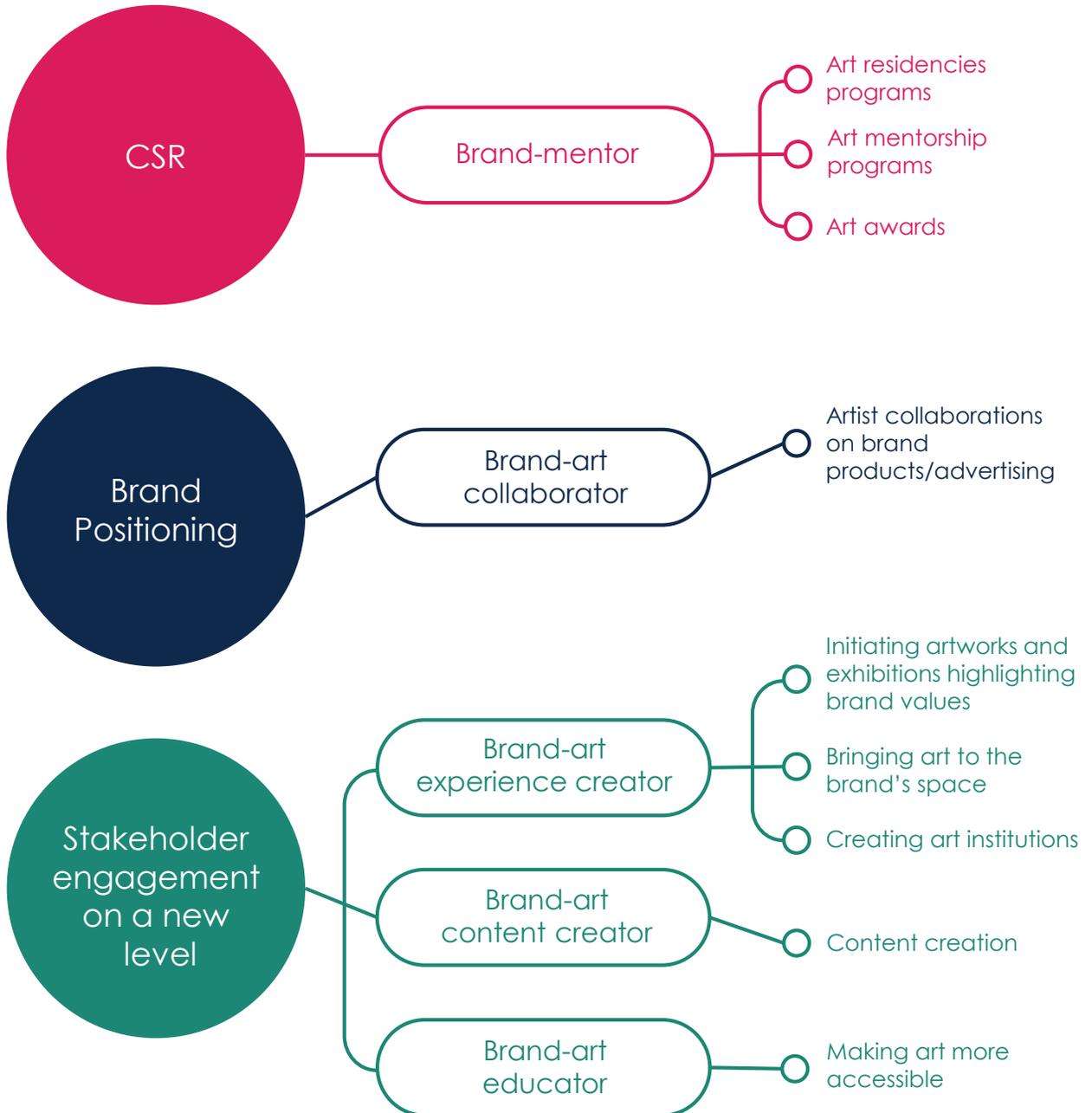
Visionaire + Tiffany Visionaire Issue #38: Love by Tiffany & Co. (2002) Sourced from visionaireworld.com



Five Types of Corporate Art Engagement Platforms



Brand Goals & Corporate Art Engagement Platforms



Five Types of Corporate Art Engagement Platforms



Each corporate art program is unique, and yet there are some common approaches brands usually take while engaging with the cultural sphere. The below framework of five different brand roles can help conceptualize an art program and serve as a starting point for strategy development. In creative partnerships, the brand can use a number of engagement platforms at the same time, depending on the complexity of its art program.

Brand-collaborator

This is perhaps one of the most common types of art engagement when a brand works with an artist on its product design or advertising with the goal to add a creative touch and make it special.



Swatch's first collaboration with an artist took place in 1984, less than a year after the Swiss watch brand was founded. Since then, many creatives including Vivienne Westwood, Keith Haring, Sam Francis, Akira Kurosava, Pedro Almodóvar, Jeremy Scott and others used "the world's smallest canvas" to express their artistic talent via Swatch Art Specials.

The BMW Art Car program, which started in 1975, allows an artist to reinterpret the vehicle and reflect on a particular topic. Since then, 18 world-renowned artists including Alexander Calder, Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Olafur Eliasson, Jeff Koons, and John Baldessari have worked on the design of BMW cars. Another artistic transformation by Chinese artist Cao Fei is currently in the works and to be presented in 2017. BMW Art Cars are exhibited at museum shows and art fairs sponsored by the brand.

Since 2014, the the Swiss premium cigar company **Davidoff** has been collaborating with Caribbean artists on its Limited Art Editions. Proceeds from their sales benefit the Davidoff Art Initiative, which aims to bring more visibility to the arts in the region. The Limited Art Editions are also presented in Davidoff's hospitality lounge at Art Basel fairs in Basel, Miami Beach, and Hong Kong, which the company has been supporting as an Associate Partner since 2012.

The Italian luxury goods house **Bottega Veneta** regularly invites international photographers and artists to shoot an advertising campaign for the brand. The Art of Collaboration project launched by Bottega Veneta's creative director Tomas Maier in 2001 aims to tell the story of the brand in an unconventional way. Among the artists and photographers who have partnered with Bottega Veneta are Annie Leibovitz, Peter Lindbergh, Steven Meisel, Robert Longo, Nan Goldin, Nick Knight, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, and others. In 2015, more than 1,000 pictures resulting from partnerships with 27 photographers were featured in the book "Bottega Veneta: Art of Collaboration."

Five Types of Corporate Art Engagement Platforms



Such fashion houses as **Dior**, **Louis Vuitton**, **Prada**, and **Victor & Rolf** often reference artworks in their collections or engage artists around product design. One of the longest brand and artist partnerships was **Louis Vuitton's** 13-year old relationship with Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, which lasted until 2015. It was perhaps one of the most successful collaborations from the commercial perspective, but it also faced some criticism for that particular reason. One of such examples was the opening of a pop-up store offering Louis Vuitton handbags designed by the artist during his show “© Murakami” at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 2007.

However, it is not only luxury and premium brands that turn to the arts. Swedish fast fashion retailer **H&M** collaborated with artist Alex Katz on its [Fashion Loves Art collection](#), which was presented in time for the Art Basel Miami fair in December 2016. The 19-piece collection was available in the brand's Miami stores and on its website. Two years prior to that, H&M started the trend when it invited American artists Jeff Koons to design a leather handbag with one of his signature balloon dogs, which also coincided with his retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art supported by H&M.

On top of the sponsorship of Canadian-American abstract painter Agnes Martin's retrospective at the Guggenheim in New York, H&M-owned high street retailer **COS** created [a capsule collection](#) inspired by the artist's works, which matched the brand's minimalist aesthetic.

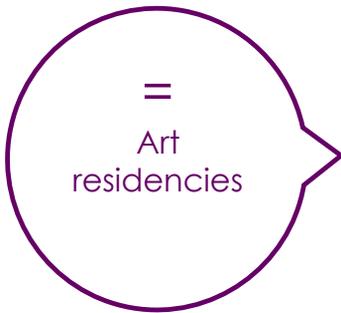
As part of its [partnership with the Museum of Modern Art in New York](#), **UNIQLO** features the works of renowned modern and contemporary artists such as Jackson Pollock, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Keith Haring on a special line of T-shirts.

Every season the US clothing and footwear brand **Vans** works with influential artists and brands on limited edition collections for its premium [Vault label](#). Among the recent notable collaborations are such artists as Takashi Murakami, Robert Williams, and KAWS (The Simpsons collection).

Brands are also engaging in artist collaborations that aim to support a charitable cause. In 2016, **Burton** collaborated with Jeff Koons to create 50 limited-edition snowboards called [“The Philosopher”](#), and proceeds from the sales went to the non-profit Chill, which provides opportunities for underserved youth to build self-esteem and life skills through board sports. Every year in advance of the holiday season beauty brand **Kiehl's** collaborates with renowned artists, including such big names in the art world as Jeff Koons, KAWS, Eric Haze, and Craig & Karl, on a limited-edition collection of its signature products for the benefit of a charity.



Brand-mentor



Another way of supporting creative talent is the launch of a corporate art residency program, which allows artists to explore the world and to take some time to focus on their work. The Davidoff Art initiative, for example, offers positions to emerging and mid-career contemporary visual artists from the Caribbean at five art residencies worldwide. In addition, five artists from outside the region can participate in a three-month residency program in the Dominican Republic.

In 2011, **Swatch** launched its artist residency in Shanghai, and since then, more than 240 artists from more than 45 countries have come to live and make art at The Swatch Art Peace Hotel. The program focuses on creative exchange, and artists are free to work on their individual or joint projects. They live in Shanghai for three – six months, and they are asked to leave a trace of their choice at the end of their stay. Swatch organizes the exhibitions of the artists' works, including at its pavilions at the Venice Biennale, to which the company serves as the Main Partner.

Swatch

Swatch Art Peace Hotel artist residency in Shanghai.
Sourced from swatch.com



Five Types of Corporate Art Engagement Platforms



Launched in 2002, the **Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative** pairs emerging artists from all over the world with artistic masters for a year of one-to-one creative collaboration. The mentoring program encompasses dance, film, literature, music, theatre, visual arts and – as of 2012 – architecture. Young artists (22 – 36 years old) are nominated and invited to apply to the program by an expert panel assembled for each artistic discipline. Mentors are suggested by an advisory board, which gets renewed every two years. The discipline panels review young artists' applications and recommends three finalists, among which each mentor selects his or her protégé following a personal meeting.



The Rolex Arts Initiative provides the mentor-protégé pairs with funding and logistical support, enabling them to spend at least six weeks working together.

Rolex

Visual Arts Mentor Joan Jonas in her Soho Studio in New York.
Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. © Rolex/Robert Wright
Sourced from pressroom.rolex.com





Absolut

Absolut Art Absolut "Embrace" by media artist kyttenjanae,
presented by Absolut Art project. Sourced from absolutart.com



A number of brands focus on recognizing creative talent in their art support programs. Among the examples are Hugo Boss Art Award, Absolut Art Award, and BMW Art Journey.

Founded in 1996, the Hugo Boss Prize honoring outstanding achievement in contemporary art is one of the oldest corporate art awards. It is presented every two years and is administered by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. The winner is selected by the jury of international museum directors, curators and critics, and there are no restrictions on age, gender, nationality, or medium. The winning artist receives a \$100,000 grant and an opportunity to have a solo exhibition at Guggenheim in New York.

Started in 2009, the Absolut Art Award gives artists and art writers the financial support they need to fulfill their submitted artistic dream projects.

The BMW Art Journey was created by the car brand in collaboration with Art Basel in 2015. Built around the brand's idea of mobility, the award offers artists selected from the fair's emerging art section an opportunity to undertake a journey of creative discovery. Winning artists can go almost anywhere in the world by any means of transportation — to conduct research, make new contacts, and create new work.

With its contemporary art initiatives, the French water brand **Perrier** aims to highlight its modernity values and to connect with younger audiences. In 2016, it took its street art collaboration program further and introduced the ARTXTRA – the Perrier Art Experience platform, which included a public engagement component. With the help of the Advisory Board comprised of art experts from around the world, the brand's team selected three artists, and one of them was named the Artist of the Year as a result of the public vote on the Perrier Tumblr page. The winner was awarded the opportunity to design limited edition Perrier cans and bottles and to present a full-scale installation at Miami Art Week 2017.



Brand-art experience creator

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Initiating artworks and exhibitions highlighting brand values

Some brands commission new artworks or organize exhibitions that serve as creative metaphors for their values.

Absolut collaborated with a number of acclaimed artists on a series of art bar installations exhibited at many art and cultural events around the world.

During the Venice Biennale, the event's Main Partner **Swatch** presents several pavilions with special contemporary art exhibits, including sound installations, which reflect the philosophy of the brand.

Since 2010, **Lexus** has been hosting annual Lexus Hybrid Art interactive exhibits in Russia (Moscow and St. Petersburg). They combine kinetic installations, videos and performances by leading contemporary artists, all created around the values or themes inspired by the brand. **Ruinart** collaborates with artists to showcase the story of the champagne house. Each year, as the partner of Art Basel, the brand dedicates its VIP lounge to its partner artist's work. Launched in 2015, the Audemars Piguet Art Commission program challenges artists to explore and to visualize the themes of complexity and precision as well as the links between science, art, and nature. It has an annual guest curator and an international advisory board. The commissioned artworks are presented to the public during Art Basel editions, which Audemars Piguet has been supporting as an Associate Partner since 2013. The Swiss watchmaker provides the invited artist with all necessary resources and access to experts and scientists.

Corporate collections represent one of the oldest types of art engagement. According to "Global Corporate Collections", a book published by Deutsche Standards in 2015, about 600 global companies have collections, with many of them focusing on contemporary art.

The largest collections often belong to financial services companies. For example, **Deutsche Bank** owns more than 57,000 artworks, which actually makes it the global leader in terms of collection size. Swiss bank **UBS** has 35,000 pieces of art, and **JP Morgan Chase**'s collection includes more than 30,000 objects. **Credit Suisse** has assembled more than 10,000 works by young Swiss artists. It follows the approach of supporting the young creative talent when purchasing art and initiating art awards in other regions of its presence as well.

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Bringing art to the brand's space

Five Types of Corporate Art Engagement Platforms



Some companies build their collections around a particular topic. For example, German maker of square chocolates **Ritter Sport** owns a public gallery near its headquarters in the town of Waldenbuch. It has more than 1,000 works united by the concept of the square. More and more brands are looking into creating their own cultural venues. This goes beyond just organizing temporary exhibitions at a traditional retail space as brands strive to launch permanent centers where people would come for creative experiences.

In 2015, **Cadillac** opened a cultural space on the first floor of its HQ in New York City. It serves as home to several partnerships, including exhibitions curated by the luxury art and fashion magazine *Visionaire*, a mentoring program for designers in collaboration with the Council of Fashion Designers of America, and a local specialty coffeehouse.

Louis Vuitton created free and open to the public cultural spaces with books and temporary exhibits at its flagship stores in Paris, Venice, Munich, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Taipei and Singapore. Some of them feature exhibitions organized around a particular concept relevant to the location. For example, in Venice, contemporary artists are invited to respond with a new creation to an artwork from the Venetian heritage.

The fashion brand **JW Anderson** uses the so-called Workshops platform, which is built on the idea of collaboration with other creatives. The brand's retail space in Shoreditch, London, changes its concept each month and houses rotating installations in partnership with other artists, photographers, potters, and publishers.

To bring **Vans'** philosophy of enabling creative expression to life, the brand runs two permanent cultural hubs in Brooklyn, New York (a former beverage warehouse), and Waterloo, in London (a former complex of abandoned tunnels under the Waterloo railroad stations). Free and open to the public, the **Houses of Vans** feature art galleries, cinema, live music venues, skate parks, and cafes and bars. As part of its 50th anniversary campaign in 2016, the brand took the concept on the road and brought pop-up Houses of Vans to various locations around the world, giving visitors the opportunity to participate in skateboarding demos, music events, interactive design workshops and art installations.

The beer brand **Heineken** often presents pop-up art projects around the world. For example, for Miami Art Week and Art Basel Miami Beach in 2015, it collaborated with the street art paint brand Montana Cans to launch the **Heineken Mobile Art Experience** – a truck with a rotating canvas on its exterior and an art supply store inside. It traveled from the Miami neighborhood of Wynwood to South Beach, and during its stops spectators could watch artists creating artworks in real time on the side of the truck. An aerial drone was filming the live art sessions and was sharing the videos via social media. A limited edition commemorative green Montana Can was designed in honor of the collaboration. It was also available at the Heineken Art Project Lounge at SCOPE Miami Beach where fair visitors could follow streaming content straight from the truck.

UNIQLO

UNIQLO SPRZ NY ("Surprise New York") project.
Sourced from sprzny.uniqlo.com



Five Types of Corporate Art Engagement Platforms



Some companies go as far as to create their own art institutions, with Fondazione Prada and the Fondation Louis Vuitton being one of the most prominent examples.

Fondazione Prada, which is mainly interested in “ideas and the ways they are transformed into cultural disciplines and products”, displays its collection and organizes research exhibitions at its Venice (since 2011) and Milan (since 2015) venues. They are solely dedicated to culture and do not feature any Prada branding or products.

In 2016, Fondazione Prada announced the opening of a new gallery dedicated to photography in Milan's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II shopping arcade.

The Paris-based **Fondation Louis Vuitton** was created at the initiative of LVMH CEO Bernard Arnault, and it presents a blockbuster permanent collection, temporary exhibits, and artistic commissions.

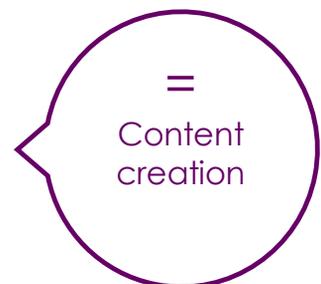
This model of art engagement is probably more of an exception in the corporate world than a rule as it is based on large-scale investments and on the business owner's will and passions.

Brand-art content creator

These are the brands that invest in creating art related content, be it art news applications, videos, or art guides.

Since 2012, **BMW** has been cooperating with Independent Collectors to produce a pocket-size guide to privately owned contemporary art collections with public access around the world. The BMW Art Guide by Independent Collectors features texts by distinguished authors and aims to inspire readers to discover art in unexpected settings.

In 2015, **UBS** presented the Planet Art application, which brings together art news from a range of leading publications and institutions. The bank also collaborated with the online art portal Artsy on a series of short films exploring the contemporary art market.



Five Types of Corporate Art Engagement Platforms



In 2016, the US jeweler **Tiffany** launched a five-part video series "[New Ways of Seeing](#)" to share experts' quirky insights on contemporary art and what it means today. The project was inspired by BBC's award-winning 1972 series "Ways of Seeing" by writer John Berger. During Tiffany's first three-minute video "Art Contains Multitudes" art critic Jerry Saltz gave an overview of the beginning of art from cave drawings and interviewed three contemporary artists. The playful video series complement the company's sponsorship of the next three Whitney Biennials (2017 – 2021) at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

In its communications, the Australian skin, hair and body care brand **Aēsop** focuses on providing its clients with intelligent content. It starts with literary and philosophical quotes on its product packaging and continues with [online monthly newsletters](#) that include the listings of cultural events, insights into hidden city gems around the world, book recommendations, and links to interviews with writers and other creatives, etc. Aēsop also publishes a bimonthly literary magazine called [The Fabulist](#), which is not about promoting corporate content or selling products. "Born of the enjoyment and intellectual nourishment Aēsop derives daily through the written word", the publication features fiction and non-fiction stories by emerging and established writers, and interviews of extraordinary individuals. The brand also produces [city guides](#) with insider advice on off-the-beaten track places in select destinations.

To highlight its appreciation for art content, some brands partner with niche creative culture publications around visual storytelling projects. For example, **COS**, **Gap**, and **SAMSUNG** recently collaborated with the travel and lifestyle quarterly [Cereal magazine](#), which features literary texts, photography, and clean design.

Brand-educator



One of the examples of such collaborations is the Japanese clothing retailer **UNIQLO**. In the US, it [sponsors the Friday night free admission program](#) at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). In the UK, the brand partners with Tate Modern around its free and open to the public [UNIQLO Tate Late program](#), which takes place on the last Friday of every month and features art, music, talks, and workshops. In Belgium, the retailer sponsors [UNIQLO MoMu Sundays](#) providing free access to the Mode Museum (MoMu / Fashion Museum) every first Sunday of the month. Within a week visitors who show their MoMu entrance tickets can also receive a free HEATTECH-shirt at UNIQLO stores in Antwerp and Wijnegem.

Five Types of Corporate Art Engagement Platforms



With the mission “to present artworks at an accessible location and at affordable prices so that everyone can participate in the art discourse,” UNIQLO announced “[Art for All](#)”, a partnership with a well-known New York-based gallerist, curator, and writer Jeffrey Deitch in January 2017. As part of the project, the brand introduced museum-type shops within its two New York stores, which featured limited-edition items inspired by the ideas and works of established and emerging artists from around the world, available at under \$100. Among the artists’ products, all selected by Jeffrey Deitch, were Ai Weiwei Sunflower Seeds handkerchief, Maurizio Cattelan & Pierpaolo Ferrari tray, and a puzzle by Fred Tomaselli. The initiative also featured a series of activities such as a lecture by Jeffrey Deitch and live screen printing events with artists.

[UNIQLO](#) also started a collaboration with the [NYC Parks](#) to bring more art to city parks in New York. Nike worked with [artist and designer KAWS](#) to transform Stanton Street basketball courts into a colorful floor-wide mural in honor of the brand’s New York City roots.

Ahead of its 90-year old anniversary in 2016, **Fendi** sponsored the restoration of the Trevi fountain in Rome, the city of the company’s origins. The fashion house also moved its headquarters to a 75-year old Roman palazzo, which has a permanent free-entry gallery space on the ground floor. Fendi commissioned the Italian artist Giuseppe Penone to create an artwork to be donated to the city of Rome in the form of a public sculpture. Prior to that, the fashion house organized [Penone’s exhibition](#) at its gallery.

Established in 2008, [Fondazione Zegna’s ALL’APERTO \(OUTDOORS\) program](#) aims to broaden access to contemporary art among the local Trivero community and its visitors. It supports the realization of a series of site-specific permanent artworks in **Ermenegildo Zegna**’s home municipality.

As the brand built on the values of youth spirit and creativity, **Vans** runs [the Custom Culture competition](#) in partnership the non-profit “Americans for the arts.” Launched in 2010 , it strives to bring attention to diminishing arts education and to empower high school students in the US to express themselves creatively. As part of the competition, they are provided with four pairs of blank Vans shoes to create designs that represent the four themes of the Vans’ “Off The Wall” lifestyle: action sports, arts, music and local flavor. Nearly 3,000 schools around the US compete for the opportunity to win a \$50,000 donation from the brand and to have one of its designs produced for sale at its select retail locations and online store.

In 2016, **Absolut** launched its first brand extension – [Absolut Art](#), a venture that strives to bring more art to people’s houses. The program aims to democratize access to art and presents an online portal where emerging artists’ works selected by international curators can be discovered and bought at affordable prices.



Vans

House of Vans London - Festifeel celebration
By Joe Hart Photography
Sourced from houseofvanslondon.com



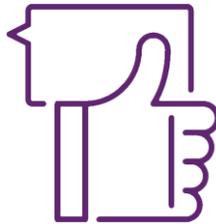
20 Rules of Successful Brands & Arts Collaborations





Strategy

1.



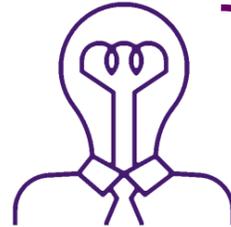
**Assess whether the art
and culture strategy
makes sense.**

Before embarking on an art and culture engagement strategy, it is important to have a reality check and see whether it actually makes sense for a brand. Supporting culture is a noble cause by itself, but companies should get involved only if they are ready to do this on a long-term basis and commit a significant amount of time and resources.

They should review what they are trying to achieve and determine whether art collaborations are the right route to take. As sponsorships are facing increasing scrutiny from consumers and activists (especially when it comes to the oil industry), companies also need to assess potential risks related to the current image of the brand and the context around it.



2.



Just putting your logo on a press wall is not effective.

Look for more meaningful and systematic ways of engagement and creating memorable experiences.

Mere “logo” sponsorships have become the thing of the past. They show that a company or a brand did not put enough effort into understanding the art community and into engaging with it in a meaningful way.

“If we want to become a sponsor of, say, a fashion week, we cannot just place a car on a display and have a logo on a banner,” explains **Enuri Acosta** from **Cadillac**. “This would simply mean doing bare minimum – just showing up. This would also illustrate to the community that we really don’t know how it works, and we are just trying to latch on for the cool factor. To make it really effective, we need to be a contributor to the conversation in a credible way.”

Instead, during the New York Fashion Week as part of its partnership with the Council of Fashion Designers of America the brand turns its Cadillac House in downtown New York into an official runway venue and hosts additional programming there. The brand also provides space to emerging designers who have demonstrated potential for commercial success, so they could experience what the world of retail would be (hiring staff, customizing space, etc.). The designers go through a special curriculum from fashion industry experts, so they could make a decision whether it is the next challenge they would like to take on. “This all happens at our space, and it gives people the natural reason to come there,” says **Enuri Acosta**.

20 Rules of Successful Brands & Arts Collaborations



Andras Szanto makes a strong distinction between the brands that just look for an artist to put something on their merchandising vs. the brands that view the arts as part of their identity. “When the brand is truly interested in a creative partnership, it makes the arts the centre piece of its communications and it uses a systematic approach over a period of years where there is a cumulative effect from different components building upon each other,” he explains.

“I believe more and more customers and clients are taking a closer look at brands, therefore staying true to your mission and being authentic will be more and more important,” says **Carlo Giordanetti** from **Swatch**.

Meaningful, content-driven and inventive collaborations can help in creating memorable experiences.

“It is important for brands to give back and to financially allow the dissemination of the arts to the public, and I hope brands will do more of this,” says **Cecilia Dean** from **Visionaire**. “However, there are ways we can get even more creative with that. The more unexpected activations we can come up with, the more exciting it is going to be. Incredible experiences lead to incredible memories.”

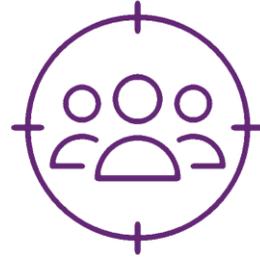
Absolut

Absolut Vodka, the official spirit of Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, transforms festival experience with Absolut Little Sun by Olafur Eliasson. (PRNewsFoto/Pernod Ricard USA)





3.



Find your niche and define your brand's role in art and culture engagement.

Effective engagement with the art world requires a strategic approach. You need to have a clear picture of what your competition is doing, to identify your strengths, and to see where you can make a difference. According to **Thomas Girst**, "you need to create unique experiences that define you as a brand and set you apart from the competition." Another important step during your preparation work is to select the key pillars of your cultural strategy such as design, fashion, music, visual art, etc. These would serve as guiding forces allowing you to narrow down your focus and to select potential partners and projects from the areas that are relevant for your brand.

"At the start, we needed to pinpoint the pillars where, as a brand, we could speak with culture with credibility. And there are some communities with which we have a very solid footing due to our rich history. Whether it's in the world of fashion, the world of art, or even the world of film," explains **Eneuri Acosta** from **Cadillac**. "Knowing that these communities already embrace us, we thought it would make sense for us to continue to engage them."

You should also decide on the potential role of your brand in a creative partnership, be it the brand-mentor, collaborator, or experience creator, or all of the above. The analysis of leading corporate art initiatives shows that many luxury brands implement comprehensive programs that often combine product collaborations with artists, exhibition or institution sponsorships, awards, and the creation of cultural spaces at their facilities. However, before initiating just one more corporate art award, it is important to consider whether there is really a need for it, what gap it helps filling in the art world, and what makes it unique to the brand.



4.



Set your goals and expectations from the start.

It is important to define your targets from the beginning, and to make your partner institution or an artist aware of these. “Be honest and transparent about your goals, so everything is crystal clear on both sides,” advises **Thomas Girst** from **BMW**.

According to **Herve Mikaeloff**, an international art consultant and curator for brands such as **Louis Vuitton**, **Dior**, and **Hennessy**, in an artist collaboration, a brand or a company needs to set expectations with regards to what they are looking for – whether it should be a global artist, emerging artist, or an artist with a particular point of view. “We shouldn’t just pick someone because they are famous, and the brand is famous. It’s not a question of putting two names together, not the question of logos, it’s a question of understanding each other and having a clear picture of how to work together,” he adds.

BMW

BMW Art Journey Winner Abigail Reynolds during the first leg of her journey along the Silk Road, starting in her hometown Cornwall (UK). © BMW AG. Sourced from press.bmwgroup.com





5.



Treat it as investment into the brand, not a driver of sales.

According to **Andras Szanto**, there are usually two types of competing marketing philosophies within the company. Based on the first one, art initiatives play a role in enhancing the meaning of the brand on a long-term basis, and the second one focuses on their impact on sales.

“Art programs are really investments into the brand more than moving the next item off the shelf. Unfortunately, sometimes decision makers accept that logic more when it comes to a golf tournament rather than the arts,” says **Andras Szanto**.

“We know that the average consumer, especially here in the US, buys a new car every 8-10 years. If we interact with consumers only when they are going to buy a new vehicle, it will be a missed opportunity for us,” explains **Eneuri Acosta** from **Cadillac**. “What we’re doing is we’re engaging them through different areas of the arts they are personally interested in. So, when they are going to buy a new vehicle they are considering Cadillac because it’s a brand they have seen in other areas of their world.” “We view much of what we do in the art space as a long-term investment into our brand,” he summarizes.



6.



Think long-term and develop a crisis-proof strategy.

Successful art platforms are based on long-term thinking.

“If you don’t have the sensibility to be in this over a longer period of time, and you just jump from an event to event, you position your brand or your company in the wrong way,” say **BMW's Thomas Girst**.

Effective partnership is a matter of having a strategy and gradually expanding your relationships with the art community, so it literally becomes part of your brand's value system.

“Corporate cultural engagement depends very much on the company's leadership, its stakeholder relationships, and business performance,” says **Albertine Kopp** from **Davidoff**. “The challenge is to find a long-term solution, which is deeply embedded in the company, so the program can survive any changes or crises.”



7.



Ensure consistent global brand experience, but recognize local trends and tailor your strategy to different cultures.

The interconnected and globalized world makes it important for brands to ensure consistency in their positioning and communications. “The world is small, consumers are traveling, and they want to see the brand they recognize. So, the brand experience needs to be consistent across the board and we rely on similar pillars in our cultural work in all regions,” says **Eneuri Acosta** from **Cadillac**.

“It’s also important to take into account local trends and culture. Even if we engage in the same industries, it’s all with the local flavor intertwined in,” adds **Eneuri Acosta**.

“Your strategy has to be flexible, but you need to use certain pillars, certain focus areas,” agrees **Thomas Girst** from **BMW**. “Pay tribute to what is going on in a particular country. In our strategy, we consider local cultures, but we also know the coordinates where our strategy works best.”

When relevant, partnerships from one region can also be used in other markets. For example, Cecilia Dean, Visionaire editor-in-chief, who curates Cadillac’s space in New York City, gave a speech at the Moscow-based Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, which the auto brand started to support in 2016. “This speaking engagement is a great example of how our team in Russia is leveraging the partnership that we have here in the US, with it being relevant to what they have in their programming there,” says **Eneuri Acosta**.



8.



**Think beyond just visual art.
Consider other media - art
performances, dance, sound,
literature.**

As you go further with your art strategy, experts recommend not limiting yourself to just visual art because there are many other ways to explore your brand from a creative perspective.

“Of course, the main goal of different collaborations is to bring them to life in a meaningful environment, and to keep our eyes and our minds open to be ready for projects that can be much more than just visual. A brand like Swatch can be interpreted by artists in many other ways and all senses can become a territory for artistic expression,” says **Carlo Giordanetti** from **Swatch**.

The skin, hair, and body care brand **Aēsop** sees the arts as “an avenue through which to inspire, learn and communicate.” One of the cultural realms it explores and supports is literature. To highlight its commitment to the written word, Aēsop has been collaborating with the international literary quarterly Paris Review since 2013. Magazine issues are available for purchase at the brand's spaces around the world and its website. The partnership started when the brand's New York store was designed in tribute of the legendary publication. Its ceiling has a floating sculpture made of a thousand of original covers from the magazine, and its walls feature photos, letters, and other signature pages from the publication's archive.

In October 2016, for The Paris Review's annual Spring Revel gala, Aēsop produced a special-edition bottle of the brand's mouthwash with one of the writer Lydia Davis's short stories on its label. Aēsop also supports a number of literary prizes, including The Horne Prize, an essay award in partnership with Australia's **The Saturday Paper**.

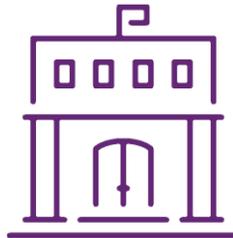


Swatch

"Untitled" by Sebastian Wickerroth, Swatch Art Peace Hotel
resident 2015 – 2016. Sourced from swatch-art-peace-hotel.com



9.



Evolve and build on your foundation.

It is important to pay attention to what is happening within the art community, to make adjustments to your strategy and to try new things.

“Our involvement with the art and culture is constantly developing and evolving to ensure that we continue to be at the forefront of supporting contemporary culture,” says **Saskia Neuman** from **Absolut**. “Our support began with Absolut bottle commissions, collaborating with artists like Andy Warhol and Keith Haring. This was a cutting-edge thing to do at the time, but since then the art world has moved on and many brands have invited artists to use their products as inspiration and a platform.”

In 2011, Absolut introduced a new art strategy to refresh the brand's position in the art community through a broad range of initiatives. This included international partnerships and teaming up with numerous artists on site-specific Art Bars, which have been implemented at art fairs and high-profile cultural events in more than 20 countries.

“Sometimes it's just the matter of sitting together a little longer to come up with something fresh and original,” says **BMW's Thomas Girst** commenting on the launch of the [BMW Art Journey award](#), which embodies the brand's idea of mobility applied to the art world. The three winners of the award can go on a journey of creative discovery enabled by BMW in collaboration with Art Basel. “Every one of us knows what it feels like to get onto a plane, into car, or onto a bicycle, and how that frees up the mind. If you have an artist on a journey, who may translate that journey into a new work by means of exploration, that can be a great way of supporting art and also of advancing our own vision of cultural engagement,” says **Thomas Girst**.



Partner relations

10.



**Respect, invest time, and learn
from the art community.
It's a dialogue.**

Successful partnerships are based on the intention and effort to make it a mutually beneficial engagement. A brand or a company should have respect for the art community and the desire to better understand and learn from it.

“I think the most important words that define a successful collaboration are passion, respect and curiosity,” says **Carlo Giordanetti** from **Swatch**.

“Passion – because without a sparkle no project can succeed. Respect – because at Swatch we have the utmost respect for artists and their freedom of expression. Curiosity – we love being challenged by the questions artists ask and learning from their way of thinking.”

“A successful collaboration should be borne out of a genuine passion for contemporary art and desire to support and nurture creative talent,” agrees **Saskia Neuman** from **Absolut**.

20 Rules of Successful Brands & Arts Collaborations



According to **BMW's Thomas Girst**, "creative partnership is not just the celebration of the brand, not a monetary transaction, but it's an interaction." It should be based on the desire from each side to bring something to the other.

"This is a relationship, and you need to abide by certain rules," says **Andras Szanto**. "It's important for an artist to approach it with an open mind. If the artist is suspicious of the brand and thinks that the brand is going to take advantage of him or her, it's not a good basis for the collaboration. There has to be the curiosity to engage, but also a healthy sense of being able to set boundaries of what the one is willing to do or not." He also adds that the requirement on the side of brands is the respect for artists' independence and freedom to create.

Albertine Kopp, Davidoff Art Initiative Manager, says that both sides benefit from an art collaboration only if they communicate with one another. "When you work with living artists it is important to understand and respect the arts, the artists, and the creative process."

Aesop

Aesop Chelsea collaborative project with The Paris Review in New York.
Sourced from taxonomyofdesign.com





11.



Bring in art experts.

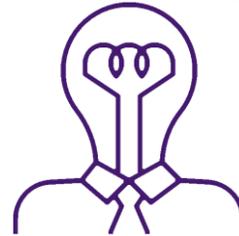
According to **Cadillac's Eneuri Acosta**, when brands want to interact with communities outside of their core realm, they need to stay true to what the culture of that particular community is, which can only be done through understanding. Therefore, to effectively engage with the arts, it is key for brands to rely on expert knowledge and counsel.

“You don't have to choose an artist, but once you do, you need to respect them and work through trusted sources such as art experts and committees. Companies need to have people onboard who understand the art world, who can translate and maintain mutually satisfying relationship with this sector,” explains **Andras Szanto**.
“Brands that engage in a respectful and sensible way are welcomed in the art world.”

Luxury and premium brands tend to have special managers in charge of their corporate art programs who have some background in the cultural world. They also often rely on advisory boards comprised of art curators, museum directors, and other experts. When it comes to mass-market brands, with some exceptions like Swatch and Absolut, their art initiatives are usually run out of companies' marketing and communications departments.



12.



Ensure the artist develops a deeper understanding of what your brand stands for.

If the brand wants to have a successful collaboration with artists, they should be given enough time to get acquainted with the company and to learn about its heritage and history.

“During the Hennessy 250 project we had worked with artists for a year before they presented their works. They went to see how the cognac is made and met people involved in the process to understand it better. After that the company CEO said they were part of the family, and they could get access to all premises and archives,” explains **Herve Mikaeloff**.

In his opinion, the artist should be able to get to know the brand and its storytelling, so he or she can become a real ambassador. Each side should make an effort to understand each other, and if this is not achieved, there is a possibility that the artist and his work are disconnected from the brand.

The level of artists' involvement is actually what is changing in today's collaborations. “Artists are becoming much more engaged. They are starting to think of themselves as professionals who can take on different opportunities, with brand collaborations being some of them,” explains **Andras Szanto**.



13.



Initiate and co-create but give artists creative freedom.

In creative collaborations, it is key to be able to loosen up control and to give artists creative freedom to do their work. It might not be the easiest thing to do, but only then will you get what can eventually be considered a real artwork.

According to **Andras Szanto**, if the brand comes in and starts treating the artist as a designer – someone to whom you can just hand a brief, this collaboration is not going to work.

“The brand should trust the creative as the brand is there to support it,” says **Cecilia Dean** from **Visionaire**. “No one should meddle in the creative process, and collaborations with artists work best when artists are allowed to do what they want. At Visionaire, we usually give them very basic parameters – they should know what is the format, what is the deadline, some things that are impossible for us to do. However, overall we can do many things.”

“I have dealt with the Davidoff Art initiative rather than Davidoff itself, but of course, things cannot be separated so easily. Although we met with important figures at the head of the brand, working with the initiative has provided enough freedom, and its team has been listening very carefully to the needs of each artist and has been open to diverse forms of input,” says **Jimmy Robert**, artist-in-residence at the **Davidoff Art Initiative**. “In creative partnerships, a company should be involved primarily to the degree of understanding what the work is about and helping towards its completion.”

“The artist’s scope of work has to be clearly defined from the start, so he or she understands what can be actually done. But the artist should also have creative freedom to realize his or her idea,” advises **Herve Mikaeloff**. Whether the idea works or not and what tweaks could be done to it should be a matter of discussion between the artist and the brand. “If it doesn’t, they shouldn’t go ahead with it because both sides will be frustrated at the end,” he adds.

“We don’t shy away from controversy. We believe in creative freedom and making creativity possible through our initiatives all over the world, honoring the vision of curators and artists,” says **BMW’s Thomas Girst**.



Credit Suisse

Claudia Comte, Big Bob, his square friend and their diamond totem, 2013
Credit Suisse Collection, installation in the lobby of Geneva Forum conference centre
Photo: Dirk Altenkirch, Karlsruhe.

Tomas Maier, creative director at **Bottega Veneta**, commented on his approach to partnerships with artists and photographers in an interview with [Another magazine](#) (November, 2015): "One of the advantages of the Art of Collaboration series is the chance to introduce deeper ideas and narratives into the imagery that surrounds Bottega Veneta." "I give the artist the freedom to interpret the collection in their own way, and bring their own signature to the campaign. There would be no point in asking them to collaborate if we were asking them to compromise their vision."

14.



**Be mindful of your partner's
priorities and sensibilities.
Understand their limitations.**

The art world is a special territory full of its own intricacies and true partnerships and should be based on the understanding of the other side's sensibilities, priorities, and limitations. "There are certain things that you cannot simply do there because it's a cultural institution," explains **Thomas Girst** from **BMW**.

"Our priorities cannot be the sole driving force behind any partnership we take on. It needs to be a two-way street. When you work with people on projects that are unique, they should benefit both sides, and that's when you get the best results," says **Eneuri Acosta** from **Cadillac**.



15.



Bring additional value to the partnership. It's not just about writing a check.

There is much more that the brand can bring to a creative partnership, and this goes beyond just giving a financial grant. Companies have connections, knowledge, and expertise that can assist artists in their work or help art institutions to become more sustainable.

“It should be a win-win interaction where the artist can bring something to the brand, and the brand can bring something to the artist. It's a dialogue, and it has to be interesting and beneficial for both sides,” says **Herve Mikaeloff**.

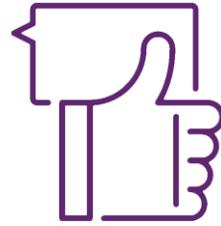
For example, the BMW Art Journey winner Samson Young was hoping to make a clean recording of the bells of the Great Peacock Clock in the Hermitage museum in St. Petersburg. This was part of his global exploration of historical bells to create musical compositions and visual artworks in response to them. BMW negotiated this opportunity with the museum, and the artist was given a permission to record the clock in solitude outside of the institution's opening hours. “It was one of the most remarkable things to have happened to me on what is already an unbelievably rich journey,” writes Samson Young in his [travelogue](#).

[The Audemars Piguet Art Commission program](#) challenges artists to create artwork around the themes of complexity and precision visualizing links between science, art, and nature. In return, the company provides the artist not only with the necessary financial resources, but also with access to scientists and relevant experts.



Stakeholder engagement and communication

16.



**Engage internal stakeholders.
Make your employees the
ambassadors of your program.**

Successful creative partnerships start by building the understanding of your program and its goals within the company. It is key to engage employees, so they could take their excitement externally and become real brand champions and ambassadors.

“Art and culture need to grow into the company's DNA, employees should be involved, so they could support and extend the engagement,” advises **Albertine Kopp** from **Davidoff**.

“In Switzerland where our HQ is located, I started doing lectures over lunch where employees can come and learn about the program. In Basel, we also have an artist-in-residence, so we do open studio events and invite our employees to come. In Santiago, we have several artists who are interested in tobacco leaves as a medium, so we have them talk to our employees and learn more about the production process.”



Davidoff

Davidoff Art Studios, Altos de Chavón, La Romana, Dominican Republic. © Oettinger Davidoff AG





17.



Get senior management on board.

The success of brands and arts collaborations often relies on the management of the company.

“They need to understand the value of such initiatives and their difference from classic marketing approaches,” says **Andras Szanto**. “It’s important to get decision makers on board, articulate different scenarios, have discussions, and then create a plan that can be implemented.”

18.



Storytelling and engagement matter.

As much as a brand or a company invests in establishing a true creative partnership, they should also put enough effort into telling its story. Digital media provides many opportunities to engage the public in a conversation about art and culture and lets them get a deeper experience of creative collaborations.



“Successful projects are the ones with a strong and meaningful story to tell. They are the ones where passion, respect and curiosity can also be felt and experienced by the public. Swatch’s mission to remain a democratic and globally diverse brand is respected in art projects, and it becomes a real “manifesto,” says **Carlo Giordanetti** from Swatch. Storytelling around creative partnerships allows the brand to get the consumer immersed into its realm and lifestyle.

“Our [Dare Greatly website](#) is an example of how we tell the story of Cadillac in the way that does not pertain just to the world of cars. We can talk about the point of view of the brand in a way that is relatable to a very large audience and in a way they are willing to engage with us. It tells our consumers that maybe we are a lot more alike than they may think, says **Eneuri Acosta** from **Cadillac**.

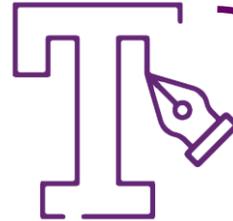
Sometimes the process of art collaboration proves just as interesting as the final result, in which case the brand should find creative and effective ways of talking about it. During Manifesta Biennale in Zurich in 2016, each project based on partnerships between artists and someone from the local community, including business organizations such as Hyatt, Les Ambassadeurs, and Julius Baer, was covered in a short film. It gave the collaboration a new depth and showed both sides of the process including initial expectations, challenges, and key highlights of the working process.

Content related to art collaborations should be packaged in the right way and have a cultural credibility. “It should do justice to the art world and speak to the audiences who receive it,” says **Andras Szanto**.

According to **Carlo Giordanetti**, “creativity and ability to engage are key assets to make any program relevant today.” The surprise and gaming element is key for that. For example, in honor of London’s Frieze Art Fair in October 2016, French-Italian outerwear brand **Moncler** partnered with the Royal College of Art (RCA) for an exhibit at its flagship store in the UK capital. The “[Moncler Freeze for Frieze](#)” project showcased 400 postcard-sized works of art from RCA alumni, students, fashion designers, cultural icons and renowned artists, selected by guest curator and fashion editor Tim Blanks. Each donated work was presented anonymously, and the name of the artist could be revealed only after the purchase of the card at a fixed price of £60. All proceeds went toward scholarships for two students to attend an RCA master’s program in fashion and textiles.



19.



Sophistication in moderation - go for minimal branding, don't overuse.

Although it is hard to imagine a creative partnership that does not include any branding elements, it is key not to overdo it and to make sure that it doesn't overpower the collaboration.

"The subtler the brand positioning, the more sophisticated the company is," says **Thomas Girst** from **BMW**. "As far as our brand we don't need to have our logo everywhere. It's about doing long-term and meaningful things, like helping connect artists to galleries and museums through our networks, and whether we can pay tribute to the cultural world."

Jimmy Robert, artist-in-residence at **Davidoff Art Initiative**, thinks that one of the potential challenges in art collaborations is "branding taking over things in ownership of the project." To avoid this, "communication around the project should be managed very carefully."



20.



“Cultural cool” vs. scale – find the right balance.

It is also important to recognize that scale (the opportunity to reach out to mass audiences) and “cultural cool” (outreach to niche audiences of trendsetters) sometimes conflict, and the brand cannot rely solely on creative partnerships in its positioning and communications.

“You can’t always do a campaign that reaches millions and still have the same impact as from a partnership that speaks more to the trendsetters. We should have the balance of both – you need to have a set of those cool niche partnerships that drive cultural conversations with campaigns that are meant for more mass market reach,” advises **Eneuri Acosta** from **Cadillac**.

Cadillac House

Cadillac House, New York CTS-V, CT6, and XT5 vehicles stationed on the runway inside.
© Gensler Sourced from media.cadillac.com



Creative Partnership Framework





The below framework summarizes the findings of the previous section and can serve as a guideline in developing a creative partnership strategy. It outlines key questions the brand team needs to consider during the planning process. For example, if they decide that an art prize is going to be at the core of their arts strategy, they should also think about what would make it unique, what specific needs in the art world it will serve (in comparison to many other art awards that are already in place), and how it will resonate with the values of the brand.

Creative Partnership Element	Strategy	Partner Relations	Stakeholder Engagement & Comms
Things to consider	<p>Reasons for Art & Culture Engagement</p> <p>Niche/Strategic Pillars</p> <p>Goals & Expectations</p> <p>Timeframe & View of Partnership Evolution</p>	<p>Partnership Approach & Acceptance of Creative Freedom</p> <p>Art Expert Knowledge & Counsel</p> <p>Partner Education & Bringing Extra Value</p>	<p>Engaging internal Stakeholders (incl. senior management)</p> <p>Telling the Partnership Story & Engaging External Stakeholders</p> <p>Branding & Balance between Niche 'Cultural Cool' Initiatives and Mass Branding</p>
Questions to ask	<p>Does Art & Culture strategy make sense for the brand? What resonates well with your target audiences?</p> <p>What makes your initiative unique? How does it correlate with your brand's values? What are your strategic pillars (i.e. arts, music, design, etc.)?</p> <p>What are you trying to achieve? On the short-term and long-term basis? What are your expectations from your partner?</p> <p>What is the timeframe of the initiative? How will it evolve over time? How will you make your initiative sustainable and crisis-proof?</p>	<p>What is your overall approach towards the partnership? What are your partner's sensibilities and limitations? How much involved are you going to be? Are you ready to loosen up control?</p> <p>Will you rely on internal/external art expert support?</p> <p>How will you ensure that your partner understands your brand? How can you bring additional value to your partner based on your expertise and connections?</p>	<p>How will you engage internal stakeholders? How will you make the case for the partnership to the company's senior management?</p> <p>What is your communications strategy? How will you engage external audiences? Channels? Messages?</p> <p>How much branding will you use? How will you balance niche, so called 'cultural cool', initiatives with the ones that have more mass audience effect?</p>

10 Future Trends in Creative Partnerships





So, where are brand and arts collaborations heading? And what are the trends that are driving the future of creative partnerships?

1.

More systematic and meaningful approach towards corporate art programs

As more brands are getting involved in art collaborations and consumers are becoming more demanding, the need to stand out from the competition and to create unique and meaningful programming is increasing.

Smart brands will be developing art and culture engagement strategies aimed to make a difference, highlight brand values, and engage key stakeholders through memorable experiences. The sustainability of art initiatives often depends on whether they make sense from the business perspective. More brands will be looking for that sweet spot where the interests of both worlds intersect.

2.

More hybrid spaces – where art and commercial meet



The trend is moving towards the opening of more so-called hybrid spaces that combine art and commercial interests. For example, art malls have gained popularity in China, and it is becoming a common thing in other parts of the world as well. Trying to reach new audiences, some art projects are moving out of galleries and museum spaces to occupy vacant commercial premises. As part of The Artist/City project, for a year [New York-based Bortolami Gallery will present artist Tom Burr's installation at the vacant former office of the Pirelli Tire Company in New Haven, CT, which is now owned by IKEA.](#) More brands will create unique experiences by bringing art to their corporate and retail premises as well as by setting up their own temporary or permanent cultural spaces. Art organizations should become cleverer in securing their funding and use such projects as an opportunity to serve as external experts and consultants.



3. More time for artist education and deeper immersion into the brand

Smart brands will try to establish deeper engagement with artists. Collaborations will involve a lengthy education process, so the artist is fully immersed and has a good understanding of the brand, its values, and its history.

4. More expert involvement

As creative partnerships become more complex, they will require more art expert advice and counsel, so creative collaborations can move beyond just pure marketing. Brands will be bringing art advisors on board to run or consult their art initiatives. There is also a trend towards companies engaging art publications to manage their cultural spaces and curate exhibitions. Some of the recent examples include **Cadillac** working **Visionaire** in New York, **Aesop** collaborating the **Paris Review**, and **Pullman Hotels** [engaging Wallpaper magazine](#) to arrange their exhibition in Brussels.

5. More storytelling & digital experience

Storytelling will become even more important to communicate the brand's creative partnerships to wider audiences. Multimedia content can provide a much richer experience of the collaboration process and its results. For example, some brands such as **Lexus** create digital versions of their [offline exhibits](#), so their shows can go beyond the physical space. However, in art related storytelling, brands will need to find their unique voice and to consider what kind of content will resonate with their audiences. Besides being interesting and relevant, it should also be fair and respectful to the art world.

Brands are also increasingly turning to latest technologies to enhance their audiences' experiences of art initiatives. For example, in January 2017, **M&M'S** (Mars) teamed up with the fashion and art publication **Visionaire** and contemporary artist **KAWS** to create a [virtual reality film](#) in honor of the iconic chocolate brand's 75th anniversary. In addition to releasing the video online, the collaboration included a free immersive viewing experience at the New York Public Library. With VR goggles, participants could watch **KAWS'** studio being transformed into a 360-degree overload of swirling colors and changing shapes - familiar elements of his artworks.



M&M'S (Mars)

M&M's, Visionaire and KAWS VR collaboration (2017).
Sourced from the project video on www.visionaireworld.com



6.

More interactive communications via social media

Social media play a big role in engaging audiences and can help a brand in creating an online community passionate about the arts. Some companies heavily investing in the arts have separate culture-focused social media accounts, so their followers can watch the brand's event live streams and interviews with partner artists, participate in interactive activities and post about their own experiences.

7.

More scrutiny over companies' right to engage with the arts and the nature of their intentions

Activists are becoming more suspicious of corporations' intentions with regards to art sponsorships, and one of the hottest issues today is what kind of companies are actually allowed to engage with culture and use it to enhance their image.

In the UK, Art Not Oil, a coalition of protest groups seeking to end sponsorship of the arts by oil companies, staged protests ("creative interventions") against BP's partnerships with Tate Modern and the British Museum. In October 2016, they also organized a performance criticizing the Science Museum's collaboration with the Norwegian oil and gas company Statoil, which sponsored the new children's interactive gallery Wonderlab. Over 40,000 people signed an online petition calling for the museum to end its partnership with the company. During the opening, the Art Not Oil members unfurled a white carpet, symbolizing the Arctic, and poured black liquid over it, referring to the damage from Statoil's drilling activities.

8.

More mass market companies engaging with the arts. It's not only luxury and premium brands anymore. Tech companies is another kid on the block

Creative collaborations are going beyond the world of luxury. More mass-market brands are launching such initiatives as they strive to highlight their artsy side and to bring creative experiences to their audiences. They tend to have product collaborations with influential artists or the ones that reflect their aesthetics. "Someone like Alex Katz really works for **H&M** because his work is colourful, vibrant, very iconic," explained Marybeth Schmitt, an H&M spokesperson in [an interview with the Business of Fashion](#) (December 2016). "Some of our customers will already be fans, some might just be inspired by the work."



Other unusual suspects in the world of art and cultural partnerships are technology companies. **Apple** was a sponsor of the annual Met Gala and its accompanying exhibition “Manus x Machina: Fashion in an Age of Technology” in 2016. **Google** launched an impressive [Google Arts & Culture Project platform](#), which allows users to see artworks from around the world in high definition, to read articles about artists, movements, and to follow other special themes. **Adobe** sponsors a yearlong [creative residency program](#), during which artists get financial support, mentoring guidance, and all tools necessary to realize their dream projects.

9.

More public art projects initiated by brands

As more mass-market brands are becoming interested in the arts, the nature of collaborative projects is changing as well. Seeing their mission in making culture more accessible, such brands get involved in public art projects, i.e. **UNIQLO** and the NYC Parks, **Nike** and KAWS collaboration to transform basketball courts in New York.

However, it is not only mass-market brands that commission public art, some luxury brands including **Fendi** and **Ermenegildo Zegna** see it as a priority as well. For them, such projects represent a way to give back to their communities and to highlight their connections to the places of their origin and location.

10.

More unexpected collaborations between high-end brands and street, graffiti, or tattoo artists

To reach out to younger audiences, to differentiate themselves from the competition, and to add an edgy flair to their products, some high-end heritage brands such as watch brands Richard Mille, Hublot, and Romain Jerome [collaborate with trendy street, graffiti, and tattoo artists](#). Many fashion brands used to engage in such partnerships in the past, but now even the ones that have traditionally focused on craftsmanship and heritage are joining the trend.

Artists and Art Institutions on Brand Collaboration



Artists and Art Institutions on Brand Collaborations

Some of the greatest works of art were done on commissions. If the commercial world assigns me a project that interests me a lot, or excites me, or I feel challenges me in some way, than I am absolutely going to take it on because their budgets and their larger audience is absolutely something that is interesting to me.

But if it means I have to water down my work to where it is no longer recognizable, then it is not interesting to me.

The old methodology of only having a gallery is outdated for me personally.

One of the challenges of being an artist commissioned to work with a brand is that you want to create an expression of the brand and its values without it looking like typical ad. The art should be more than an advertisement. It should be authentic, real and tell a sincere story.

That's the alchemy when artists come together with a great, creative brand with resources -- magic happens, and great projects get born. It's a beautiful thing to be a part of. It's what my dream project looks like.



Alex Prager,
photographer, Art of
Collaboration for
Bottega Veneta,
"Art + Fashion:
Collaborations and
Connections Between
Icons" by E.P. Cutler
and Julien Tomasello,
2015

Hebru Brantley,
collaborated with Red
Bull, KAWS, Hublot, The
NY Times, March 2015

Olaf Erwin
on his collaboration
with Ruinart, Girlfriend
Guide to Zurich, June
2016

Jeremy Ville,
collaborated with
Disney, Adidas,
Mercedes-Benz,
UNIQLO, Converse,
The Standard Hotel,
Kiehl's, etc, Huffington
Post Australia,
December 2016

Artists and Art Institutions on Brand Collaborations

My participation in the Davidoff Art Initiative helped me build confidence in terms of believing in a challenging project and taking it all the way. It has really become a learning experience for my students and myself.

MoMA is focused on helping a wide audience understand and enjoy the art of our time, and this partnership [with UNIQLO] supports that mission — from our retail collaboration, which enables new audiences to engage with well-known and lesser-known artists in our collection... to the UNIQLO 'Free Friday Night' programme, which provides free admission for everyone. In all cases, these activities extend MoMA's brand and educational mission, enable us to reach new communities and help financially support the museum's exhibitions.



Jimmy Robert,
artist-in-residence,
Davidoff Art Initiative,
interview, December
2016

Thomas Randon,
General Manager of
retail, Museum of
Modern Art, New York,
Business of Fashion,
December 2016

About the Author



Anastasia Elaeva

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Anastasia graduated from the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow where she majored in business and political journalism.

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About Grayling Europe

Grayling operates a flexible, international communications network that has no respect for borders, whether between nations or disciplines. With on-call senior counsel, powerful content, and unrivalled connections, we help our clients to engage, adapt and evolve in fast-changing landscapes – building brand resilience and creating measurable advantage.

Grayling has the most comprehensive footprint of any communications agency in Europe, with **31 offices** in **22 European countries**, employing more than **500 consultants**.

Grayling is part of Huntsworth Plc., an international communications group which is headquartered in London and listed on the London Stock Exchange.



About Grayling Creative Partnerships

As more brands are turning to the art and culture as part of their positioning and communications, managers responsible for such programs should take a systematic approach, consider potential risks, think long term, and develop engagement strategies for both internal and external stakeholders. Grayling's communications experts can help brands to build and implement the right strategy and make **creative partnerships work**.

We advise our clients on cultural insights and trends, help them find a niche for their initiatives, identify relevant partners and art experts, and effectively communicate the collaboration to different stakeholder groups.



Find more:

www.grayling.com/global/sector/service/brands-and-the-arts