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# Arts and Entrepreneurship: Disentangling the Literature<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Arts entrepreneurship is not a new area of investigation, but it is far from constituting a consolidated topic. Scholars coming from several fields rediscovered it only in recent years, after a period in which it has been slow to emerge. Since the early 2000s, they developed a heterogeneous literature, which is difficult to disentangle. The purpose of this study is to shed light on arts entrepreneurship literature, outlining the most significant issues emerged and their trajectories for future development. We attempted to achieve the purpose of this chapter through a qualitative analysis of the relevant literature on the topic. Results revealed the most relevant issues to which scholars are devoting their efforts. With respect to these, we tried to identify subthemes and we attempted to trace the trajectories for future research. The first main theme concerns the entrepreneur in the arts, focusing on aspects such as identity and characteristics, and examining training and entrepreneurial education. Another theme regards entrepreneurship and training, which is attracting increasing attention, thanks also to the emergence of specific curricula and arts incubators. Besides these themes, other collateral issues emerged. Ultimately, literature is complex and multifaceted, but it is possible to read it with greater clarity.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship, arts, culture, literature review

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## 1. Introduction

Art for art's sake [1] has long been an imperative difficult to demolish. The goal of the artist, in the purest sense of the term, has always been considered the expression of his own artistic talent. Indeed, often artists seemed worried that addressing business-related issues could

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undermine the artistic value of what they created. Even scholars mostly neglected entrepreneurial aspects related to arts, with few exceptions (e.g., [2]). Over the last 20 years, something has changed: there has been an increasing interest in entrepreneurship in the arts. The main reason behind this seems to be the progressive reduction of public contributions to cultural enterprises in many countries such as Italy. This highlighted the need to operate according to entrepreneurial logic and to look for alternative sources of funding. Scholars with different backgrounds became interested in these themes, contributing to the formation of a quite heterogeneous emerging literature on entrepreneurship in the arts. This growing attention is also witnessed by some new academic journals dedicated to entrepreneurship in the arts, and specifically: "Artivate: A Journal of Entrepreneurship in the Arts" and "Journal of Arts Entrepreneurship Research." In addition, Scherdin and Zander published a pioneering book in 2011: "Art Entrepreneurship." The aim of this chapter is to clarify the phenomenon of entrepreneurship in the arts through a review of the literature of the last decades. In this way, we will identify the dominant issues addressed by scholars and we will trace the future evolution of the studies.

## 2. Arts and entrepreneurship

The starting point in approaching the study of entrepreneurship in the arts consists inevitably in defining the concepts of art and entrepreneurship, artist and entrepreneur. With regard to entrepreneurship, it translates into actions aimed at the creation/discovery of entrepreneurial opportunities [3]. Instead, art is the result of artistic actions through which artistic talent is expressed by using a certain artistic language. These are the key points to approach the study of entrepreneurship in the artistic context.

Many scholars tried to provide a definition of "arts entrepreneurship." Scherdin and Zander ([4], p. 3), argued that in the arts "entrepreneurship is about the discovery and pursuit of new art ideas, using a multitude of artistic expressions and organizational forms as vehicles by which to express and convey these ideas to the public." Rentschler ([5], p. 3), suggested that, through arts entrepreneurship, are fully expressed creativity, which is "the specific mission of arts," and innovation, namely "the specific tool of entrepreneurs [6]." Thus, combining creativity and innovation, it leads to the creation of "something new (and appreciated) in the area of culture" ([7], p. 260). Considering this, in entrepreneurial terms, it is possible to identify the activities that can be placed within arts entrepreneurship, drawing a continuum whose extremes are the artist that work by adopting "entrepreneurial habits of mind" and the "new venture creation in the creative industries" ([8], p. 6; [9]).

To date, according to Beckman ([10], p. 8), "arts entrepreneurship ... is not a discipline" and it is not based on a single theory; rather, various theories and practices, "developed in business and the social sciences" contribute to its development ([8], p. 5). Moreover, the identification of the industrial contexts embraced by arts entrepreneurship is problematic. In fact, creative industries, cultural industries, and the arts are not completely overlapped (e.g., [11]). Often scholars make reference to the creative (e.g., [12, 13]) and cultural

industries (e.g., [14–20]), examining artistic issues. Many papers examine the phenomenon within the “core creative arts” [11] (e.g., [10, 21–24]), while others focus on narrower competitive areas within the arts (e.g., [25, 26]) or are limited to specific arts (e.g., [27–30]).

Based on these observations, the chapter reviews arts entrepreneurship literature, trying to trace its future evolution.

### 3. Methodology

In order to review the literature on arts entrepreneurship, we followed a rigorous methodological approach, starting with the definition of precise selection criteria to identify the resources to examine and culminating in a qualitative analysis of them.

The first decision concerned the type of scientific contributions to consider. In this regard, we decided to focus only on articles, thus excluding books, book chapters, review of books, and papers presented at conferences. This is for two reasons: (1) to try to make the set of contributions to examine the most homogeneous as possible and (2) to avoid problems in defining the selection field (e.g., with reference to conference papers, which selection criteria should be adopted to select the conferences?).

The second decision concerned the journals to which make reference. We preliminarily considered top entrepreneurship and management journals, searching for the following expressions in the title, in the abstract, and in the keywords of the articles: “arts entrepreneurship,” “art entrepreneurship,” “art entrepreneur,” “arts entrepreneur,” “artist entrepreneur,” “cultural entrepreneur,” and “cultural entrepreneurship.” Given the limited number of articles identified, we realized that the argument has not yet found enough room to justify such a focused analysis of the literature. Therefore, we decided to cover a broad spectrum of journals as outlined below. First, we considered the journals included in the Scopus database and, given the transversality of the theme, we selected the following thematic areas: “social sciences,” “arts and humanities,” “business, management and accounting,” “decision sciences,” and “economics, econometrics and finance.” We searched for the same expressions mentioned above, but in the whole text of the articles and with reference to the period 1992–2016. This research has provided us with a significant number of articles, constituting our starting point. We made a first selection by considering articles published in journals included in the AIDEA and/or GEV lists<sup>2</sup> (for the latter, only administration and management<sup>3</sup>), updated to 2016. In this way, we have been able to identify and exclude articles not

<sup>2</sup>The AIDEA (Italian Academy of Business Administration and Management) list includes journals of management, business administration, business organization and corporate finance, ranking them into four quality bands. GEV lists are arranged by groups of experts appointed by the National Agency for Evaluation of the Italian System of University and Research (ANVUR).

<sup>3</sup>We also considered some journals included in the “economics” section of the list, and namely: “Review of Austrian Economics,” “Journal of Cultural Economics,” and “International Journal of Cultural Policy.” We also considered two journals that are not included in AIDEA and GEV lists, due to the relevance of the articles identified with respect to the theme under investigation: “Journal of Business Venturing Insights,” and “Arts and Humanities in Higher Education.”

focused on arts entrepreneurship. It was a particularly long and laborious operation, which led to the definitive set of articles to consider. In total, we selected 59 articles. In addition, we identified other 5 articles, particularly relevant with regard to the topic, cited in the articles previously selected and published in the journals we considered. Finally, we selected another article including expressions similar to those we were looking for.

We categorized the articles by considering the following: authors, year, journal, the expressions we found, the central theme under investigation, and the level of analysis. This allowed us to appreciate the evolution of the scientific production on the topic and to identify its main issues. The publications, so grouped, have been the object of study, with the objective to get a picture of the specific issues investigated by scholars.

## 4. Findings

We grouped the selected articles on the basis of the theme examined. The following subsections illustrate the main themes, revolving around entrepreneurship in the arts, discussed by scholars.

### 4.1. The entrepreneur in the arts: identity and characteristics

One of the most relevant themes in the literature on arts entrepreneurship concerns the artist-entrepreneur, its identity, and all issues related to this figure.

Most difficulties concerning the approach to the study of the entrepreneur in artistic contexts can be traced to the motivations that lead him to operate in the arts. Caves [1] introduced the concept of “art for art’s sake,” highlighting that in the arts motivations often go beyond economic aspects. The dichotomy between “artistic logic” and “economic logic,” emphasized by scholars (see e.g., [31, 32]), is at the basis of most studies centered on the figure of the entrepreneur in the arts, since in this type of industry the artist-entrepreneur’s motivation is the “primary resource for economic production” ([31], p. 234). In particular, scholars are wondering how to conjugate these logics (e.g., [33]), resulting in a dual identity that the entrepreneur is called to integrate: the artist, for whom “work motivation and creative impetus” are extremely important, and the “small firm” identity, which would lead the entrepreneur to “living out of being an artist” ([31], p. 234). The relationship between culture, entrepreneurship, and territory is also expressed in the concept of “culturepreneur” [34, 35].

Eikof and Haunschild [31] argued that making reference to the lifestyle of the artist is possible to fill the gap between art and business. More precisely, according to the authors, entrepreneurs conceived as “bohemians,” who tend to stand out from the society, can “integrate intensive self-management and self-marketing as well as subordination of private life to work into their artistic work life” ([31], p. 234).

The problematic relationship between culture and business has also led other scholars to draw specific figures of entrepreneur in the arts. For example, Mulcahy ([36], p. 165), without

questioning the importance of profitability (although companies in this context are mostly nonprofit), with the objective to “go beyond a reductionist obsession with the bottom line,” introduces the notion of “entrepreneur as an arts administrator,” who act as a “contractual intermediary (...) bringing together government, the private sector, and the public to best realize a general cultural good.”

Klamer [37] approached the problem from a different view, going beyond the idea of an integration of the two perspectives. The author suggested that the culture-business relationship cannot be addressed by claiming that the cultural entrepreneur should be necessarily able to combine “artistic qualities with business sense,” in order to “attract customers for the arts without compromising the artistic mission and artistic identity” ([37], p. 147), [38] in [37]. On the basis of his argument, there is the conviction that art and culture cannot be simply conceived through the logic of business.<sup>4</sup> According to Klamer ([37], p. 147), this view on the conflict between art and business and the consequent attempts to combine them do not give the idea of the “complexity of the artistic process.” The main purpose of the entrepreneurs in the arts is not profit, but rather the realization of cultural values, and business is only a tool used in this end ([37], p. 154); this means that the cultural entrepreneur, in creating these values, should not in any way follow the logic of business ([37], p. 141). Ellmaier [40], adopted a similar economic approach, focuses on the labor market and intercepts, downstream of the phenomena of “marketization of culture” and “culturalization of the market,” the transition from “cultural workers” to “cultural entrepreneurs,” considered “sole service supplier[s] in the professional cultural field” with the objective to “try out their own combinations and assert themselves on the market and in society” ([40], p. 3).

Another group of contributions focused on a different issue, which is the identification of similarities between the artist and the entrepreneur, and the explanation of how these similarities can be beneficial for their activities. For example, Daum ([41], p. 55), identified a number of connections between the two figures, noting that often entrepreneurs characterized by an artistic background tend to seek solutions to the “business problems by applying lessons learned from their artistic endeavors.” He concluded that the two figures are much more similar than one might imagine, while usually with respect to the artists there is the prejudice to be “flaky” ([41] p. 57). Instead, Fontela et al. ([42], p. 11), deepened the role of forecasting, which characterizes the artist’s work, but it is essential also for “entrepreneurial decision making”; therefore, the entrepreneur should think in a “less ‘rational’ and more ‘emotional’” way ([42], p. 11).

There is no doubt that around the figure of the artist there are prejudices, but it is also true that it is sometimes idealized. Cova and Svanfeldt ([43], p. 12), defined the artist-entrepreneur as “an esthetically visionary entrepreneur,” “who innovates by vocation rather than by utility” ([43], pp. 12, 14). They argue that “as opposed to the self-made person, the artist-entrepreneur plays upon one’s culture; and to the contrary of the team hero, the artist-entrepreneur is sur-

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<sup>4</sup>It should be mentioned, in this regard, the position of Lampel et al. [39], which instead point out that in the cultural industry entrepreneurs are facing challenges similar to those typical of businesses based on knowledge and creativity Preece ([25], p. 104).

rounded by a team" ([43], p. 14). Instead, Berglund et al. ([44], p. 268), pointed out that the artist-entrepreneur may not respond to the type of "hero entrepreneur," but can be a creative imitator, who uses "multiple identities in legitimizing their work," and often does not work alone.

Ultimately, exploring literature on the entrepreneur in the arts, we found three subthemes, which concern, respectively, the culture-business relationship, the similarities between the artist and the entrepreneur, and the idealized arts entrepreneur.

#### 4.2. Entrepreneurship education and training in the arts

Another debated theme concerns entrepreneurship education in the arts. The main reference in this area is the contribution of Beckman [45]. The author noted that the arts entrepreneurship programs are mostly idiosyncratic, and this led to different "philosophical and curricular trajectories" that "reflect the unique microcultures of theater, art, and music units" ([45], p. 87). Thus, given this situation, Beckman ([45], p. 87), identified some "best practices" and deepened the structure of curricula in arts entrepreneurship education. In particular, three practices help to shape adequate curricula ([45], p. 102): a reassessment of "the nineteenth century romantic esthetic"; the acquisition of a "supportive and visionary leadership"; and the definition of "entrepreneurship in a manner that informs and guides the effort." Also Bridgstock [46] examined the implications of the peculiarities of arts entrepreneurship on education programs. The author focused on the characteristics of curricula instrumental to the development of the "arts entrepreneurship capabilities" ([46], p. 133). Arguing that entrepreneurship should be included from the beginning of the education programs in the arts, and considering it as "a complex set of qualities, beliefs, attitudes, and skills that underpin all areas of working life" ([46], p. 133), the author suggested specific strategies to develop entrepreneurial skills within educational programs ([46], p. 122).

Besides the studies centered on the main issues related to arts entrepreneurship education and on the definition of appropriate curricula, a new area of research concerns arts incubators. Incubators constitute a particularly promising instrument in the arts. Phillips [47] noted that arts incubators, and cultural institutions eventually related to these, can play a key role in promoting the development of arts entrepreneurship. The point is then deepened by Essig [48], who intercepted the different functions performed by incubators, the goals to which they tend, and identifies different types of incubators in the arts. To date, due to the novelty of the phenomenon, few contributions examine arts incubators, but they will probably lead to a growing attention from scholars.

#### 4.3. Other areas of research

Marketing scholars approached arts entrepreneurship, although in most cases, they consider it collaterally when examining other themes.

Colbert ([49], p. 30), pointed out that entrepreneurship, marketing, and leadership are interconnected; moreover, he emphasized that entrepreneurship and leadership allow improving the level of service offered to customers ([49], p. 38). Fillis [50, 51] explored the marketing/

entrepreneurship interface in the arts, claiming that in certain contexts is useful to adopt an “entrepreneurial” approach to marketing, based on the creative behavior [50]. Rentschler and Geursen ([52], p. 44), explored the relationship between entrepreneurship, marketing, and leadership in nonprofit performing arts organizations (PAOs), and identify a “tension” between them in this type of organizations ([52], p. 50). The entrepreneurship-marketing link in the arts is also investigated by Wilson and Stokes [53], who emphasized the ability of the entrepreneur to “creating exchanges” between “content” and “service” in order to acquire financial resources, which is necessary for an “effective cultural entrepreneurship” ([53], p. 37). The authors ([54], p. 218) pointed out that, in order to access networks in which financial resources can be found, the entrepreneurs’ legitimacy plays a fundamental role, but it is difficult to build; because of this, entrepreneurs can define specific marketing strategies: the “selection strategy,” to identify the most favorable environment, and the “manipulation strategy,” through which to face the environment by taking an innovative approach ([54], p. 225).

Another area of research within arts entrepreneurship is related to entrepreneurial bricolage. Entrepreneurial bricolage, which concerns how to create something by using limited resources [55], seems to be particularly interesting in the arts. Obviously, we must consider what kind of resources we are talking about. De Klerk [56] noted that in creative industries, artists adopt a particular type of bricolage, the “collaborative bricolage,” which consists in a “relationship where people work with each other to make the most of what is available, but it transcends the short-term goal of getting the job done for one specific project” ([56], p. 831). People involved in this relationship share a “long-term vision” and work on specific projects, interacting and making best use of scarce resources ([56], p. 837).

## 5. Conclusion

Arts entrepreneurship is a promising field of research that involves different disciplines. In the last 20 years, publications grew considerably, and most of them are placed in specialized journals. The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on arts entrepreneurship literature, trying to make order in a complex scenario constituted by studies on different subthemes, often following different perspectives.

The main themes explored in literature concern, respectively, the entrepreneur in the arts, with a special focus on his identity and characteristics, and entrepreneurship and training in the arts. With respect to the first theme, many studies are based on the culture-business relationship, which seems problematic. Another subtheme concerns the similarities between the artist and the entrepreneur, on which many scholars focus. Finally, we also intercepted another subtheme, concerning the entrepreneur “idealized” in the arts. The second main theme, that is entrepreneurship education and training in the arts, attracted the attention of many scholars interested in identifying best practices to design curricula, in order to favor the development of an entrepreneurial mindset. Moreover, some scholars are focusing on arts incubators, instruments designed to favor entrepreneurship in the arts. Besides these two main themes, other arguments are the object of investigation. Some marketing scholars are interested in entrepreneurship, but in most cases they consider it

“collaterally.” Other scholars approach arts entrepreneurship in order to investigate its role in the development of new products. Finally, entrepreneurial bricolage is of interest of scholars because it seems suitable to artistic contexts. In sum, literature is not yet consolidate but is already complex. In this chapter, we tried to make order among a heterogeneous set of publications.

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