

# São Paulo Art Biennial and Its Relation to the Brazilian Art Market

Ana Paula Moreno<sup>1,\*</sup>, Marcos Rizolli<sup>1</sup>, Katya Hochleitner<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>History of Arts, Culture and Education Faculty, Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie, São Paulo, Brazil

<sup>2</sup>Inter-Graduate Program in Aesthetics and Art History, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

## Email address:

[anapaula@apmstrategy.com](mailto:anapaula@apmstrategy.com) (A. P. Moreno), [marcos.rizolli@mackenzie.br](mailto:marcos.rizolli@mackenzie.br) (M. Rizolli), [katyahochleitner@uol.com.br](mailto:katyahochleitner@uol.com.br) (K. Hochleitner)

\*Corresponding author

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**Abstract:** Art biennials have proliferated around the world. These important events have been influencing the art market in different ways, since the first art biennial, held in Venice in 1895. This article aims to analyze and discuss the relationship between the São Paulo International Art Biennial, established in 1951, and the Brazilian art market. In this study three sources of information were used, with primary and secondary data. The first source was the Brazilian artworks exports data during the exhibition period of the São Paulo Art Biennial, as per the Ministry of Industry, Foreign Trade and Services of Brazil. The second source was a survey with the commercial staff of renowned Brazilian art galleries. The third source of information used in this paper was the systematic review of articles published in selected newspapers in USA and England about the São Paulo International Art Biennial between 2012 and 2019. The analysis of the gathered information led to the conclusion that, although the São Paulo International Art Biennial may not directly impact the Brazilian art market short-term sales, the event highlights and promotes Brazilian artists internationally, providing a solid base for the recognition of Brazilian art as good and innovative art, therefore being essential to the Brazilian art system and to the Brazilian art market.

**Keywords:** São Paulo International Art Biennial, Galleries, Art Market, Business

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## 1. Introduction

By the year 2000, there were about thirty art biennials around the world. However, this number has, since, increased to over hundreds of events in all continents. The São Paulo International Art Biennial is the second oldest art biennial, having been inaugurated in 1951, while Venice Biennale has been around since 1895. Today, the São Paulo Art Biennial is one of the most prestigious in the art world. Since beginning, it has been an event related more to cultural and political agendas, a place to introduce *avant-garde* art with global aspirations, rather than an explicit market purpose. However, the relationship between art and market has, nowadays, become an usual topic of debate.

Therefore, this article aims to identify and analyze the relation between the São Paulo International Art Biennial and the Brazilian art market. To achieve our objective, this study combines three different research methodologies. First, we

used a quantitative analysis of data on art exports from Brazil, extracted from the Ministry of Industry, Foreign Trade and Services (MDIC) website. Secondly, we used qualitative methodology with semi-structured interviews with important Brazilian art galleries. The choice of these galleries was based on their leading role in the São Paulo art market. The third methodology used was the critical systematic review of journalistic articles published in the main qualified newspapers in USA and UK, the main markets for art in the western world.

## 2. São Paulo International Art Biennial

### 2.1. The History of São Paulo International Art Biennial

The São Paulo International Art Biennial is an art exhibition that has been held every two years in the city of São Paulo since 1951. It was the first major modern art exhibition held outside European or American cultural centers. Its origin

is articulated to a series of other cultural achievements in São Paulo such as the establishment of Museu de Arte de São Paulo<sup>1</sup> - MASP (1947), Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia<sup>2</sup> (1948), Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo<sup>3</sup> - MAM/SP (1949), and Companhia Cinematográfica Vera Cruz<sup>4</sup> (1949) - all made possible by the strong institutional impulse that the arts received in Brazil at the time, benefited by patrons such as Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho, known by Ciccillo Matarazzo, and Assis Chateaubriand.

Conceived within MAM/SP, the opening of the first São Paulo Biennial was held on October 20, 1951, on the esplanade of the Trianon, the site now occupied by MASP. The space, designed by architects Luís Saia and Eduardo Kneese de Mello, exhibits 1,800 artworks from 23 countries, in addition to the national representation.

The first São Paulo art biennial took place thanks to the efforts of entrepreneur and patron Ciccillo Matarazzo, and his wife Yolanda Penteado. The second edition, held in 1953, became famous for bringing to Brazil the work *Guernica*, by Pablo Picasso.

The São Paulo art biennial takes place at the Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion in Ibirapuera Park, part of the Ibirapuera Park Compound, to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of São Paulo, in 1954. The compound included four other pavilions, planned for fairs of all kinds, amongst other structures. The Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion is most known as the Biennial Pavillion and was designed by a team of Brazilian architects led by Oscar Niemeyer. In 1962, the Biennial of São Paulo Foundation was created as an institution that idealizes and puts into practice artistic, educational, and social initiatives.

The São Paulo art biennial is considered one of the three main art exhibition events in the international art circuit, alongside the Venice Biennial and the Kassel Documenta, and the largest art exhibition in the southern hemisphere, bringing together over 500 thousand people per edition, with innovative curatorship and focus on the contemporary scene. Since its creation, 34 biennials have been produced with the participation of more than 170 countries, 16 thousand artists, and ten million visitors.

One of the most symbolic editions, however, was the 10th International Art Biennial de São Paulo (1969), which happened at the time when the Institutional Act 5 (AI-5) decreed by the federal government, then a military dictatorship. That year, dozens of artists refused to participate in the exhibition, such as Burle Marx and Hélio Oiticica, and some countries and regions did not send artistic representation to the exhibition, such as the Soviet Union. In parallel, in France, some 321 artists signed the manifesto "No to the Biennale" - or, in French, "Non à la Biennale", at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, a way to repudiate the Brazilian dictatorship. The intense movement can be understood because of the censorship of art imposed by the government during the military period.

Another historical biennial was the 24<sup>th</sup> edition in 1998, *Anthropophagy*, curated by Paulo Herkenhoff, which exposed and highlighted the Brazilian diverse cultural roots and influences another important Brazilian art critic and curator, Mario Pedrosa, was involved in the exhibition, boosting the internationalization process of Brazilian art.

In 2018, the 33<sup>rd</sup> São Paulo Art Biennial, curated by Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro, with seven artists as co-curators, invited the participants to reflect on the affective affinities between the artwork and the visitor, raising the awareness of the lack of attention that technology induces in humans. This edition reached a pick of visitors, with 736 thousand people attending.

The last edition, the 34<sup>th</sup> art biennial, took place in 2021, instead of in 2020, due to coronavirus epidemic. Besides the exhibition in the Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion and in the Ibirapuera Park area, which exceeded 1,100 works by 91 artists and 39 countries, partnerships were established with other institutions, in Brazil and abroad. The total reach of the 34<sup>th</sup> edition was of 3.4 million people, being 2.7 million digitally and 700 thousand personally, with 400 thousand in the Biennial Pavilion and 300 thousand in partner institutions. 300,000 visitors used the internet of the Biennial's partners, 1.7 million interacted on social networks and 1 million visited the exhibition's website.

## 2.2. The Internationalization of São Paulo Art Biennial

Art Biennials have been a major happening for artists to present their work and to have the chance of interacting with art from other cultures. In 2009, Chin-Tao Wu published an article in *New Left Review*, with reference to the study by Appadurai (1996), which identified six dimensions of global cultural flow: ethoscapes (flows of tourists, immigrants, refugees, foreign professionals with work visas, etc.), mediascapes (flows of information and images), technoscapes (of technology), financescapes (financial), ideoscapes (flows of cultural and political ideologies), and artscape (works of art) [2, 19].

In relation to artscape, biennials and international art fairs are a good example, for they have been growing rapidly and becoming a commercial hub, to where collectors go to get to know works of art and buy more safely, following the great flow of movement of other collectors. In terms of biennials, the internationalization of the world art market was the boom in several biennial art shows such as Johannesburg, Istanbul, Dakar, Havana, Quito, Berlin, Liverpool and Mercosur, and Brazilian artists begin to receive invitations to participate at international exhibitions, museums, and gallery circuits, leading to an appreciation of their works in the market [17].

With the "financialized" culture, art has become a business, and, consequently, works of art are seen as products of financial speculation. The biennials thus present themselves as an interesting stage for exhibition. They attract investors from all over the world in search of investment opportunities. Since what is new has a lower value, it can be more freely speculated upon, and this means that the financial risk of acquiring these works is lower. This group of explores the world, and the biennials become essential stops for them [6].

1 São Paulo Art Museum

2 Brazilian Comedy Theater

3 São Paulo Museum of Modern Art

4 Vera Cruz Cinematographic Company

### 3. The Brazilian Art Sector

The Brazilian art sector has been structuring itself for its development. In 2007, the Brazilian Contemporary Art Association (ABACT) was founded, a non-profit entity that represents 50 contemporary art galleries in Brazil and over a thousand artists, acting to align the interests of Brazilian art galleries in the sector and to promote actions to encourage the professionalization and the de-bureaucratization of the market, as well as educational actions and the promotion of dialogue between the agents of the national and international markets.

From 2008 to 2010, Latitude's actions were focused on supporting the participation of Brazilian galleries in the calendar of foreign fairs and on receiving international opinion makers and art buyers in events in Brazil, with the São Paulo Art Biennial as the main attraction. More than 200 international guests, curators, museum representatives, art critics, professionals, and potential buyers came to Brazil within Latitude's Art Immersion Trip program, which organized guided tours to the art biennial, museums, and art galleries in the country.

Between 2010 and 2014, there was a significant growth in the volume of business generated by the sector. In 2015, international business grew from 34 million dollars (2014) to 67 million dollars (2015). As the subject of this article, the Latitude<sup>5</sup> project is particularly interesting for generating an increase in the percentage of artists who entered the market for the first time in 2013, compared to the previous year [7, 8]. This program was executed through an agreement of technical and financial cooperation signed with the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (Apex) for the international promotion of projects and businesses for the Brazilian art market.

However, programs such as Latitude had already taken place in the 90s. An important case study happened in 1998, when Mari Carmen Ramírez, curator and director of the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH)<sup>6</sup>, was invited by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to visit the 22nd São Paulo International Art Biennial. On that year, during the art biennial, the MAM-SP exhibited "Brazilian Constructive Art: The Adolpho Leirner Collection". In an interview to Ana Paula Moreno, co-author of this paper, Ramírez declared that visiting the São Paulo Art Biennial was an opportunity to know Brazilian constructivism and meet the collector, Adolpho Leirner. Two decades later, the MFAH acquired Leirner's complete collection, and the museum now has a gallery dedicated to Brazilian constructivism [12]. This is an interesting example of how the São Paulo Biennial offers possibilities to explore the internationalization of Brazilian art.

<sup>5</sup> Latitude is a partnership program between Brazilian Contemporary Art Association (Abact) and Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (Apex), developed to promote the internationalization of the Brazilian contemporary art market.

<sup>6</sup> Museum of Fine Arts of Houston

### 4. Overview of the Brazilian Artwork Exports

The methodology to analyze the relation of São Paulo International Art Biennial and the Brazilian art market, specifically regarding internationalization, was data on Brazilian exports of artworks [13]. In the quantitative research, data on the export of works of art from São Paulo was taken from the Comex State<sup>7</sup> site, which is a system for querying and extracting data on Brazilian foreign trade. Monthly, detailed data on Brazilian exports and imports are disclosed, which are extracted from the Integrated Foreign Trade System (SISCOMEX), an administrative tool that integrates the activities of registration, monitoring, and control of foreign trade operations and that is based on the declaration of exporters and importers.

The definition of the research item was "artwork" with the choice of the Mercosur Common Nomenclature (NCM)<sup>8</sup> number 9701.10.00, which refers to the following qualifications: objects of art, collectors' pieces and antiques, pictures, paintings, and drawings, made entirely by hand, except for the drawings, manufactured articles decorated by hand; collages and similar decorative pictures (pictures, paintings, and drawings) [20].

The first analysis aimed to identify the main countries which imported artworks from Brazil in the period from 2000 to 2017. The result explicitly showed that the main countries were the United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain. Through qualitative interviews, the contemporary art gallerists informed us that the main art fairs in the world take place in these countries. As the focus of this article is the role of the Art Biennial, we will not delve into this analysis of the fairs.

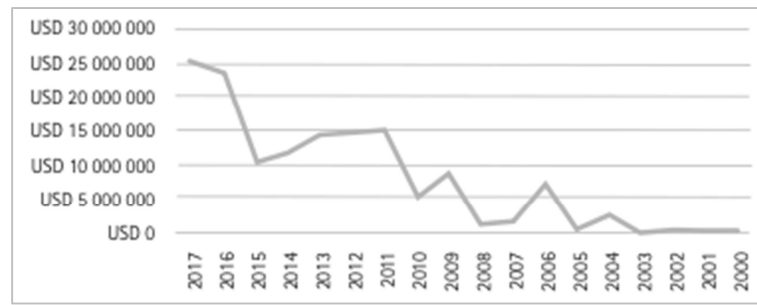
The total export results were approximately 144 million dollars a year (United States), 88 million dollars (United Kingdom) and 31 million dollars (Spain). Other countries had less relevant results. In terms of the country and period relation, Figures 1, 2 and 3 represent the results specific of the Brazilian artwork exports to the United States of America, United Kingdom and Spain.

The analysis of the export values of Brazilian art from 2000 to 2017, in the years when the São Paulo International Art Biennials took place (marked with a black arrow) shows that the art biennial year does not appear to have a direct impact on the value of Brazilian artworks exports, and, thus, it should not be considered the main reason for the export peaks, such as in

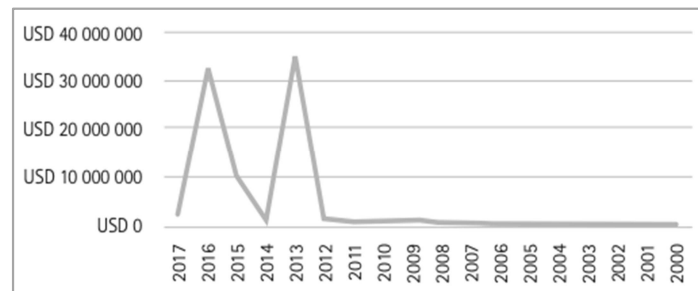
<sup>7</sup> Comex was established by Resolution of the Chamber of Foreign Trade (Comex) No. 78, of October 2, 2013. It is a service to solve doubts that aims to answer information requests related to the following subjects related to foreign trade: legislation, requirements, documents and operational and technical procedures related to import and export operations; international agreements; nomenclatures; logistics, statistics; taxes; credit, financing and support for exports; commercial promotion and business opportunities.

<sup>8</sup> Mercosur Common Nomenclature (NCM) is an eight-digit code established by the Brazilian government to identify the nature of goods and promote the development of international trade, as well as to facilitate the collection and analysis of foreign trade statistics carried out by Receita Federal.

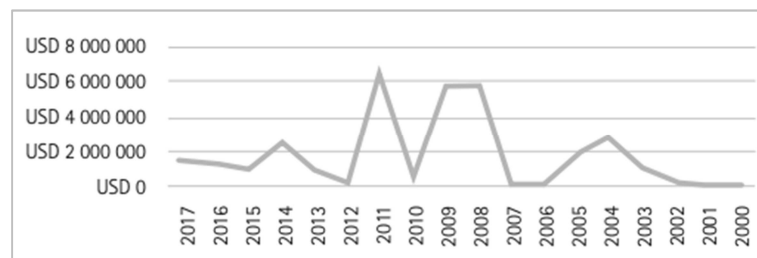
2013, 2011 and 2010 (Figure 4).



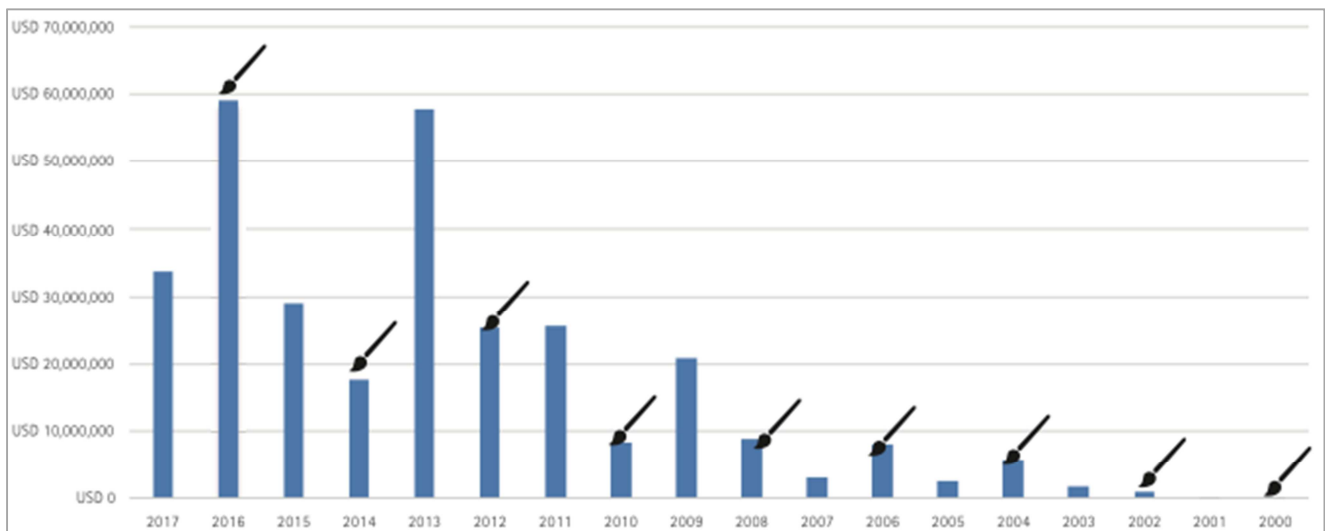
**Figure 1.** Exports of Brazilian artworks to the United States of America.



**Figure 2.** Exports of Brazilian artworks to the United Kingdom.



**Figure 3.** Exports of Brazilian artworks to Spain.



**Figure 4.** Brazilian artwork Export data by year.

We notice that, as of 2009, the highest peaks in exports of works of art occur in the second semester, the period in which the São Paulo International Art Biennial takes place. However, these results are achieved not only in the years of the biennials. For

comparison, we have highlighted in blue the periods in which the biennials took place. A survey was conducted for export data by month, specifically for the state of São Paulo, considering that the Biennial takes place in that state (see Figure 5).

Mês	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
01	USD 1,885,515	USD 20,579	USD 51,100	USD 121,231	USD 2,428,335	USD 66,206	USD 59,791	USD 8,975
02	USD 2,721,357	USD 1,420,025	USD 2,298,918	USD 3,589,352	USD 740,697	USD 545,011	USD 5,756,978	USD 102,755
03	USD 2,287,466	USD 315,857	USD 33,000	USD 955,430	USD 220,932	USD 227,937	USD 1,145,628	USD 320,507
04	USD 243,381	USD 1,189,349	USD 361,141	USD 1,827,406	USD 1,410,405	USD 376,170	USD 72,823	USD 419,402
05	USD 3,533,470	USD 3,099,583	USD 2,688,566	USD 224,246	USD 1,496,978	USD 3,982,170	USD 1,043,346	USD 1,407,046
06	USD 342,600	USD 29,341,640	USD 2,715,155	USD 2,509,281	USD 2,184,342	USD 534,496	USD 963,393	USD 368,987
07	USD 9,132,649	USD 1,162,782	USD 446,463	USD 1,548,290	USD 3,646,727	USD 124,434	USD 215,689	USD 6,100
08	USD 5,790,677	USD 1,168,609	USD 471,349	USD 695,459	USD 1,517,446	USD 171,860	USD 96,417	USD 494,824
09	USD 2,184,674	USD 9,958,388	USD 9,464,940	USD 3,969,692	USD 339,756	USD 1,584,627	USD 944,779	USD 199,855
10	USD 1,160,407	USD 563,850	USD 2,449,236	USD 1,212,985	USD 35,115,995	USD 798,805	USD 2,123,917	USD 3,496,212
11	USD 3,639,298	USD 5,551,889	USD 7,124,747	USD 971,233	USD 6,135,051	USD 16,754,205	USD 13,014,664	USD 1,447,829
12	USD 879,392	USD 5,156,884	USD 874,345	USD 43,700	USD 2,589,864	USD 72,051	USD 94,490	USD 3,609
SP:	USD 33,802,903	USD 58,951,451	USD 28,980,975	USD 17,670,319	USD 57,828,541	USD 25,239,984	USD 25,533,926	USD 8,277,931

Mês	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
01	USD 295,555	USD 1,398,719	USD 33,853	USD 1,425,150	USD 258,400	USD 2,613,332	USD 73,688	USD 215,914	USD 8,557	USD 4,988
02	USD 5,731,987	USD 4,559,963	USD 30,893	USD 48,967	USD 1,640,533	USD 45,339	USD 931,430	USD 31,794	USD 13,213	USD 1,400
03	USD 3,508,971	USD 24,532	USD 481,432	USD 5,245,950	USD 123,765	USD 44,113	USD 497	USD 5,760	USD 3,550	USD 4,000
04	USD 245,047	USD 324,515	USD 120,863	USD 370,546	USD 13,836	USD 51,059	USD 11,450	USD 226,700	USD 1,290	USD 1,060
05	USD 1,589,379	USD 964,111	USD 938,897	USD 204,630	USD 45,053	USD 1,318,653	USD 383,913	USD 2,850	USD 21,835	USD 10,860
06	USD 100,078	USD 92,138	USD 167,056	USD 13,850	USD 68,426	USD 1,088,172	USD 13,950	USD 5,300	USD 9,000	USD 20,810
07	USD 100,134	USD 109,645	USD 66,993	USD 329,915	USD 37,863	USD 9,400	USD 0	USD 6,700	USD 2,200	USD 0
08	USD 58,441	USD 99,701	USD 11,581	USD 62,297	USD 36,002	USD 39,697	USD 26,285	USD 325,100	USD 2,700	USD 0
09	USD 537,128	USD 350,350	USD 258,921	USD 65,856	USD 62,199	USD 126,973	USD 5,075	USD 1,586	USD 100,228	USD 202,500
10	USD 121,534	USD 533,961	USD 283,351	USD 67,350	USD 80,678	USD 43,704	USD 164,582	USD 83,820	USD 3,021	USD 5,000
11	USD 8,280,775	USD 320,917	USD 673,507	USD 210,354	USD 99,200	USD 64,170	USD 176,039	USD 13,353	USD 0	USD 4,321
12	USD 252,800	USD 18,311	USD 31,429	USD 38,119	USD 67,221	USD 270,287	USD 17,616	USD 35,097	USD 17,926	USD 960
SP:	USD 20,823,838	USD 8,798,871	USD 3,100,783	USD 8,084,990	USD 2,535,181	USD 5,716,903	USD 1,806,528	USD 955,976	USD 185,521	USD 257,899

Figure 5. Brazilian Art Export data by month, by year.

According to official data from the Latitude program, Latitude galleries were responsible for 41% of the total volume of the sector's exports in 2016. According to the program, the volume of exports from the Brazilian art market has been growing significantly; in 2007, US\$ 6 million were exported, and in 2015, a peak of almost US\$ 70 million was reached, an amount which represented almost twice that of 2014.

For the Brazilian researcher Natália Rava [15], “contemporary art has been breaking with established traditions and coming into line with an increasingly globalized world, it has found new mechanisms of internationalization, [...]”. These mechanisms are international art fairs and artistic exhibitions at biennials, both of which promote the international insertion of contemporary art in general.

## 5. Interview with Art Gallery Commercial Staff

We chose to interview art gallery commercial staff as, according to Pérez-Barreiro, galleries are much more involved into the artist consecration process. First, artists would go through a curatorial assessment by a museum, then an intermediary stage by smaller museums, for a collective exhibition, for an individual exhibition in a city or at a university museum, until he reached a conventional museum, where nowadays, processes have been extremely sped up due to the change in the art market, which, thanks to galleries, which more dynamic and agile, and there had never been these

many art galleries bringing options of younger artists discovered. [14]

The interviews with the art gallery commercial staff were semi-structured with the purpose of understanding what happens to the galleries during the Biennials, especially in terms of services to foreign collectors and the commercial aspect. The purpose was to evaluate the relation of the São Paulo International Art Biennial and the Brazilian art market considering galleries sales results. To this end, we chose four galleries that have been in the market for several years and have reputation and credibility: Nara Roesler, Baró, Milan and Almeida & Dale.

Founded in 1989 by Nara Roesler, the eponymous gallery is one of the main spaces for contemporary art in Brazil and represents influential Brazilian and Latin American artists since the 1950s, as well as important established and up-and-coming artists. Since 2015, the gallery is also established in New York. Its main artists are Abraham Palatnik, Antonio Dias, Artur Lescher, Hélio Oiticica, José Patrício, Tomie Ohtake, and Vik Muniz. Galeria Baró exists since 2010 and is a reference in international art in the Brazilian art circuit. It is directed by the Spanish expat Maria Baró in São Paulo. She opened a new gallery in Spain in 2019. It represents important artists such as Pablo Reinoso and David Medalla. Galeria Milan has been in business since 1986 and is currently directed by André Milan and Socorro de Andrade Lima, in São Paulo. Since its foundation, the gallery has sought to establish dialogues between the production of contemporary artists and their contribution to the formation of the new generations. Its main artists are Tunga, José Damasceno,

Henrique Oliveira and Paulo Pasta. Galeria Almeida & Dale was founded in 1998 with the objective of promoting works of Brazilian artists and has become, in more than two decades of existence, one of the most relevant galleries in the field in Brazil. The owners are Antônio Almeida and Carlos Dale, and the list of represented artists featured names such as Luiz Sacilotto, Willys de Castro, Di Cavalcanti, Flávio de Carvalho, Mestre Didi, Alberto da Veiga Guignard, Alfredo Volpi, Jandira Waters and Roberto Burle Marx.

For Cristiva Tolovi, who has been working in the art market for seven years at Galeria Milan as the person responsible for the commercial and institutional area, the São Paulo Art Biennial attracts many visitors, who are mostly professionals in the area, curators, other artists, and consultants. Tolovi also says that sales results in the market cannot be quickly analyzed, because their effect is not immediate. The sale of an artwork usually goes through a long process of decision by the collector, that can take up to one year. According to Tolovi, the biggest exports happen after the participation in international fairs, when the works are exhibited abroad and sold. This phenomenon might explain the high export value to the United States and Spain, since the main contemporary art fairs take place in these countries: Frieze, Armory, Art Basel Miami (United States) and ARCO-International Contemporary Art Fair (Spain).

According to Rosa Moreira, who has been a collector for a decade and has worked at Galeria Nara Roesler's commercial area, for three years, the art biennial agitates the city, and, during the event, the gallery receives many foreign professionals, and, due to this fact, special exhibitions are organized, and these programs increase sales.

Martin Bernard, partner at Galeria Baró, believes the São Paulo Art Biennial does not directly influence the art market. Despite of the organized guided tours for foreigners to show Brazilian art, this action does not revert necessarily into sales. It should be noted that the gallery represents artists who had their works exhibited in the Biennial but failed to sell them.

On the other hand, the gallerist Carlos Dale believes that the São Paulo International Art Biennial boosts galleries' business, especially when having the represented artists present at biennials and exhibitions. For him, the presence of artworks in such events is fundamental for an artist's career and has a commercial impact. When a gallerist chooses an artist and markets them, there is a risk, but when a biennial includes an artist, it greatly dilutes the risk of the choice and legitimates the gallery selection. For Dale, perhaps, nowadays, one of the most important challenges the art world deals with are the issue of collecting art in an association with an investment mindset. Pieces that have been exhibited in a biennial can become objects of desire for collectors, that the Biennial provides, being an important window to the world.

## 6. Systematic Review of Foreign Newspaper Articles

Contemporary art, sometimes called post-modern art, can be distinguished by several elements, such as its insertion in

the contemporary art market system, artist's independence, rupture with the modernist *avant-gardes*, use of reinterpretations and assimilations, work in the expanded field of expression, and, finally, being emergent, that is, it uses whatever is newest, including technology [1, 3, 11]. Contemporary art is disseminated and distributed in the contemporary art system, circulating from the artist to the consumer or buyer with the intermediation of agents, who operate in an environment defined by economic and social standards, based on communication and information [5]. In this system, the artist must be legitimized, or validated, by the system's agents, such as critics, art dealers, auction houses, academics, museum curators, social networks, traditional and digital news media, art awards, art commissions, and, of course, participation in events (art biennials, artist residencies, museum exhibitions, galleries, cultural spaces, art fairs, etc).

This is the reason why we decided to study the impact of the São Paulo Art Biennial in the global artworld through the eyes of the international press. We used as a premise the fact that the circulation and dissemination of Brazilian visual arts abroad positively impacts the exports of art produced in Brazil. To arrive at this premise, we read the studies of Kato [10] which showed that newspaper news impacts the image of a country, when the public has no direct contact with such a country. Another study proved that the image of the seller impacts sales [16]. And more, as per interviews with Brazilian gallery owners, cited earlier in this article, if an artwork is known to have been exhibited at the São Paulo Biennial, sales of the artist work become easier. At last, we cannot forget the known "Country of Origin Effect" or how we evaluate products based on "Made in..." [18].

The methodology we chose to understand the image of the São Paulo Art Biennial abroad was the systematic critical review of newspaper articles, with use of explicit and systematized methods, leading to scientific rigor and transparency, in such a way that the probability of any subjective bias in the result is minimized [4]. The first step was to choose the countries to be analyzed and thus we chose USA and UK, as per their higher market share in art sales of the western world [13]. Then we selected to work only with quality newspapers, ignoring the sensationalist tabloids (as per BBC's definition<sup>9</sup>). With that in mind, we prioritized the quality newspapers with higher circulation (digital and in paper). The selected newspaper titles were New York Times (NYT), Los Angeles Times (LAT) and Wall Street Journal (WSJ) in the United States of America (USA); The Guardian/The Observer (G/O); The Times (TT) and Financial Times (FT) in the United Kingdom (UK). We focused on the period between 2012 and 2019, as we wanted to include the years of 2014 and 2016 (Brazil World Soccer Cup and Rio Olympics), excluding 2020 and 2021 due to the covid pandemic. The keywords defined for the search of newspaper articles were all related to Bienal de São Paulo or São Paulo Biennial, in various forms, always in the English language. Using "Google Advanced" and excluding non-relevant

<sup>9</sup> British Broadcasting Corporation



articles such as the ones related to the São Paulo Architecture Biennial, amongst other criteria, we reached 49 articles citing the Biennial. We used Excel spreadsheets for data collection and tabulation. The article key ideas were then categorized in 22 categories, such as number of words, number of photos, artists mentioned, other art biennials mentioned, and so forth. The last step was to define if the article final impression was positive, negative, or neutral. For the evaluation was based on the balance of number of positive key ideas vs negative key ideas listed for each article. For the data synthesis we used descriptive statistical analysis due to the small number of samples (49), but also, due to the heterogeneity of ideas and keywords, the narrative method.

From the 49 articles found referring to the São Paulo Biennial, 40 were considered positive, eight neutral and only one negative. There was a higher concentration of articles in the UK vs. in the USA, although the market is bigger in the USA. More mentions were made to “1951” (first SP Biennial); ordinal numbers of the editions (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> etc.); second oldest after Venice’s; most important in a geographic zone (Latin America, South America, non-specified region). Secondly, came the ideas of quantity or number of artists, visitors, artworks, or exhibition area. There were several mentions to internationalization; discovery of foreign art; and location of the event (São Paulo Biennial Pavilion, by Oscar Niemeyer). The Venice Biennial was cited in 12 articles. Further categorizing the ideas from the articles, we discovered that the most mentioned were related to tradition, artistic and institutional legacy, large size, importance, respect, and relevance for the visual arts. Finally, 69 positive ideas were mentioned once (such as intelligent, agreeable, disruptive, etc.). Only one article was negative about the Biennial and mentioned 36 negative ideas such as tiring, immature, soulless and so on. It is important to note that we found a low number of articles per year (1.8), and only 15 exclusive articles [9].

## 7. Conclusion

From the research carried out, we can conclude that the São Paulo International Art Biennial brings many foreigners to the city, such as curators, collectors, investors, and several art world professionals. During the event duration, guided tours and parallel events are organized by art galleries and art advisors, as a strategy to increase sales.

Using the MDCI database, we noticed that the highest export numbers of art from Brazil have happened in the second semester, the same time of the year when the São Paulo Art Biennial takes place. However, according to the interviews with sales staff from selected art galleries, despite the high number of international visitors that come to the art Biennial, the conversion rate to sales is not so obvious. For the gallerists, art exports are usually more related to their participation at international art fairs.

We also found out that, for the legitimization process of Brazilian art in foreign countries, the São Paulo Biennial plays an important role, generating positive articles in quality newspapers, in the main art markets of the western world, with

content related to new and upcoming artists and trends, being respected as one of the most important biennials in the world, associated with tradition, artistic and institutional legacy, as well as relevance for the visual arts. The São Paulo Art Biennial may not be relevant for the short-term sales, but Brazilian galleries believe it provides a solid base for the recognition of Brazilian art as good and innovative art, thus being essential to the Brazilian art system and, therefore, to the Brazilian art market.

It is worth noticing that the São Paulo Art Biennial takes place at the Cicillo Matarazzo Pavilion, in Ibirapuera Park, the same venue of another important event for the Brazilian art market. It is SP-Arte, an international art fair that has occurred in São Paulo annually since 2005 (except for 2020 and 2021). Hochleitner detected a slight confusion between the two events, as perceived by some visitors of SP-Arte [9]. These visitors considered SP-Arte as an international art exhibition like the São Paulo Art Biennial. If the Cicillo Matarazzo Pavilion is locally known as the Biennial Pavilion, then the confusion would make even more sense. However, they are events that belong to different categories of the contemporary global art system, as defined by Anne Cauquelin [5].

The numbers of SP-Arte, in terms of public visitation, gallery participation, and sales have shown steady growth, except for the years of the Covid pandemic. Its 14<sup>th</sup> edition took place from April 11 to 15, 2018, at the Cicillo Matarazzo Pavilion, in São Paulo, with the participation of 132 celebrated national and international art galleries and 33 design exhibitors. About 34,000 people visited the event, and, according to data provided by the fair, sales grew 24% vs. 2017.

Finally, the export data we have analyzed showed that the main countries to where Brazilian art has been exported are United States, Spain, and the United Kingdom, countries that host the largest contemporary art fairs in the world. We believe this relation could be the object of a future research study.

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