

# The Process of Empowering the Artist in the Art Market

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**Abstract.** The accessibility and purchase of artwork these days open up more opportunities for artists to exhibit, sell their work on a larger scale and gain recognition. However, simultaneously, there is high competition between all participants in the art market. Not knowing how to start, the creator faces challenges and obstacles to becoming a well-known art representative. In this case, artists can be helped by art galleries, which allow creators to show their creations and provide other support. In that instance, the gallery plays a role in empowering the artist to participate in the art market. Thus, this study aims to explore the process of empowering an artist to participate in the art market. It is important to understand how this process works and helps artists' careers, so the presentation includes the results of research on artists and galleries, models, the empowerment process and emerging problems.

**Key words:** empowering process, gallery, artist, empowerment, art market.

## Introduction

### *Relevance of the article*

It can be argued that globalisation has positively impacted the art world. Works of art are more easily accessible and purchased, and artists have more opportunities for recognition and sales. However, the prevailing high competition makes it more difficult for artists to establish themselves in the art market. Artists want to make themselves visible by participating in exhibitions, competitions, projects and other activities, in which art galleries play an essential role by allowing artists to showcase their work and by providing other kinds of support. Galleries seek out and invite artists who want to present their work. Research is needed to understand more about what actions and processes art galleries are doing to have a positive impact on creators and how this can be used to strengthen and improve those processes.

### *Problem investigation level*

An analysis of the available scientific literature on the topic of empowerment in social sciences is presented. Interviews were also conducted with Lithuanian galleries and artists from different disciplines. The collection of this theoretical and practical information gave a broader understanding of the impact of galleries on artists and their work cycles, and allowed for a deeper understanding of this topic. The combination of theory and practice provided the opportunity to create a more accurate model.

### *Scientific problem*

It is noted that in Lithuania, the problem of empowerment has been studied in scientific fields such as education and social sciences, but in the field of art, it has not been possible to find. Thus, given the lack of development and research on this topic in the field of art in Lithuania, this study seeks to begin a broader development of the critical topic of art management, which analyses the process of empowering the artist in the art market.

**Object of the article** – the gallery's empowerment process for the artist.

**Aim of the article** is to disclose the process of empowering the artist in the art market.

### *Objectives of the article:*

1. To analyse the concept of gallery, art market and empowerment;
2. To provide an overview of how the process of empowerment helps artists and galleries;
3. To discuss the model of the gallery's role in empowering the artist to participate in the art market, created by empirical research and theoretical material.

## ***Methods of the article***

The theoretical part uses comparative analysis and synthesis of scientific literature with a summary. The other part uses qualitative research and analysis of responses received during interviews from representatives of Lithuanian galleries and artists.

### **1. Theoretical aspects of the process of empowering the artist in the art market**

#### ***The concept of the gallery and the art market***

A gallery is defined as one of the leading organisations that presents artists and their work to the public, buyers, and other persons involved in the field of art. It is stated that galleries represent artists, participate in developing their careers, participate in the market, and provide spaces for exhibition. It can be stated that, according to the concepts, the goals of galleries are to provide assistance to the artist and shape public perception. According to Tulytė (2014), the main functions of art and cultural institutions have not changed to date – museums, galleries exhibit and show artists' work.

In galleries, visitors to exhibitions can get acquainted with the exhibited works of artists, which can have a significant impact on the artist's career. Among these gallery visitors are not only art lovers, but also potential buyers, collectors, investors and other participants in the art market. It can be said that the gallery brings all these individuals together in one space, where artists can be observed, evaluated and expand their career opportunities. Moureau & Sagot-Duvaurox (2012, p. 48) state that the gallery becomes a "centre of the art economy" and becomes, as Novelskaitė, & Timinskienė (2016, p. 220) write, "an intermediary between the artist and the buyer of the artwork".

It is essential to mention that the Lithuanian art market, compared to the leaders of the world art market, is extremely small, still forming and growing. Specific and chaotic – this is how Mockutė (2013) describes the Lithuanian art market and states that supply exceeds demand, there is a lack of large collectors and independent art critics, trade is disproportionately increasing in the primary market, and shadow trade is taking place and auction functions are being taken over by galleries. These problems affect various market participants, such as artists, gallery owners, etc. However, Mockutė (2013) notes that the Lithuanian art market is not lagging behind the trends of the global art market. Nagrockaitė (2020) states that as digitalisation accelerates, a number of cultural institutions are moving to online spaces. More and more different art platforms are being presented virtually, making them more accessible to investors from other countries and familiar to the younger generation.

#### ***The concept of empowerment***

Empowerment is associated with power. According to Parsons, "power is the ability of a social system to achieve its goals by allocating resources, responsibilities and ensuring commitments of institutions and actors" (Ruškus, 2013, p. 11). Jurevičienė (2011) describes the process of empowerment as an encounter between the empower and the empowered with a problematic situation and an attempt to overcome it in an interaction of equivalence, in other words, mutual communication, working and creating with a belief in the other person is important (Venclovienė, 2015).

The authors have different emphases on the aspects of empowerment that are important. Some of them refer to the power to rule and control others or to the possession of power in general, which highlights the extrinsic motivation for empowerment. Others present empowerment as the ability to be autonomous, the freedom to fulfil oneself, to use the resources available and provided, thus focusing more on the internal empowerment of the individual. According to the research on the empowerment process of Lord, & Hutchison (1993), empowerment is an individual and continuous process. Ruškus (2013) also mentions that empowerment itself has neither an end nor a starting point from which to begin, as it is an ongoing effort. This process takes place as individuals become more aware of their abilities and of alternatives to the experience of powerlessness, and thus create new directions for themselves.

However, noting both the definitions of empowerment and the discussed observations by the other authors, one can agree with Imbrasaitė (2015), who argues that the concept of empowerment

is multifaceted and varies depending on the unit of analysis and the context presented. Empowerment can be defined in general terms as having the power to perform certain actions, but in addition to power, empowerment through skills, independence, working with the person in general, and the provision of social support are very important. The scientific literature identifies 5 levels of empowerment:

1. **Individual empowerment.** Venclovienė (2015) describes personal empowerment as helping (mediating) someone to develop their potential through concrete actions – to begin to increasingly take more control, to manage one’s own mental and social reality, when one is no longer able to help oneself, to change and improve one’s current situation. Individual empowerment is said to reduce the powerlessness of a person in a problematic situation, encourages change and transformation of one’s environment, critical and responsible thinking and action, and provides freedom of choice, the necessary knowledge, skills, resources and encouragement to take responsibility for one’s actions and lifestyle. Venclovienė (2015) identifies the following factors: encouragement, motivation, training (education), self-esteem building, individual, community and societal relationships and resources.
2. **Group empowerment.** Sadan (2004) identifies it as an important empowerment tool, due to its excellent education of critical awareness, as a self-help tool (Ruškus, 2013). Donaldson (2004) argues that social action-oriented groups have the ambition to change the systemic barriers affecting the lives of group members. It contributes to the self-confidence and self-efficacy of participants, improving personal skills. Groups are seen as an ideal tool for promoting individual empowerment: they provide social and emotional support and the skills needed for future socio-political action.
3. **Community empowerment.** Sadan (2004) describes it as better control over environments and decision-making in community-based environments. The community teaches people to make decisions in a group, to solve common problems, and to mobilise resources for the common good. People jointly formulate and set the goals they need, the means to achieve them and evaluate the results.
4. **Organisational empowerment** is linked to the organisational context and is defined as “a practice or set of practices involving the delegation of responsibility downwards, providing employees with a greater role in their primary job tasks” (Leach et al., 2003, based on Imbrasaitė et al., 2015). Organisational empowerment refers to the fact that social service organisations are ideal for the formation of empowerment-oriented social groups. Ideal because of the professionals involved, the presence of a social service network and the availability of organisational resources, which are valuable in raising critical awareness, developing education on strategies and tactics for action, organising and mobilising joint action. In empowerment theory, Zimmerman (2012) argues that organisations that empower individuals to take control of their lives are empowering organisations. Those organisations that are successful in creating, influencing decisions or offering effective service alternatives are empowered organisations. They can thrive among competitors, achieve their objectives and develop through efficiency gains.
5. **Psychological empowerment.** It has been argued that psychological empowerment can make a significant contribution to the creativity of an employee, positively influencing intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1996; Spreitzer, 1995). Intrinsic motivation is seen as one of the mediating elements linking empowerment between leadership and creativity. According to the authors, it acts as a link between psychological empowerment and creative outcomes (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Spreitzer (1995) defines empowerment as a process or psychological state manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, determination and impact.

## 2. Analysis of the research results

### *The start of the empowerment process: gallery and artist*

Galleries use various routes to engage with artists, which helps them discover new creators. There are **2 main ways** that galleries have put forward: **Artists are sought by the gallery itself.** It observes, participates in the Lithuanian and international art field, participates in the defence of Bachelor and Master diplomas, discovers at exhibitions or through recommendations from other art professionals. **Artists contact the gallery.** They come by themselves, provide information, send their portfolio to the gallery.

Collaboration is executed step-by-step, often with the gallery assessing, observing and testing the artist before offering them a contract. Therefore, if the artist himself addresses the gallery with both talent and works of high artistic value, but does not match the visual image of the gallery, this does not necessarily guarantee that the gallery will accept the artist or that he or s/he will be included in the list of artists represented by the gallery. The analysis of the interviews also shows a different scenario, where the gallery provides a place for the artist to exhibit, but does not try to present his/her work, to engage with dissemination, which, especially for a young artist who does not yet know how things work in the field of art, is a difficult way to start his career path. In the opinion of the artist, a gallery has to work, to create its audience, its field of people, to advertise, to provide information about openings, etc. Others collaborate because it is difficult for the artist himself to do commercial activities, let alone to get into art fairs and other places, which is what a gallery does. It could be argued that the support of the gallery helps the artist to be more concentrated on the creative activity if the gallery carries it out.

For an artist to sign a contract with a gallery means that the gallery chooses to represent the artist, but artists point out that some clauses in the agreement may prevent them from signing it. According to the artists, it is essential to note whether the gallery allows collaborations with other galleries, whether the gallery puts enough work into sales, whether the artist also sells well from his studio, and it is not necessary for him to have a gallery as an intermediary between him and the buyer. It is essential to consider whether the gallery is able to accelerate and enhance the process for the artist, whether the promises and plans of the gallery are realistic, feasible, and will be realised, or if they are just between the lines of a contract. It could be argued that artists find it essential that the gallery does not restrict their freedom, but rather that it seeks to give the artist the broadest possible access to the art field.

The analysis of the responses of the galleries has highlighted the following criteria for galleries in their choice of artists:

1. **Career of an artist.** Continuity, potential and attractiveness of the artist.
2. **Human factors.** Consideration is given to whether the artist is open to collaboration and the trusting relationship between the gallery and the artist.
3. **Reaction of the audience to the creativity.** Galleries test, see if the artist they are planning to collaborate with is suitable for the gallery, and receive positive reactions and interest from gallery visitors, collectors and art lovers.
4. **Corresponding to the face and style of the gallery.** Galleries develop their activities, strategies, vision, which corresponds to the list of artists.
5. **Contemporary art tendencies.** Galleries follow and observe what is happening in the field of contemporary art, what the trends are, and they choose and look for new talents based on that.

These criteria help galleries to assess and select the best artist for them in advance and to offer them the next stage of their collaboration.

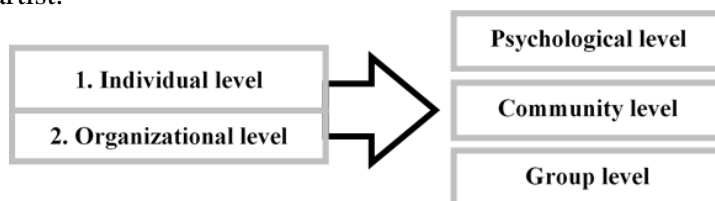
The collaboration between the gallery and the artist can best be described as a mutual collaboration in which both sides help and communicate with each other in one way or another. The gallery shares, introduces its contacts, its art field, its projects, tries to overcome, presents its work, writes projects for fairs, exhibitions. Artists also share their contacts with collectors, curators, museums, media, journalists. The representative argues that it is not so much an appointment as

a collaboration with the artist, with a shared commitment to complete projects, so there is a responsibility for both the gallery and the artist.

Artists unanimously say that galleries have had a significant influence on them. They get the opportunity to become more visible in the media and the art world. The gallery is like a first step into the art field and market; it helps them to understand how things are going, motivates them, and financially contributes to the development of creativity and making friends and contacts. Galleries have highlighted that young artists often lack technical, self-presentation skills, the creation of a portfolio, metrics, how the work has to be submitted to the gallery, what form to receive it in, signature, dimensions. The galleries introduce them to the market and management processes, pricing, how the gallery works, etc.

#### ***Levels of empowerment, ways and measures used by galleries for artists***

The empowerment levels according to the galleries are all used, stating that the empowerment levels are all closely linked, and what is missing is apparent when you start working with the artists, and then you try to get everything in order. It is stressed that the gallery works specifically for the artists and seeks to have a personal relationship with them, motivate them, and stimulate their creativity. The representative of the gallery stresses that individual empowerment comes first, followed by collaboration at the **organisational level**. The others he calls nonessential, as they may be used more by some artists and less by others. Based on the responses received, Fig. 1, compiled by the galleries, shows the order of importance of the levels of empowerment to the gallery to empower the artist.

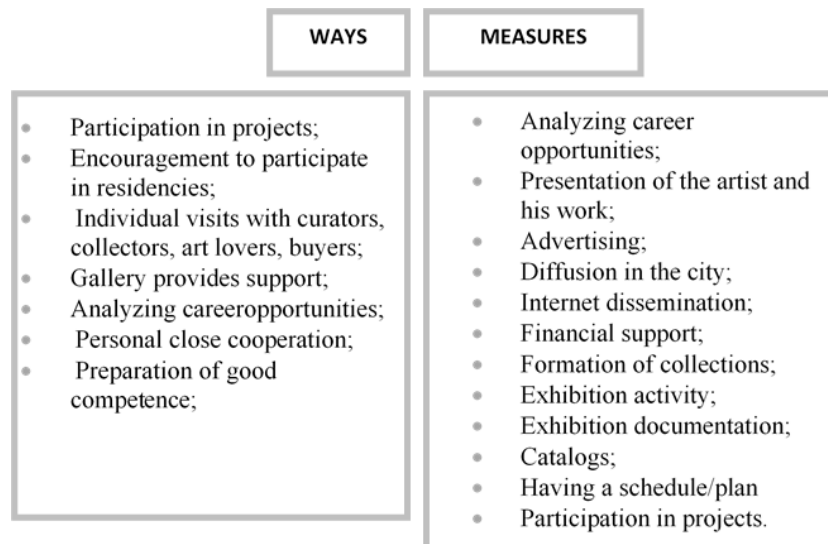


Source: created by the authors.

**Fig. 1. The importance of levels of empowerment when collaborating with an artist**

Galleries empower the artist in the local primary market and the international market. The artist starts in the local market (national) and then in other markets, depending on the plan of the gallery, strategy and programme for that year. So, different options can accelerate the expected success and results. The international market gives the artist a stronger and more reliable hold and opens up other opportunities, as it is a more inclusive art market. The distinction is that markets are different, with trends varying depending on whether the market is local or international. Therefore, the representatives of the gallery say that in shaping the gallery programme, they have to think about what they will present at art fairs and exhibitions in Lithuania, which is due to the difference in audience and demand.

An analysis is being made of where it could be shown, and targeted exhibitions suitable for one or another artist are being sought. Gallery representative claims that by holding an exhibition in a gallery, the artist is already empowered for further steps, and it is important for the artist to take advantage of the given opportunity to be noticed by other galleries and to be active, announce, and inform that he has been presented by one or another gallery. The most important thing for an artist is to create their own biography. This is helped by active participation in projects and encouragement to participate in residencies, which open up many experiences and paths by releasing creative potential. Galleries representatives distinguished the following successful ways and measures in the empowerment process were highlighted (Fig. 2).



Source: created by the authors.

**Fig. 2. Ways and measures of the empowerment process**

Ways and measures of empowerment that helped artists are dissemination, advertising on internet pages, competitions for art graduates, fairs, obtaining contacts, catalogues, schedule/ plan, documentation for projects of exhibition, prizes and funding. The benefits for artists if they are empowered in the art market are awareness, visibility, audience, contacts, direct and indirect acquaintances with artists, with other galleries, with collectors, art fairs. A gallery is said to have a certain authority that can help generate more interest in the presentation of the artist to an audience. Artists point out that more galleries are needed for smoother empowerment, more open ones adapted to young artists, more open doors, easier access, so that you do not have to wait 1-2 years in line.

***Process of gallery empowerment***

**The process of empowerment is not permanent;** the representative of the gallery says that this process can stop the creative path of the artist for some time or forever. However, another representative of the gallery points out that this is a constant process, because when working with artists they have and need to be empowered differently and specifically, and the scale is different, but sometimes there can be creative pauses and then it stops empowerment, renewed motivation to work and empowerment is continued. And this empowerment is present in all phases of the artist’s growth. Gallery monitors the impact and results of the empowerment, because it simply adds to the gallery process itself. And it can be seen from the results whether the artist is invited to exhibitions and elsewhere, when asked whether his works are bought, purchased for collections. Plans are being prepared for 1–2 years, how many exhibitions and fairs of local international projects will be held. The number of international shows, museum acquisitions, involvement in private collections, and travelling and sold works is measured. Those results consist of financial, publications, establishment of international relations. Regarding the goals set, the gallery claims that such goals are not final, the main general goal of the gallery is that if the work is worthwhile, it is important to do more for it, because, as the representatives of the galleries say, there are many side circumstances that arise that do not know in which way it can turn everything. It is important to constantly support an active and well-creating artist by participating in that “cauldron”.

The representatives of the galleries distinguish that the main powers granted to the artist are the power and freedom left for creation by removing the managerial, informational and technical part, and in this way the artist can be less hindered and concentrate more on his creative process. The gallery provides the opportunity to use the name of the gallery, network, contacts, receive recommendations for residencies, acquire a certain status of the gallery, state and international scholarships, the ability to be recognised and to be visible in its own field by having a connection with the gallery. An artist can manage himself and often does, but there are certain limitations, such

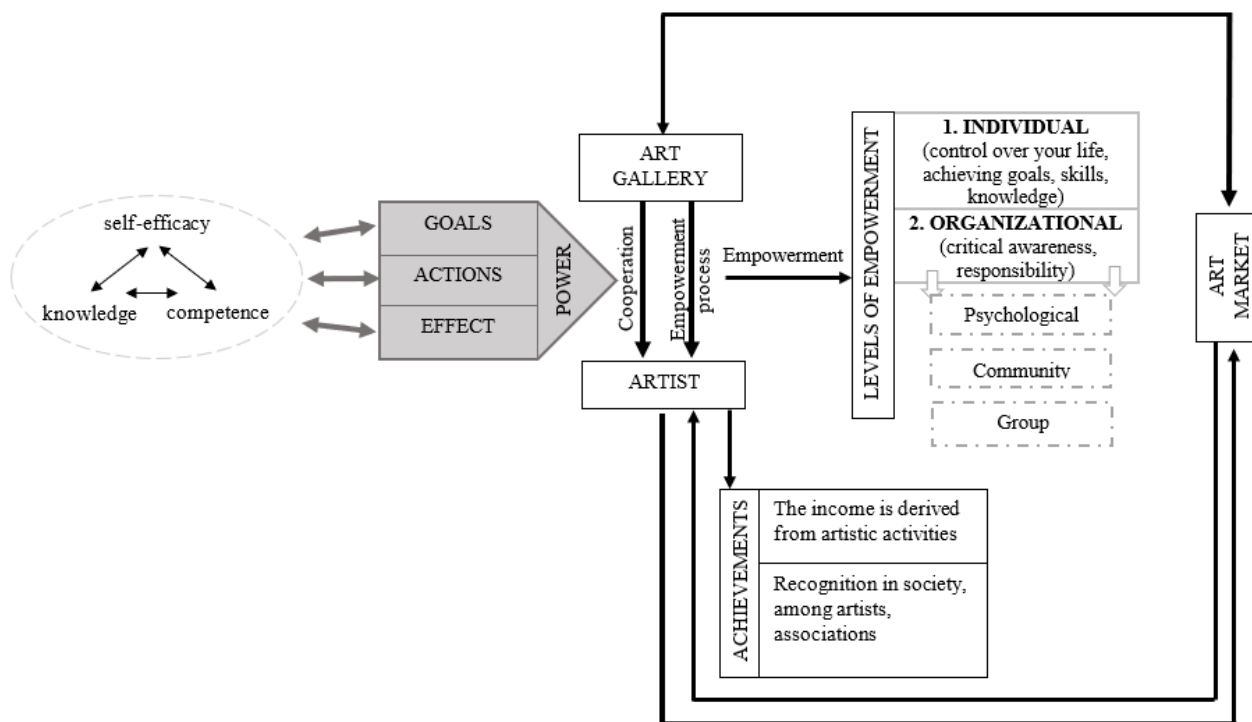
as the fact that only galleries participate in most contemporary art fairs. Therefore, although an artist can participate in various platforms, they need to work with a gallery to get into big, recognised projects. The gallery claims that it is a guarantor for the collector, museum, etc., because it is also a legal guarantor, where everything is done officially with documents, attestations, certificates, etc.

The artists who participated in the study unanimously say that although it can be difficult to enter the art market on your own and the gallery has a huge role in empowering the artist, it is not a complete guarantee. The most important thing is the talent and work of the artist. These things are inseparable because the gallery seeks to empower the talented artist. Gallery highlights the talent of the artist, communicates and creates a marketable product, but without talent, the gallery can be powerless. Nowadays, with the existence of the virtual world, the artist has many opportunities to realise and represent himself in various spaces, and he can be more successful in entering that international market, attracting an audience that can invest in his works of art. However, if the creator creates something that is not suitable for the eyes of the galleries or the audience, it may mean that it will be necessary to look for alternatives for the artist himself. They notice that what is important and sought after now is what stands out, is unique, authentic and unrepeatable. It is said that it is very good when a good artist meets a good gallery, and there is a mutual interaction.

#### ***A theoretical model of the role of the gallery in empowering the artist to participate in the art market***

Based on the collected and analysed scientific sources, interviews with gallery representatives and artists, a theoretical model was created (Fig. 3). This article will focus more on how the empowerment process is reflected in the model.

The **empowerment process** in the model begins with gallery and artist familiarity and collaboration, which was evident in the responses of the survey from both galleries and artists. In the course of **collaboration**, contracts and other agreements are signed, indicating the beginning of their joint activities. Only two empowerment levels are primary. First, the **Individual level** of empowerment, in which the collaboration between the artist and the gallery begins, when there is a personal discussion, the possibilities of the artist in the gallery. Second, the **Organisational level** of empowerment is used to empower an artist when they are already represented by a gallery and are part of that organisation, in this case, the gallery. The remaining three levels of empowerment, psychological, community and group levels of empowerment, are complementary. This is where the gallery plays an important role, using one or more levels of empowerment depending on what the artist needs at the time to gain the missing knowledge, skills, motivation, etc. During empowerment, the gallery monitors the impact of actions based on whether the artist gains knowledge, competence related to the goal and self-efficacy. After the gallery and the artist discuss the effectiveness of the **empowerment process**, the empowerment continues to participate in the primary, regional, and national art market. The artist and gallery evaluate the results of the empowerment, and if there is a need, then the process of empowerment is continued.



Source: created by the authors.

**Fig. 3. A model of the role of the gallery in empowering the artist to participate in the art market**

## Conclusions

1. The gallery is one of the main localised places where the art market operates and the public is introduced to the work of artists. The art market is an economic and cultural space consisting of various art representatives, where exchange takes place, and supply and demand are formed. Galleries provide information about exhibitions, represented artists and engage in the sale of works of art.
2. Empowerment is a multifunctional, multifaceted and changing concept. There are 5 levels of empowerment that can be used, one or more levels depending on the need. Empowerment is an ongoing process that is used to set a goal that is beneficial to the individual.
3. The research showed that the empowerment process consists of levels of empowerment that are used in all phases of an artist, from a young to an established artist. The activation process can be stopped, but it keeps repeating and restarting when needed. All 5 levels of empowerment that was described in the theoretical part are also used in practice, but galleries are distinguished by the fact that 2 of them are used to initiate collaboration with the artist – individual and organisational, which help the gallery create a personal relationship with the artist and involve them in the activities of the gallery. Empowerment levels are divided into basic and non-basic. This individual level is the first level through which the empowerment process takes place; the gallery will start communicating with the artist. The next is the organisational level, which occurs when the gallery and the artist collaborate or sign a contract, and the gallery represents the artist. The other three, psychological, community and group, are also used, but depending on the artist's needs, some may need more, others less. Another process is collaboration, because after the research, it became clear that collaboration starts with the creation of further activities of the gallery and the artist.



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