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**THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF ARTISTS:
A NEW APPROACH TO THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF ART ¹**

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The history of learned occupations or professions in the modern era has become an active and lively subsection of social history in recent years, especially where Germany is concerned. We now know not only a great deal about the historical details and patterns of the "professionalization process" in general but also about many discrete professions, from "old" professions like medicine and law to "new" ones such as engineering and teaching, as well as to a host of academic disciplines that one might call "subprofessions" such as clinical (as opposed to experimental) psychology, physics and folklore.

There are a few "learned professions"ⁱ which depart significantly enough from the classical patterns of medicine or law (which many researchers are tempted to stylize as the "queen professions" for their tone-giving importance for others). Despite their antiquity and the clear fact that they also underwent a modernization process at roughly the same time or a little later than others, the occupations of clergyman, military officer and artist, to name the most prominent, faced serious obstacles to realizing their group potential for shaping the destinies of their members. With the churches and the armed forces, one of the most important barriers to the secular process of professionalization lay obviously in the hierarchical structure of these institutions. Such an explanation is useless for artists, who if anything suffered (or perhaps one could also say enjoyed) the impediment of too little structure in their collective activity.ⁱⁱ Nor could artists be excused (as most officers and pastors could) as being late or indifferent about professionalization because of deeply-ingrained conservative political and social outlooks. On the contrary, especially in Germany, some artists came to occupy the most forward positions of innovation and critique of existing social as well as aesthetic values by the end of the nineteenth century and ever after.

Perhaps because of the somewhat inchoate and seemingly disorganized nature of the world of the arts, most students of modern social history and professions have steered clear of engagement with this fascinating crowd. Yet further acquaintance

¹Unpublished invited lecture at Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, November 1996.

with the subject reveals that artists did in fact attempt to professionalize, and -- even if their efforts were not as successful as those of some others -- these efforts left a clear record of articulated demands and statements. It appears to me that this record is promising and worth exploring as a path into broader issues of what one might call the "social history of artists."

The social history of art, or more precisely, the social history of artists, has until fairly recently been a neglected stepchild of both art history and "mainstream" history. The tendency of Western art history to concentrate on the individual artist and his (and I underline the masculine adjective here) personality is as old as the Renaissance. It has also been reinforced since the middle of the nineteenth century by the rise of the system of private dealers and critics that together have come to shape public taste in art. As an early and perceptive study of the sociology of painting in France argues,

It was artists, not paintings, who were the focus of the dealer-critic institutional system. The new system triumphed in part because it could and did command a bigger market than the academic-governmental structure. Equally important, however, it dealt with an artist more in terms of his production over a career and thus provided a rational alternative to the chaos of the academic focus on paintings by themselves.ⁱⁱⁱ

The capitalist commodification of art that accompanied the growth of an art-consuming urban bourgeoisie and of public collections also promoted concentration on "safely dead" artists, whose "careers" could no longer produce unwelcome surprises that might reduce the market value of their individual works.^{iv} For these and other reasons, the most socially-prominent and potentially profitable sides of the modern market for artists' services have deflected attention from the history of artists as a collectivity to an exaggerated concentration on individual artists with the potential or reality of fashionability.

"Mainstream" historians have different reasons for neglect, one of the most important of which is our own inadequate exposure to or training in the arts. Still, ignorance is no excuse, and it can certainly be argued that artists could hardly be more difficult to understand and appreciate than the princes, statesmen and generals who have constituted the main object of modern historians' study.

Granted, artists as a group are neither as uniform nor as colorless as members of most other professions. Dramatic posturing or the disguise of mystery can be said to belong in the professional toolkit of the modern artist just as anodynes and high-speed drills do in that of the dentist. But the tendency to wrap professional knowledge in mystery may be described as a constitutive requisite of all "expert" knowledge: if it were easily accessible to the laity, it would no longer be in scarcity and hence not "expert." Indeed, to the extent that formal schooling and qualifying examinations -- markers of professionalization in many other modern professions -- played a less pronounced role in designating artists, one must face the possible explanation that the mystery of "talent" already existed as a designator of "expert status". Historians who have taken the trouble to study other professions, even though not trained in their skills, have encountered no insuperable problems in understanding their collective behavior and statements. Indeed, part of the "lobbying" function of modern professional organizations depends for its success on the ability to persuade laypersons of the justness of their demands.

By the same token, one need not rely on individual artists or their often elliptical and idiosyncratic statements, nor take very seriously the myth of verbal "inarticulateness" that many visual artists themselves perpetuate and perhaps believe. While it may be true that many artists gravitate to their profession because they discover early on that they have a different way of seeing or describing the world than logic or verbal rhetoric would prescribe, a glance at the statements of artists' organizations quickly demonstrates that artistic vision by no means precludes verbal articulateness!

Naturally the social history of artists encompasses far more than the relatively narrow aspect of "professionalization," which I regard more as a methodologically tried path into a much vaster forest left obscure by the traditional preoccupations of western art history. Thus it may be appropriate to say a few more words here about the professionalization process as applied to artists, especially in modern Germany.

If the term "professional artist" means something, it presumably means the opposite of an "amateur artist," a person who pursues art as a primary occupation. (Indeed this point immediately raises another, concerning the difficulty of market control for artists: what sick person would consult an "amateur

surgeon"?) Is art a profession at all? What comes to mind when we say "professionalized artist"?

Theories of professionalization or (not quite the same thing) Berufsbildung presuppose a dynamic that creates new or transforms old occupations and differentiates them from other forms of work, even in the same general field. This differentiation by no means implies the withering away or suppression of traditional, alternative or "amateur" forms, but rather a redefinition of their status. For example, the professionalization of medicine over the past century and a half has not meant the end of midwives, herbalists or lay healers, much as the medical profession would like to dismiss (and sometimes even suppress) them as "quacks". Nor has it meant the disappearance of family members caring for each other in times of normal illness. Similarly, the "professionalization" of music has not spelled the end of street musicians or amateur recitals.

How can one call "artists" professionals (or even members of a more or less learned occupation) or "art" a profession when they range from street musicians to cult composers, from Sunday painters to Picassos? The answer is that amateurs, part-timers, and even the lay public in some ways belong (with professional artists themselves) to an interest group -- but not to a profession. The degree to which the "professionals" in the interest group can organize and structure it, based to a large extent on controlling its institutional gates and exchanges, constitutes a measure of the "professionalization" process itself.

In another, broader sense, "professionalizing" occupations has meant the attempt to restrict the "professional group" to certified practitioners of a complex kind of work, requiring years of higher (rather than apprentice) education and training, and to members of a powerful lobbying association comparable to the German Medical Association. The characteristics of modern professions^v fly in the face of a common image in the modern Western iconography of the artist -- as lonely genius or, perhaps a bit closer to historical reality, starving visionary clinging to the individualist's rocky path. Yet as both Arnold Hauser's Social History of Art and etymological dictionaries remind us, "artist" and "artisan" have the same medieval root. One of the preconditions for the Renaissance's particular myth of the titanic creative loner was precisely the forceful breakup or marginalization of powerful medieval artists' guilds, and princely patronage was a substitute for the professional self-reliance of the shattered artisanal organizations. Even so,

professional associations of artists re-emerged after the Renaissance in the guise of art academies, which were at least as important as marketing and lobbying combines with monopolistic tendencies as they were teaching institutions, and even the art maitrises survive alongside them, especially in the area of handicrafts. In the end, both extreme professionalization (or its medieval variant, guildification) and individualism are not so much mutually exclusive opposites as mutually distant points on a continuum of possible forms of the social organization of art.

In Germany as in France by the late nineteenth century, a system of organization incorporating both royal academies and independent artists' associations had emerged, but it was soon to be undermined and transformed by the broader forces of industrialization, urbanization, the growth of the middle class, and that assault on classicism we know as Modernism. An alliance of art academies and Künstlervereine that had managed to control the market to some degree and assure a modicum of security and income to their members over most of the century began to dissolve and lose its effectiveness. While the public clientele undoubtedly grew at the same time, the size and frequency of exhibitions such as salons and the number of artists competing for attention exploded disproportionately. Like members of other learned occupations, whether old ones like medicine or "new" ones like chemistry, were busily organizing for self-protection and the promotion of a common professional agenda, artists (and not only visual artists) were also facing heightened competition, rapid innovations, and declining economic and social security.

Why did artists not follow the path of the German Medical Association or the Association of German Engineers in what sociologist Margali Larson dubbed "the professionalization project"?^{vi} In fact they did make the attempt. But the history of efforts by artists to professionalize has been little studied, possibly because such initiatives were not usually crowned with the clear-cut victories claimed by German dentists and schoolteachers.

What follows is a set of suggestions about why the professionalization of German artists should be investigated, how it can be treated, and what we might be able to learn about the social history of art and the cultural values of modern societies from such a treatment.

Why Should Artists' Attempts to Professionalize Interest Us?

I see at least four answers to the question of why the subject is worthy of further research. The first is closest to my own recent approaches to studying the graduated "products" of the German higher educational system, the "learned professions." Most scholars of German professions have neglected artists as a professional group because their evolution did not fit a pattern common to most other learned professions. So the first answer is: to find out why artists have had such difficulty "professionalizing" and with that, imposing their own standards on the contemporary world whose aesthetic vision they could be said to shape.

Second, what professional activity does, whether successful or not, is reveal the parameters of discourse (including discourse about self-definition and perceived social role) within a large part, perhaps even the majority, or practitioners. Most professionalizing occupations are concerned with defining and "raising" the Stand, protecting and improving the economic position and working conditions of its members, helping define and enforce the "gatekeeping" functions of educational qualifications, licensing, professional ethics, and safeguarding the prestige and honor of the collectivity. Discourse about these points reveals a great deal about how entire professions or subsets within them perceived their task and place in society, as well as dissonance with the views held by influential groups in that society, such as politicians, economic elites, the aristocratic and bourgeois strata (including a large part of their clientele), and so on.

One of the fascinating subtopics of this self-defining discourse (and which reveals some of the reasons artists had difficulty "professionalizing") lies in the chronic difficulty (shared with engineers, among other "new" professions) of defining the social borders of the "artists' world". It would appear, for example, that most painters and sculptors (the most exclusive meaning of the term "artist") in the nineteenth century in Germany and certainly in France^{vii} came from bourgeois social backgrounds and could thus loosely be grouped with the Bildungsbürgertum. But rapid technological and social changes produced a whole new stratum of "artists" who had previously been considered "artisans" and whose social background and status was not so secure, but who, by the end of the last century, began to demand and enjoy the kind of advanced education that had always defined the Bildungsbürgertum. A

comparable opening of social recruitment, of greater "social differentiation," can also be discovered among the traditional liberal professions, such as the law.^{viii} If one includes all the artists who were not primarily sculptors or easel painters, but who claimed a "higher" education in the arts (for example in the reformed Kunstgewerbeschulen), one can chart a geometric explosion in their numbers over the last century. Some of these may have had incomes that consigned them to an "artist proletariat," but they were hardly children of the industrial working class. (For that matter, there were minorities of "proletarian" earners among the more traditional learned professions in Germany by 1900, also.) Nor were artists any longer strictly by origin or their own life-style identifiable as the traditional "educated middle class." (One could call them ironically the Bild-Bürgertum, but that term excludes such non-visual artists as composers, writers, and stage performers.)

Finally, if the Bildungsbürgertum increasingly patronized the arts from the early nineteenth century on, it also changed its character (significant for its membership in the "Interest Group Arts"). By 1900 most of the Bildungsbürgertum had itself undergone the first stages of professionalization. The belief that the arts were too important to be left to the patchwork of previous support and training systems emerged as a strong motive for institutional reforms initiated by professional civil servants around this time. While also resisting this type of professionalization from above, German avant-garde artists around the turn of the century were nevertheless also adopting the view that the artist, like the doctor, knows best and should no longer tolerate undue interference or resistance by the client or patient.

A third, related reason for studying the professionalization of artists is that the process reveals the fissure-lines along which the total community of artists of all kinds broke with each other (one of the reasons for difficulties in successful professionalization). Professionalization (at least in Germany) was to a large extent conducted as Standespolitik both externally and internally. The difference in professional interest and outlook between the Malerfürsten in their opulent villas and the starving painters of tourist-souvenir watercolors is one example; the gap between theater Intendanten and actors is another. Artists in Germany were from early days pulled in contrary directions (and they were not entirely alone in this). On the one hand, organizing as professionals in the way of doctors and lawyers might offer better market control to individual "free" professionals; on the

other, labor-union types of organizations might offer better protection to mere "employees" in such enterprises as publishing houses, theaters or concert halls. The distinction between professional "unions" and "associations" had and still has mostly to do with collective bargaining, but even German doctors had begun to get involved in such collective agreements with insurance funds before World War I.

To avoid confusion about this point, it might be well to recall that members of traditional "liberal" or "free" professions had often in the past based their claims to special status not merely on their being specialists of a rarified type but also on the noble associations of learnedness, as especially transmitted by universities. They were not merely trained, but educated (gebildet) and expected to be treated like "gentlemen" as a result. Art academies were supposed to serve a similar function for artists as normal universities did for physicians, jurists, pastors and professors. True, not all medical practitioners through much of the nineteenth century had graduated from a university (e.g. Wundärzte). But the professions traditionally associated with university studies were better able by 1900 to academicize preparation for entry into their ranks than was the case with artists. Indeed, with the decline of guild traditions and in the wake liberal legislation on trades, virtually anybody could call himself "artist" or for that matter "engineer." Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume that the swelling numbers of people who did do were mere self-taught dabblers or people with some school drawing classes under their belt. On the contrary, art academies were increasingly popular and experienced enrollment booms; the deficiencies of art training "on the job" were apparent enough by the 1890s to induce the founding or reform of numerous art and design schools by German governments and private initiative. Graduation from an art academy was even less likely than a university doctorate to guarantee a gentlemanly career, nor was a diploma from a Kunstgewerbeschule a barrier to success and prominence. Like many engineering and science graduates around 1900 and after, artists often had to work as employees, a fact that conditioned their view of the scope of professional or unionizing activity.

A fourth reason for studying artists' struggle with professionalization lies in the particularly strong way in which the "profession" of artist was conditioned by the peculiarities of the "occupation" of artist. This occupation has deep prehistoric roots, along with those of healer and mediator with invisible forces, the ancestors of doctors and priests. Perhaps

because of their relative nearness to existential, literally life-and-death situations, however, medicine and religion have usually been socially valued occupations, even when their "therapeutic effectiveness" was demonstrably low. In contrast, the social value of artists has varied greatly over recorded history, and it would not be too much to say that most artists have been rather marginal in the economic and social hierarchy. This peculiarity of the occupation produced, I would argue, contradictory strategies for the advancement of artists' interests: on the one hand (as in Italy in the eve of the Renaissance) a strong movement of guilds and on the other, during and since the Renaissance, the cult of individual genius and originality.

The two directions are not necessarily incompatible. Yet one of the goals of the "professionalization project" is to establish homogenous standards (at least as far as occupational training, licensing, and subsequent practice are concerned) to exclude by those standards all who claim to have equal or superior skills obtained by some other means. Under the conditions of the European art market over the last century and a half, on the other hand, artistic careers have been more likely to be made by claims to originality or a new vision than by adherence to a universal canon of traditional standards. Thus while the majority of what one might call professional practitioners had a vested interest in codified universal standards compatible with professional organization, many of the more successful or at least innovative practitioners -- especially with the rise of the dealer-critic system of marketing their skills -- had little to gain by leading the majority in that direction. The dilemma becomes clearer if one imagines leading German doctors maintaining that "curing cannot be taught" (as many artists claimed talent could not be taught) or the medical profession tolerating, perhaps even cultivating the public's judgment of what is good medicine, instead of consulting their own standards and medical science.

Did these tensions within the profession also reflect broader tensions within European societies? Did battles over style reflect divisions within elites as well as between elites and the legendary Spießbürger and "philistines" classically located in the heavy bottom of the middle class, clinging to outworn tastes? I suspect that difficulties in professionalization also reflect these deeper tensions and can shed some new light on them.

How to approach the social history of artists?

Let me now turn from reasons to study the social history of artists to possible methods, goals, and sources.

While art historians must often piece together scant records about artists of the quattrocento and struggle with sometimes inadequate or destroyed evidence even through the eighteenth century, they have at their disposal from the nineteenth century onward increasingly rich material on both individual and collective artistic life. These latter sources have not been fully exploited, in my view. Is it because of the cult of personality that produces hundreds of slick coffee-table books on Picasso but only the occasional scholarly monograph on the fin-de-siecle Spanish artistic milieu from which he emerged, or because the activities of "everyday" artists -- the potential subject-matter of a sort of artists' Alltagsgeschichte -- lack enough glamour? Whatever the reason, interesting sources for the social historian lie slumbering in the past activities and publications of Germany's numerous artists' associations, whether local Künstlervereine, the national Künstlergenossenschaft, the Weimar Reichsverband der bildenden Künstler and its postwar successors, the Nazi Reichskulturkammer as well as in the archives of Germany's art academies and other educational institutions. It is true that the archival record is sadly incomplete thanks to wartime losses, but not so much so as to form an insuperable barrier.

I will not take the space here to do more than mention the rich collections of government documents about artists and the arts, which was a matter of interest and considerable expense to everybody from town councilors to emperors. Nor can I do more than allude to the large volume of independent arts periodicals that thrived in Germany from the late nineteenth century onward, some of them, as far as I can ascertain, hardly ever used by scholars of any kind.

While much raw material exists, one major problem for the social historian is that little of it has been collected and collated. Our knowledge of such basic questions as "how many artists were there" at a given time is limited. One would need to investigate such quantitative questions as how many artists of different types existed, whether they viewed themselves as "professionals," part-timers or amateurs, how and when "new" subspecialties came into being, how artists were recruited and trained, how many were active in professional organizations, and so on. In sorting through the raw data, one would have to make working definitions of categories, for example between

industrial and "folk" artists, as well as the different types and levels of the "market" for artistic services, or in terms of professionalization, different and changing "clienteles." Indices of the economic status of the art professions would also have to be sought, including income from their works and services, subventions and aid from other sources (for example, private or institutional patronage).^{ix} The size and expenditures of the art "public" -- or probably more precisely "publics" are also important economic variables about which little is known. A little better known, thanks to the rise of modern museums in the nineteenth century, is the role of their purchases and exhibitions, but even here careful use of statistics might show how the "indirect clientele" of artists changed. Even citizens who could never afford an original work of art could nevertheless affect the market by their interest or boredom with large public exhibitions and purchases of popular reproductions.

Similarly one would want to know more quantifiable information about professional organizations -- number and inclusiveness of membership, confessional, ethnic and gender traits, and whether their self-understanding was or changed from social, self-help or lobbying in nature. The socioeconomic origins of artists as well as their patrons and mediators is only imprecisely established. The prestige one could sometimes achieve as an artist must also be compared to the obscurity and poverty which was also achieved very often. How did a prestige scale function within the arts professions? In other modern professions, one can often look for a "career ladder"; was such a thing even possible here?

Moving a bit further afield from gross economic statistics, one would want to know more about the relationships between artists and their clienteles. Artists could and did have such relationships based on a welter of different models. They could create works and sell them as commodities, operate on single commissions, have long-running contracts for their services (e.g. as "court painter" or Kappelmeister), short-term engagements (most common in the performing arts), and so on. Their clienteles were as varied as the crown, wealthy aristocrats and industrial magnates, the churches, the bureaucracy (with advice from legislatures), contractors for large projects, down to the individual buyer on a sidewalk. Over the century and a half under review here, painters and sculptors in particular witnessed the decline of intermediation between themselves and the public represented by traditional Ausstellungen (typically mounted by artists' associations, often in league with art academies) and the rise of private galleries

and dealers, who tended to cultivate the "career ladder" approach to artists. An interesting question about this concerns the gradual loss of control by old-fashioned Künstlervereine over the painting market: was this a form of "deprofessionalization"? Whether one uses this somewhat loaded term or not, the inability of the old alliances among artists, academies and patron associations to shape the market decisively produced a control vacuum to which one answer had to be the turn to modern professionalization tactics being practiced by virtually every other member of the educated middle class in Germany by 1900.

It need hardly be repeated that artists both paralleled and diverged from the paths of other "learned" professions. If one compares, for example, the "market" for artists' "services" with that of physicians around 1900, one can immediately see that the latter had become increasingly driven by national health insurance, which in turn drove on the organization of doctors into modern professional and lobbying associations and their largely successful attempts to gain significant control over this market. A less successful variant can be found among engineers, whose market was driven to a large extent by economic factors beyond their control and became quiet heterogenous. Both occupations nevertheless became more professionalized and focused in large part on raising educational qualifications as a means of market control.

The artists' market was more heterogenous still. Yet if one excludes part-timers and amateurs (as one would by 1900 for medical and engineering occupations) one can perceive the emergence of a reorganized system of exchange. What makes the transition murkier is, first, the mixed success of reform of artistic education before World War I and, second, the reluctance of actors in the professionalization process to impose strict boundaries on "professional competence" comparable to those imposed (usually voluntarily) among other emerging modern professions. Nevertheless, changes in the ways education was used to influence the arts had a subtle effect by awakening professional orientations and expectations, even if most art educators still agreed that schooling could not produce talent. (By the same token, they agreed that talent without training was bound to be wasted.)

Like their analogues the universities, academies underwent considerable stress, if not as much successful adaptation, starting in the last half of the nineteenth century. At the same time, by the end of the century, traditional apprenticeship

training was withering away as demands were raised for a more modern kind of training, as came to be represented by the reformed and new Kunstgewerbeschulen. Both the old academies and the new arts-and-crafts schools represented something of a breach with the guild-like functions of artistic training of the past. (In a comparable manner, many technical occupations were upgraded and modernized in their training, producing by 1900 the formal recognition of technical colleges as equal to universities.) Indeed, traditional academies had served not so much the function of teaching handiwork, but that of granting the social status of "learned gentlemen" steeped in the classics to what otherwise have been regarded as mere artisans as late as the time of the French Revolution.* By a century later, their enrollments had increased dramatically, making them clearly into professional schools, but their ability to lend status to their graduates had declined drastically. Many of their graduates were indeed competing in the vastly expanded market created by new technologies, such as photography. Largely deaf to appeals to adapt to technological change (particularly as related to industry), art academies before 1914 were not so much hopelessly hidebound as trapped in the countercurrents and confusion in the world or art. Their young rivals, the arts-and-crafts schools, were less burdened by tradition and indeed helped forge the foundations for Germany's leap into avant-garde art and revolutionary design by the beginning of this century.^{x1}

Yet we know all too little about the educational system. Such basic questions as the ratios of artists produced by that system to the market for their services have either never been studied systematically or, in the few cases where they have been, the scholarly world has not followed up on the work. To give but one example, between about 1895 and 1914 the German medical profession (already well-organized and combative) expressed its concern about mushrooming numbers of new doctors, their difficulties in getting a toehold in the market (itself changing dramatically because of medical insurance), and reform of medical faculty curriculum, licensing examinations and other matters. The medical profession had a profound impact through its efforts. In the same period, equally dramatic increases in the number of artists, changes in training, and of course near-revolutions in technology and style were occurring, but without more than the beginnings of organized attempts by artists themselves to shape the changes or even document them. It is perhaps significant that only toward the end of this period did artists respond by founding the Wirtschaftsverband der bildenden Künstler in 1913.

Finally we cannot merely rely on statistical data (as helpful as it would be) or structural history and change if we wish to learn more about the social history of artists. Values are also involved -- aesthetic, moral, social, intellectual and even political. All professions have values, to be sure, and all attempt to articulate them "objectively." But it is also true that the artistic occupations by tendency (and necessarily) engage in the realm of subjective values. By this I mean simply that a bridge designed by an engineer tends to be judged professionally by objective measurements, such as efficacy, safety, durability, and cost-effectiveness, rather than primarily by its beauty or daring. (It must be said in passing that such "material" values have also had some currency among artists, in times when stylistic canons were more stable.)

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me return to the question, "What can we learn from approaching the history of art through the social history of artists in general and the professionalization of artists in particular?"

1. Among the many valuable recent scholarly studies of European and especially German professions, there have been few dealing with artists, as already mentioned. Yet the experience of so-called "old" and established professions such as medicine and law, even in their modernized form, let alone the "crisis phenomena" called in shorthand "deprofessionalization" and the wider question of whether modern professionalization is (or was) a trend of longue durée or a fleeting side-phenomenon of the high tide of the bourgeois era can all be understood better in comparison to radically different (and equally old) occupations such as that of artists.

2. A second reason for a fresh look is a chance to rethink the relationship between artists and the publics they address, including ultimately the significance of much of what, quantitatively, gets produced by artists -- home decorations, souvenirs, advertising graphics for beer or motorcars. The vast majority of artists in Germany as elsewhere did not win or even compete for gold medals and a contract with the finest galleries of Berlin and Munich. That vast majority -- which got vaster very fast after about 1890 -- comprised men and women who made some part of their living as photographers, designers, graphic artists, and teachers (not to mention composers, performers, and

librettists.) It included not only graduates of traditional art academies who could not make a living in traditional lines of painting and sculpture, but also products of reformed and ambitious "arts and crafts" schools (Kunstgewerbeschulen) as well as private art schools (an especially important but overlooked venue for the entry of women into the art world before the end of World War I.) According to the German statistics, just between 1895 and 1907 alone the number of women professional (as opposed to amateur) artists leaped 75%, itself 2.5 times the rapid rate of increase for males.^{xii} The "overproduction" of artists has its parallels in other professions, too, but most artists were alleged to be unable to earn a decent living even before this, and if true, this situation raises the further question of what one might call market-marginal professionalism.

3. A third reason for this new approach is to explore the changing socio-economic matrix of art as an activity in rapidly evolving societies. Here the narrower question, "To what extent did artists try and succeed in becoming professionals," reflects the broader concern, "To what extent have western values about art and artists been sacrificed or transformed by the Industrial and Information revolutions?" Professional solidarity is not only, as Larson and others tend to view it, a "drive" to achieve a measure of dominance over the market in services of the type they provide, but also clearly a defensive reaction against much more powerful social, economic and political actors. The degree to which artists have followed or paralleled such professional behavior by other highly skilled occupations can serve as a measure of artists' own collective view of their role and chances of success or even survival. Similarly, professional "fissures" and disagreements expose the element of "specialization" and compartmentalization common to the later phases of development in most other professions.

4. Political behavior by artists may be seen as flowing not merely from ideological naiveté, bohemianism, "outsiderness," or even opportunism, but also from rational, calculated self-interest. For example, in answering the question, "Why did so many artists support Bolshevism or Nazism or the GDR regime?", we might learn something by looking beyond ideological proclivities of artists and consider instead what they, as threatened professionals, hoped to achieve through collaboration with "revolutionary" political regimes, as well as culturally conservative ones. New uses for powerful artistic symbols and the harnessing of art as a means of social control in the twentieth century also reveal the limits of artists' "professional independence." While "Communist medicine" or

"National Socialist engineering" remained as much cosmopolitan professions as they tailored themselves to some degree to the specific needs of the regime, artists have found it more difficult to cite Sachzwänge arising from their methodology and are hence more exposed, perhaps also more sensitive, to manipulation by regimes and movements with totalitarian aspirations.

Perhaps no century has experienced greater changes in the nature of art than the past one, in which the work of art entered the era of its "mechanical reproducibility." The demand for its mechanical and, more recently, electronic reproducibility has been created by mass markets in leisure and entertainment (which serious art history has barely begun to address), but also by the needs of advertisers, both commercial and political. The lonely-genius or Hungerkünstler approach, which probably told us more about the nineteenth-century Romantic viewer than the artists viewed, cannot, I would argue, any longer block the path to a serious investigation of the social history of artists.

ⁱ Terminology about professions and occupations is difficult enough in English but becomes more so when making international comparisons. As will become clearer later, the degree to which older "crafts" such as art (and indeed soldiering) became linked to formal, abstract knowledge was one of the signs of "professionalization" from the early nineteenth century on. Neither artists nor military officers could ever give up the "craft" skills that also defined their occupations just because the latter began to professionalize. But then, neither did physicians or engineers.

ⁱⁱ It is noteworthy that when German private architects founded the Bund Deutscher Architekten in 1903, their leaders expressed the somewhat unusual sentiment that architects needed less, not more formal training (and by implication, more imagination).

ⁱⁱⁱ Harrison C. and Cynthia A. White, Canvases and Careers. Institutional Change in the French Painting World (New York: Wiley, 1965), p. 96.

^{iv} For a useful survey of prices fetched by "old masters" vs. living painters in the last two centuries, see Gerald Reitlinger, The Economics of Taste. The Rise and Fall of the Picture Market, 1760-1960 (New York: Holt, 1961), esp. chaps. 5 and 6.

^v For a more extensive introduction to the theory of professions as applied to modern Germany and Europe, see McClelland, German Experience, chap. 2; Werner Conze and Jürgen Kocka,

"Einleitung," in their Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert, Part I (Stuttgart, 1985), pp. 9-26; Rolf Torstendahl and Michael Burrage (eds.), Professions in Theory and History (London, 1990) and The Formation of Professions (London, 1990); and Hannes Siegrist (ed.), Bürgerliche Berufe (Göttingen, 1988).

^{vi} Magali Sarfatti Larson, The Rise of Professionalism. A Sociological Analysis (Berkeley, 1977).

^{vii} Andrée Sfeier-Semler, Die Maler am Pariser Salon 1791-1880 (Frankfurt/M.: Campus-Verlag, 1992).

^{viii} Cf. Kenneth Ledford, From General Estate to Special Interest. German Lawyers, 1878-1933 (New York, 1996), especially Chap. 5.

^{ix} According to some recent estimates, paintings even by relatively well-known artists sold in Germany for under 500 marks each around 1905 (and these were prices for the ones sold!). Paintings by living artists costing a thousand marks or more were extremely rare. (Cf. Robin Lenman, "Der deutsche Kunstmarkt 1840-1923: Integration, Veränderung, Wachstum," in Ekkehard Mai and Peter Paret (eds.) Sammler, Stifter und Museen (Cologne: Böhlau, 1993), p. 144. According to a somewhat more subjective contemporary observer, ca. 20,000 works of visual art were displayed annually in Germany's many exhibitions (and about the same number refused), submitted by 10,000 painters.

Calculating an average price of a thousand marks per picture (a little high by Lenman's standards), Joachim von Bülow calculated a maximum average annual income of 2,000 marks from such sales, weighted against costs and expenses, which produced a negative net income, he estimated, for 90% of Germany's painters. Cf. Joachim von Bülow, Künstler-Elend und Proletariat (Berlin: Maritima, 1911), pp. 1-3. With nearly twice as many visual artists working in the Federal Republic (comparable population) around 1970, only about a third claimed to receive most of their income from gallery sales of their work, although the palette of employment opportunities had become much more diverse. Cf. Karla Fohrbeck and Andreas Johannes Wiesand, Der Künstler-Report (Munich: Hanser, 1975), pp. 511, 592-3

* See White and White, Canvases and Careers, pp. 11-12.

^{xi} See Charles E. McClelland, "'Young Germans, not Young Greeks and Romans'": Art Culture and Educational Reform in Wilhelmine Germany," in Françoise Forster-Hahn (ed.), Imagining Modern German Culture, 1889-1910, special issue of Studies in the History of Art (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1996).

^{xii} Paul Drey, Die wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen der Malkunst. Versuch einer Kunstökonomie (Stuttgart/Berlin: Cotta, 1910), p. 307.