

# Art markets' visibility: the alliance between Artprice, Artron and Cision

**An obsolescent hegemony and the birth of competition.**

**By Aude de Kerros.**

At the beginning of 2019, the international art market is experiencing an evolution that will likely have a profound impact on the existing global art market system. The event underlying this structural change is an unexpected and unprecedented strategic business alliance between three companies based on the creation and operation of databanks. Two are specialized in the field of art – both with an online sales capacity – and a third (Cision) selects information from the international press and feeds that information to the press and media directly concerned.

The alliance comes at the end of a decade that has seen a technological revolution in communication and a profound change in geopolitical power relations. Moreover, a clivage has emerged between a very high-end *mainstream* art market with global visibility, the 'contemporary-international' art market, and a whole series of 'local' markets that present an art considered 'non-innovative' that falls outside the sophisticated and intellectualised 'art world'. It is in this context that a new partnership has been negotiated between Artprice, Artron and Cision.

- The creation of this game-changing triumvirate was triggered by the listed French art info company **Artprice**, founded and steered by a larger-than-life and non-conformist personality dedicated to the principle of maintaining his liberty and independence. Thierry Ehrmann is the creator of the most comprehensive databank on the global art market, an exhaustive databank that covers both 'global financial art' and 'local non-sophisticated' arts. The inclusion of the latter field is a mission that the French state has distinctly eschewed (at its own national level), since its archiving work only covers 'state-recognised' conceptual/contemporary artists.

- **Artron** is a Chinese institutionnal company founded in 1993 that aims to promote art and creation in China, providing all of the requisite tools to foster a thriving art sector in a country where the auction market was almost non-existent under the communist regime. It has also built up a comprehensive database that includes all currents of Chinese art.

- Cision is a press observer and distributor, headquartered in Chicago, providing tailored relationships with global media outlets to the world's influencers and communication strategists.

## CARTELS AND MONOPOLIES BEWARE!

Thierry Ehrmann is a Robin Hood character with a strong allergy to monopolies and intermediaries which he hounds relentlessly. Over the years he has turned this allergy into a positive mission to release the art world from its economic and intellectual predators. By analysing the data collected in the Artprice databanks he realised that the high-end global art market, referenced in New York, has a hegemonic visibility around the entire globe; a supply market, without real roots and without any real competition. He also realised that the 'real' market, a demand driven market, is infinitely larger, but under-developed due to a lack of visibility.

By contrast, the hegemonic market thrives through a highly interconnected international network, sharing common interests, holding fairs, auctions, exhibitions in museums and international galleries. Its business model combines two levels: a market that closely resembles a pure financial

market, secured by collectors operating within a closed circuit, and a mass market occupied by derivative *arty* objects produced industrially in limited series in all prices and formats (from gallery replicas to keyrings and t-shirts). This latter market effectively translates the original works – which often fetch massive sums at auctions – into ‘promotional icons’.

Together (i.e. the high-end plus its low-end sister), this market owes its legitimacy to its profitability and its various different utilities: simultaneously a ‘social’ and a business platform, generating urban events, tourist attractions, fuelling the museum industry etc. The Global Financial Art system, which provides incomes for a lot of people, also benefits from donations (tax-free of course) from patrons, companies, institutions, as well as subsidies from certain states.

For Thierry Ehrmann, this market is built around a cluster of arcane agreements, in its own image

His databanks of objective information give him prime access to the market’s key information and the analytical firepower behind an inspired strategy. He was the first to note that [China had become the world’s leading art market](#) as early as 2009, ahead of America. This fact has attracted little comment, with the media pretending it is insignificant. Thierry Ehrmann quickly understood the impossibility of claiming ownership to a planetary databank that did not include data from the Chinese market, which is difficult to access because of the language obstacle and the Internet barrier. This reality inspired Ehrmann to create links with the Chinese agency Artron and, subsequently, to form an official alliance with Artron in September 2018.

As Artprice has already done for the other countries, it is working towards making its art market data accessible to the entire planet. Apart from anything else, this mission involves the translation and documentation of the spellings of proper names that change from one language to another. To make this possible, Artprice needed a unique and exceptional authorization to cross the frontier of the Chinese Internet. The resulting fluidity of information has generated an online commerce of artworks, via WeChat<sup>1</sup>, across national borders, a platform that the Chinese are familiar with, especially for luxury purchases.

In 2017 Artprice had already anticipated a massive proliferation in the flow of information and a massive expansion of the art market’s clientele by making its data available to the smartphones (much of it free of charge) of anyone interested in art. This evolution is at the very core of a strategy designed to turn the art market into a demand driven online market, without the intervention of intermediaries.

However for a real revolution to take place, raw information is not enough; it also requires analytical tools. This is the need to which Artprice has crucially responded, creating numerous equally accessible indices that allow an understanding of the art market from a variety of different angles.

Understanding the art market is no longer reserved for specialists and experts. In short, it has been demystified.

The last hurdle to jump is that of the existing monopoly on visibility: to do this Ehrmann and his teams have decided to feed global data from the art market to all journalists and media around the world. This new project was initiated by a deal signed on 26 December 2018 between Artprice and the 120-year press mogul Cision to create the world’s first press agency dedicated to the art market: **Art Press Agency**. The ‘Access-to-Information’ revolution that this deal represents is shaking the foundations of the existing system: the various different art markets, be they supply or demand, global or local, are now all in competition.

## FROM A HEGEMONIC 'GLOBAL' ART MARKET TO A 'PLURALISTIC' ART MARKET COMPETING ON EQUAL TERMS

And so... Artprice's initiatives, along with Artron and Cision, are founded on the perception and acknowledgement of the 'real' global market, one that is hidden behind today's highly visible 'global-financial' market. Indeed, the Chinese, who currently spend the most on art, make no discrimination between the various artistic currents. They consume ultra high-end art, well above the million-dollar threshold, including conceptual art validated in New York, as well as art created by artists with purely aesthetic concerns in the long tradition of art history (particularly their own). Indeed, the Chinese market is today far more geopolitically representative of the true diversity of art in the world than the New York marketplace.

The 'global-financial' art that has established itself as the reference since the collapse of the Soviet Union has lost its power to provoke and surprise, despite its astronomical prices. The idea of 'global culture and art' as a historical fatality has been questioned by many countries for a decade. *Global Kitsch* art now looks like the last metamorphosis of a 20th century utopia that imagined the art of the future as being homogeneous and the same for everyone on the whole planet.

This utopic vision, which appears to have emerged alongside the proclamation of 'socialist, international and communist realist art', nowadays appears to be confronted with the latest incarnation of 'global, international and financial conceptual art'... two sides of the same coin that reduces the world to an economic materialism supposed to explain everything.

(1) Artprice is one of the only Western companies to own a WeChat site (WeChat is reserved for companies operating under Chinese law) that reaches more than 1.8 billion Chinese Internet users worldwide.

See article (French only) on contrepunts.org: <https://www.contrepunts.org/2019/01/10/334255-trashed-5>

Try our services (free demo): <https://www.artprice.com/artist/23640/baishi-qi>

Subscribe to our services: <https://www.artprice.com/subscription>

### **About Artprice:**

*Artprice is listed on the Eurolist by Euronext Paris, SRD long only and Euroclear: 7478 - Bloomberg: PRC - Reuters: ARTF.*

Founded by thierry Ehrmann (see Who's who certified Biography )

(c) <https://imgpublic.artprice.com/img/wp/sites/11/2018/10/bio-2019-whos-who-thierry-ehrmann.pdf> ).

Discover Artprice in video: <https://www.artprice.com/video>

Artprice is the global leader in art price and art index databanks. It has over 30 million indices and auction results covering more than 700,000 artists. Artprice Images® gives unlimited access to the largest Art Market resource in the world: a library of 126 million images or prints of artworks from the year 1700 to the present day, along with comments by Artprice's art historians.

Artprice permanently enriches its databanks with information from 6,300 auctioneers and it publishes a constant flow of art market trends for the world's principal news agencies and approximately 7,200 international press publications. For its 4,500,000 members, Artprice gives access to the world's leading Standardised Marketplace for buying and selling art. Artprice is preparing its blockchain for the Art Market. It is BPI-labelled (scientific national French label) Artprice's Global Art Market Annual Report for 2017 published last March 2018: <https://www.artprice.com/artprice-reports/the-art-market-in-2017>

**Artprice is associated with Artron Group the Chinese leader in the Art Market, its solid institutional partner.**

*About the Artron Group:*

“Artron Art Group (Artron), a comprehensive cultural industrial group founded in 1993 by Wan jie, is committed to inheriting, enhancing and spreading art value. Based on abundant art data, Artron provides art industry and art fans with professional service and experience of quality products by integrated application of IT, advanced digital science and innovative crafts and materials. Having produced more than 60,000 books and auction catalogues, Artron is the world's largest art book printer with a total print volume of 300 million a year. It has more than 3 million professional members in the arts sector and an average of 15 million daily visits, making it the world's leading art website.”

Artron's Web: [www.Artron.net](http://www.Artron.net)

Artprice's Contemporary Art Market Annual Report for 2017 - free access at: <https://www.artprice.com/artprice-reports/the-contemporary-art-market-report-2017>

Artprice's press releases:

[http://serveur.serveur.com/Press\\_Release/pressreleaseen.htm](http://serveur.serveur.com/Press_Release/pressreleaseen.htm)

<https://twitter.com/artpricedotcom>

Artmarket News:

<https://twitter.com/artpricedotcom> & <https://twitter.com/artmarketdotcom>

<https://www.facebook.com/artpricedotcom> 3.4 million subscribers

<http://artmarketinsight.wordpress.com/>

Discover the Alchemy and the universe of Artprice <http://web.artprice.com/video>, which headquarters are the famous Museum of Contemporary Art, the Abode of Chaos:

<http://goo.gl/zJssd>

<https://vimeo.com/124643720>

The Contemporary Art Museum The Abode of Chaos

<https://www.facebook.com/la.demeure.du.chaos.theabodeofchaos999> 3.4 million subscribers

Contact: [ir@artprice.com](mailto:ir@artprice.com)