The Role of the Artist in Toronto’s Creative Economy

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Abstract

In recent years, the concept of the creative economy has garnered more attention in provincial, federal, and international policy circles. The creative economy envisions creativity as an input into the city’s economic engine. This philosophy attests to the importance of ‘creativity’ to generate ideas that generate profits and promote economic growth. Thus, the efforts to build a creative community have increasingly had an impact on the city, the province and the country. This raises the question, what is the role of the artist in Toronto’s creative economy? My findings have led me to conclude that in order for visual artists to capitalize on the creative economy philosophy, they need to become wittingly or unwittingly “commercial agents” with more effective business skills than ever before. In addition, those artists who handle the C.O.M.M.E.R.C.I.A.L. model well will be able to capitalize on creative economy discourses, while those still idealizing the romantic notion of the arts will not.

Keywords  Artists, Commercial, Policy, Creative, Economy
Not only does Toronto have the highest concentration of artists and arts organizations in Canada (Toronto Arts Council website) but in recent years, the concept of the creative economy has garnered more attention in provincial, federal, and international policy circles (CBCnews, 2010; Hracs, 2010; McGuigan, 2009; Sinatra, 2010). The creative economy philosophy asserts that in addition to building the economy of Toronto, it is fundamental to envision creativity as an input into the city’s economic engine (Florida, 2002). This philosophy attests to the importance of ‘creativity’ to generate ideas that produce profits and promote economic growth. The efforts to build a creative community have increasingly had an impact on the city, the province and the country (AuthentiCity, 2008; Creative City Network of Canada, 2005). This raises the question, what is the role of the artist in Toronto’s creative economy? To answer this question, I conducted qualitative research by interviewing visual artists and an expert in the field of the creative economy.

Visual artists contribute to the social fabric and attractiveness of the city by sharing their creativity and their works. Even though most artists in this sample seem to be indifferent to the creative economy discourses, these discourses are omnipresent; as a result, the role of the artist is embedded in the creative economy. The creative economy discourses based on ‘ideas’ and ‘creativity,’ has opened a space for artists to enter into conversations within cultural policy frameworks (Stolarick, 2011, Interview). The barriers to become an artist are low. In fact, anyone can become an artist; however, it is clear from the respondents that the demands of this make it difficult to succeed, in terms of making a living from arts. But in order for artists to stand out and capitalize on the creative economy philosophy, I argue, they need to become wittingly or unwittingly “commercial agents” with more effective business skills than ever before. In addition, those artists who handle the C.O.M.M.E.R.C.I.A.L. model well will be able to capitalize on creative economy discourses, while those still idealizing the romantic notion of the arts will not. Thus, this paper aspires to contribute to the understanding of the role of Toronto’s visual artists in today’s creative economy discourses.
Settings, methods, and participants

This paper is based on qualitative research conducted via e-mail and in person. I developed an open-ended questionnaire for visual artists to complete. I selected visual artists that have had some sort of success in their arts. More specifically, I sent out questionnaires to full-time artists and those receiving any arts grant. For the purpose of this paper, visual artists are either painters, sculptors or other visual artists who create original paintings, drawings, sculptures, engravings and other artistic works including installations. In general I asked them questions about their understanding of their role in society, their demands as an artist and their role in the creative economy. For specific questions, please see Appendix 1, Exhibit 1. A total of 10 questionnaires were sent out via e-mail. I received 7 responses, from this sample, 5 are professional full-time artists, and 2 hold second jobs but have successfully received grants from the Toronto Council for the Arts.

Furthermore, I conducted a one hour face-to-face interview with Dr. Kevin Stolarick, research director with the University of Toronto’s Martin Prosperity Institute. Stolarick has a background in computer science and he is an expert in the fields of the regional and creative economy. Stolarick commented on the role of the artists in Canada in an interview with CBC. Stolarick said “while the concept [of creative economy] has helped artists, decision makers are increasingly looking at the arts as just dollars and cents. It's been a trap” (CBC news, 2010). Thus, I opened this conversation and posed related questions as listed in Appendix 1, Exhibit 2. This interview took place at the facilities of the Martin Prosperity Institute, where Stolarick is employed.

From a critical perspective, I reviewed the literature on the creative economy and examined artists’ responses to the new economy in which they work. Additionally, I guided my research with a
literature review on factors that have an impact on the artist’s roles. The factors presented are not exhaustive; they aim to exemplify and to illustrate my rationale, ranging from themes of creativity, entrepreneurship, authenticity, among others.

The Genesis of the Creative Economy Discourses

A clear indication of the way in which human effort has been harnessed as a force for the commercial production of goods and services is marked by four key industrial economic sectors: (1) mining and farming; (2) construction and manufacturing; (3) services (such as law and medicine) and distribution of manufactured goods; and (4) the knowledge industry. The increased competition for cheaper production in the globalized world has added demands to compete for ideas that add economic value. Consequently, ideas were rewarded and this later gave rise to the creative economy (Florida, 2002; Stolarick, 2011, Interview).

*Business Week* first introduced the concept of a ‘creative economy’ in 2000 (Florida, 2002). A report followed the same year, *The Creative Economy Initiative* by the New England Council, which limited the definition of the creative economy to artistic and cultural fields. In 2001, John Howkins, in his book, *The Creative Economy*, asserts that anyone with a good ‘idea’ can make money in the creative economy. Hence, the creative economy is an economic system that relies primarily on ideas to serve as its major capital (Howkins, 2001). One year later, Richard Florida in *Rise of the Creative Class*, argues that the creative economy centres on ‘creativity’ as the new economic engine. Florida (2002) argues that creativity is the driver of the creative economy and is ubiquitous and occurs in the sciences, math, engineering, business, medicine and so on and thus it is essential, “Creativity is essential to the way we live and work today, and in many senses always has been” (Florida, 2002, p. 21).
Hence, the notion of creativity has trickled down in the creative economy discourses; it is now an important focal point in policy discussion on economic growth as it is understood as a tool for economic development (Pang, 2009). To illustrate in 2006, The Creative Cities Leadership Team presented its report, *Imagine a Toronto: Strategies for a Creative City*, to the City of Toronto and Province of Ontario. This report asserts creativity as a way of life, “It is not a question of ‘sustainability’ but of survival, and the beauty that inspires it. And the kinds of risks that true creativity demands are crucial to that end” (p. 3). Following this report, Meric Gertler, who is an economic geographer studying creative economies and innovative dynamics of cities, added that “Creativity means business. Creativity has become the ultimate economic resource, adding a new dimension to the competitive potential of cities around the world” (as cited in News Release, 2006). Later, in 2008, the Creative City Policy Framework adopted these ongoing discourses as it asserts that, creativity drives the economy and “as a practice is really the basis of a creative economy” (AuthentiCity, 2008, p. 24).

Later in February 2009, Premier Dalton McGuinty “heralded a report [*Ontario in the Creative Age*] that proposed measures to propel the province toward a "creativity-oriented" economy while helping those left behind” (thestar.com, 2009). This report, headed by Richard Florida and Roger Martin and his team of researchers, advocates the shift from routine-oriented to creativity-oriented jobs (Florida & Martin, 2005). In it, Florida envisions a creative city that will house creative workers, who work in “idea” factories.” The creative worker will live in, work in and derive inspiration from cities like Toronto. As a result the creative economy has been defined as the use of creative ideas to propel an economic engine.
Findings

Based on the questions (Appendix 1) visual artists were asked, responses differed remarkably due to the different stages they were at in their careers (4-20 years) and life experiences. In terms of the artist’s roles in society, not surprisingly, views were wildly diverse. One artist states, my role is “making art as entering into a conversation with the world.” Another respondent very interestingly states that he sees his role as ‘none’ and adds “Art is something I do because I’m good at it and now it is more of a business than a practice.” Then the next artist says “a friend of mine once said that “Art staves off atrocity and murder.” Then, another artist describes her role as a process where she “presents and sells.” Under these different opinions and views, it has become clear to me that artist’s roles are manifold, as one respondent asserts, “there are multiple answers to the role of the artist.” However, they also are affected by social constructs; thus, artists’ roles acquire multiple forms. These distinct and unique views attest to the complexity of the ‘Art World.’ Not only is it hard to define what the role of the artist is, from both societal and artistic perspectives, but also, what the role of the Art World is, or for that matter, what art is.

In terms of the creative economy discourses, 2 out of 7 respondents were familiar with the term creative economy. As one respondent says, the creative economy is “people making money from creative ideas.” The second respondent articulates the term in detail, it is “an idea/knowledge based economy that’s been advocated by people like John Howkins and Richard Florida ...We’re shifting away from an industrial economy, more and more menial work is done off-shore, which frees up time for creative thinking, coming up with new products and ideas.” A couple of the respondents were not familiar with the technicality of the term; however, when they were asked about their role as an artist in the creative economy, they inferred it in terms of commodity and sales. As one of the respondents explains her role under the creative economy is to “convert ideas into artistic products that have a
commodity value;” the other says, for “sales to happen.” My findings also show that 4 out of 7 respondents were indifferent to the creative economy discourses. These discourses did not seem to affect their role, as one respondent asserts, “I don't see myself involved in it, nothing will change, I will continue to make work.” On the other hand, one of the respondents, who was aware of the discourses and has been a professional visual artist for 20 years, states that his role under the creative economy is to “to capitalize creative ideas.”

My face-to-face interview with Kevin Stolarick reinforced the need for artists to capitalize on their creative ideas under these discourses. He explained the meanings of creativity, creative economy, and shared with me his view on the role of the artist in Toronto. His responses supported my findings, all of which will be addressed in the proceeding sections of this paper. Due to the scope of this paper, my research was confined to a small sample of visual artists and to a limited number of questions and thus responses, but they capture the role of the artist’s today. However, I would like to have asked further questions, such as their background and educational attainment (e.g. as self-taught), the time when their sales began to demonstrate recognition of their work. Based on different views, work and life experiences, I would assume some categories would emerge. Reflecting on multiple responses provided by the artists and what is learned from my interview, I have come to conceptualise artists as a key economic player and also as the product of societal constructs. Thus, I will draw from Jane Wolff next.

The role of the Artist in Toronto’s Creative Economy

There are undoubtedly many ways to think about the role of the artist. In this manner, drawing from the interviews and the literature, and the repeated messages of sales, creativity and the economy, I argue that in order for artists to stand out and capitalize on the creative economy philosophy, they need
to become wittingly or unwittingly “commercial agents” with more effective business skills than ever before. In addition, those artists who handle the C.O.M.M.E.R.C.I.A.L. model (see Graph 1) well will be able to capitalize on creative economy discourses, while those still idealizing the romantic notion of the arts will not. Nevertheless, his or her role is not limited to commerce; there are many other factors that play out. Wolff (1981) asserts that individuals are affected by their social conditions. Thus, I demonstrate that artists’ roles are encroached into factors which are embedded within economic discourses; bearing in mind these factors are not exhaustive. Thus I bring forth the C.O.M.M.E.R.C.I.A.L. model, an acronym to describe the role of the artist. It stands for: Creative, Observer, Money-raiser, Marketer, Entrepreneur, Reason for existence, Connect, Ideas, Authentic, and Labour of love. Although I recognize that each factor could be a paper in itself, due to the scope of this paper, I will describe them briefly to demonstrate the ways in which I construe this role.

Graph 1- The role of the Artist in Toronto

First, the artist’s role is to be Creative. There have been misconceptions on the origins of creativity. There is a belief that geniuses are born rather than made (Banks, 2007). This lead to the
belief that creativity is a genetically transmitted gift (Banks). Philosophers like Plato, Kant and Freud “have helped buttress the idea of the creative as the capricious and gifted loner prone to divergent modes of thought and anarchic action” (Banks, 2007, p. 81). Creativity is the creation of useful forms out of knowledge, as the creative driver and as an economic force (Florida). Florida argues the creative economy’s most important intellectual property is not software or music or movies, it is the ‘stuff’ inside people's heads - their creativity (2002). The word creativity has also been contested by those who argued that creative individuals are tightly prescribed and governed by discourses and management systems within which creativity is defined and valued (Pang, 2009). From a sociological perspective, Wolff (1981) argues that “art is a social product” (p. 1) and creativity is a precondition for a person to become an artist, but it is not sufficient in itself (Wolff, 1981). Hence, I take the position that creativity is an achieved trait and to be ‘creative’ implies to generate something new (Howkins, 2001), or innovative but “impactful” (Stolarick, 2011, Interview) for the beholder.

Visual artists are the eyes of society and contribute to our freedom of expression (Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008). In fact, reality is perpetually constructed through our own daily creative tasks, and an artist has the ability to put us in touch with our creative self (see Weber, 2000), as artists are observers. The role of the artist as an Observer implies to witness the world as their subject and to witness its dynamism as an attempt to interpret the world from their own lenses for an audience. The artists as an observer is thus also an ethnographer (see Foster, 1996; and upcoming book Painting Mirrors: Essays on the Artist as Observer and Social Critic). To illustrate, as I am familiar with some of the artists’ work from this sample, one of the respondents conducts field interviews before he creates his work. He meets with clients to learn more about them and ask them one question; part of this response is written in the canvas that the artist creates along with his visual rendering.
The next role of the artist is to be a *Money-raiser*. Because many artists make little income, a big part of their job is to secure external funding. There are 17,475 visual artists in Canada who had average earnings of $13,135 in 2006 (Statistics Canada, Census 2006). Thus, raising income for artists has been a concern (Adams, 2010; Toronto Arts Council website). A respondent discussed his struggles in the field,

I wanted to be responsible for my own destiny and that meant a lot of sacrifices to do it the way I wanted. It’s been a long road but it has worked out. I do not however recommend to anyone becoming a professional artist unless they are willing to give up everything in order to succeed or unless they are wealthy to begin with as it’s a tough life.

In order to ensure the continuity of his or her work, the artist needs to raise money either by selling art or applying for grants. In 2009, the Toronto Arts Council Total awarded 227 grants totalling $1,174,797 to individual artists. More specifically, in the visual arts, 247 applications for a grant were submitted in 2008 and 67 were awarded, compared to 2009, where 295 applications were submitted and 59 were awarded (Toronto Arts Council report, 2009). Therefore, the art of writing crafty funding applications is a need since the competition for grants is fierce. Stolarick (2011, Interview) asserts that in Canada, the artist can become a full-time practising artist by writing good proposals; those who can speak the language, the “fictitious” language, as he calls it, can live off of grants. As Stolarick adds, “one needs to tell the story right.” This means, artists need to know how to present themselves as ‘investments’ to prospective ‘investors.’

To market effectively, an artist assumes the role of a *Marketer* and needs to create a brand. Five respondents have demonstrated that they are doing just that, as these artists’ works are seen in major Canadian magazines and other media. Additionally, they are also aware that the market rationale is a pervasive subject within the neoliberal ideology that has shifted the meaning of art from its intrinsic
value to a commodity. One respondent said, “Art is the strangest market in the world. It is completely unregulated, which means that monetary figures attached to artwork are extremely subjective.” Then, another respondent affirms, “The artist should convert his/her intellectual ideas into artistic products that have a commodity value.” Hence, today, art is the product of marketing. Works of art have become a commodity - branded products on the shelf of selected galleries ready to be purchased by a selected consumer who recognizes the brand. This compels the artist to stand out, and become a forceful marketer.

Some of the established artists in my interviews have demonstrated their Entrepreneurial focus and business acumen. As one respondent asserts, “living off my work requires sales to happen.” Then other says, “Making money from creative ideas.” Another artist states, “I make work, I present it and sell it.” This raises the question, is the drive to entrepreneurship the result of the ‘creative economy’ or the result of neoliberal discourse embedded in society? Peck and Tickell (2002) assert neoliberalism is omnipresent; “proselytizing the virtues of free trade, flexible labour, and active individualism has become so commonplace in contemporary politics” (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p. 380). Peck and Tickell (2002) contend, “Because signature cultural events, prestigious corporate investments, public resources, and good jobs are in such short supply, cities… are induced to jump on the bandwagon of urban entrepreneurialism, which they do with varying degrees of enthusiasm and effectiveness” (p. 393). As cities embrace urban entrepreneurialism, the role of the artist in the city is also affected. In this context, neoliberal discourse has percolated into the business of the arts more than ever before.

Peck and Tickell (2002) identify two interrelated neoliberal phases that are worth noting: "roll-back" and "roll-out." Roll-back neoliberalism refers to "the active destruction or discreditation of Keynesian-welfarist and social-collectivist institutions (broadly defined)” (p. 384). This process involves the retreat from previous governmental control of resources and state regulations. Here,
“responsibility is being downloaded to individual workers who are being encouraged to be self-reliant and self-governing” (Hracs, 2010, p. 51). The second neoliberal phase, "roll-out neoliberalism," refers to "the purposeful construction and consolidation of neoliberalized state forms, modes of governance, and regulatory relations" (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p. 37). Where they [governments] roll out new programs designed to foster the creation of more entrepreneurial subjectivities (Hracs, 2010, p. 53). Thus the creative economy is entwined within neoliberalism. Current manifestations of this trend can be seen in contemporary Toronto. As one recent example, the Small Business Arts Forum 2011: a free event offered by the City of Toronto, Economic Development & Culture to help artists build their business in the arts & cultural sector and creative industries. This seminar was headed by Jeff Melanson, an artist with business acumen (holds an MBA) and the special advisor of arts and culture to Rob Ford, the mayor of Toronto. Some of the topics covered in this seminar were networking and connecting, grant writing, and fostering the art business (Enterprise Toronto, 2011).

As a result, of the entrepreneurial skill demands for the artist, there is strong emphasis on the arts, but the “arts for sale.” Thus respondents are aware that in order to be successful they need to “sell.” This is a no-brainer. However, in order to obtain funding, artists need to Reason their existence in terms of impacts. Stolarick (2011, Interview) explains when writing grants “You become the person you can by telling an impactful story…which is not a bad thing” (Interview). Stolarick agrees that the artist becomes a salesperson and that to “sell impact, rather than art, is what matters most” (Interview). I was once told by a Toronto artist who has successfully obtained grants every year from funding agencies that in order to show that one is worthy of funding, one needed to prove that the work is saleable (Smith, personal communication, 2006); in that sense, he alleges that photographers have a higher probability of obtaining grants, than painters. This begs the questions, how impactful does an artist’s work need to be to secure funding? And who has the power to decipher impact and how does this affect the artists? The neoliberal discourse is so pervasive that artists need to be aware of the
‘consumers’ in creating their art, thus, the art may also be tailored to impact those who have the power of the purse. Furthermore, I wonder to what extent does the impact resonate? To the extent of creating controversial work such as that of Robert Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano, Cindy Sherman, or Jeff Koons? Incidentally, Damien Hirst once said he makes “Perfectly dumb paintings which feel absolutely right” (Calvin Tomkins, 2008, p. 10).

So far, I have presented the artist’s role as Creative, Observer, Money-raiser, Marketer, Entrepreneurial and the need to Reason for existence within the creative economy discourses. All of these also require the artist to **Connect**. Although I did not ask the artists about their connections or networking, it is well established in the literature that connection contributes to career successes. Currid (2007) argues that in order to make it in the art world, artists need to strengthen their “weak ties” and connections. Currid’s (2007) findings show that weak ties are more effective to pass information through people than those strong ties or closest to you. Currid provides an example of a dissertation research on finding jobs that show that “interviewees were telling him [Mark Granovetter] they got their jobs through acquaintances rather than friends” (p. 75). Granovetter found a pattern in a range of disciplines: the ties farther away were most influential (Currid, 2007). Currid argues this is the way human connections advance careers, ideas and propel economic energy. It is also argued that people with large numbers of weak ties find themselves in the best position to disseminate innovation (Currid, 2007). In fact, there are claims that a great part of Andy Warhol’s success is attributed to his great number of weak ties (Currid, 2007; Stolarick, 2011, Interview). Adolph Gottlieb (1955), American abstract expressionist, painter, sculptor and graphic artist, believes the situation of the artist has improved since the 1940s. On the other hand, the artist’s difficulties are exacerbated when every person is considered a potential buyer of art (Gottlieb, 1955). There is a negative correlation between the number of visual artists and the number of buyers. While the number of visual artists increases, the
demand for buyers does not (Hill and Capriotti 2009, p. 31-35). Thus the artist not only need to work for commerce, but also needs to identify and connect with buyers.

Howkins (2001) argues that “people with ideas have become more powerful than people who work machines and, in many cases, more powerful than the people who own machines” (p. ix). Thus the artist needs to come up with Ideas, perhaps novel ideas. In my view, new ideas that generate impact. One respondent asserts, “Government should have a role in paying artists to convert intellectual ideas into artistic ideas - but ones that do not necessarily need to be commodities.” In conceiving new ideas, the work of the artists enters into the discourses of innovations, a term partly contested. Oakley (2009) argues that because artists work in risky markets, at first glance it may seem like artists are inherently innovators; however, artists draw from the past to create a body of work that is not necessarily new. Although originality is valued, Oakley maintains that contemporary works do not replace what has come in the past, in the way that an innovation in medicine replaces outdated practices. She adds “to argue that all great art is an innovation is to argue for Picasso but not Lucian Freud; Orson Welles but not Howard Hawks...” (p. 410). Oakley asserts cultural products have more value than innovation: tradition, heritage, memory contribute to what people value. She believes that by allocating public funding to the arts to innovate, this would neglect cultural products. Thus Oakley (2009) contends that there is a price for innovation: organizations can manipulate their branding for funding, risk a perpetual present by privileging the new, neglect reinterpretations of old works, and ultimately setting up a hierarchy between novel and historic. Oakley (2009) maintains that originality is valued. Thus ideas count.

Scholars agree authenticity in the arts is rewarded, which is staged as part of cultural tourism (AuthentiCity, 2008; Fine, 2003). Then, the role of the artists as Authentic takes part. Fine (2003) defines authenticity as the “the recognition of difference” (p. 155). However, Fine (2003) contends that
there is a consensus that if artists are treated as authentic, they do not sell themselves, their works are sold by those who have the authority to speak about art. As a result, 'authentic’ becomes polemical term. As Peterson (2005) argues that “authenticity is a claim that is made by or for someone, thing... and either accepted or rejected by relevant other” (p. 1086). However, Fine (2003) observes that a dealer contends “those artists whose authenticity is ‘beyond argument’ are the ones who can sell their work in the six-figure range” (p. 165). Thus, once an artist achieved the “six-figure range” they do no longer need to authenticate, as their brand has been established.

Finally, “L” for the *Labour of Love*. Artists are devoted to their work. Answers from respondents varied but suggested that they all created because of their inexplicable and inherited love for the arts. As one respondent illustrates: “It is better to spend your time doing something positive for culture than some other alternatives.” Another respondent affirms that regardless of the creative economy or any other social construct “Nothing will change, I will continue to make work.” Furthermore, two of the respondents have to juggle second jobs and write grants with ‘impact,’ and they keep creating in hopes that they will one day become a full-time professional artist. Many artists could relate to Maurizio Cattelan’s love for the arts, as he once said “What I’m doing is something I love,” and “I really think that without art I would have had a miserable life” (Tomkins, 2008, p. 160).

**Implications**

*The dichotomy between Art for Art’s sake and Commerce*

To think about the demands on visual artists in their commercial role, is to think about the dichotomy between Art for Art’s sake and commerce, and the demands on the neoliberal order and the creative economy discourses for the creative production. Under these discourses, culture is viewed as the tool for the economic engine, and thus the artist and their works are commodified. Adorno (1992) adds that many of the cultural products bearing the anticommercial trademark “art for art’s sake” show
traces of commercialism at the expense of the meaningfulness of the work. Pang (2009) argues that what distinguishes the uniqueness of our “creative age is not only the mutual support of the two domains of art and commerce, but also how the new category of the creative worker simultaneously embodies two seemingly oppositional logics” (p. 59) as most visual artists are challenged by these two oppositional purposes: creating art for art’s sake or for commerce. Since the arts have a history of struggling for economic oxygen dating back to the seventeenth century (Gottlieb, 1955; Pang, 2009), the artist’s creative autonomy seems to be reduced to a series of economic needs which cater to the consumer.

Limiting self-expression

The desire for self-expression takes higher priority in society. As Abraham Maslow pointed out long ago, aspirations for choice and self-expression are universal human aspirations, which results in self-fulfillment. Humans have an inherent need to express themselves, and this is what in my opinion, makes an artist – the need for self-expression. Furthermore, Gollmitzer and Murray (2008) point out that what artists do is both different and more important to democratic values of diversity of expression that other classes of workers” (p. 49). That is, artists as observers interpret the world by self-expressing, and remind society of our democratic values. Thus Canada needs to rethink the status of the arts legislation that came into force in 1995 to protect freedom of expression and foster creative diversity (Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008). Visual artists are the eyes of society and contribute to our freedom of expression, thus they need social protection (Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008) and support to succeed.
Concluding Analysis

Graph 2- The role of the Artist in Toronto’s Creative Economy

The discourses of creative economy and the need for creativity has become central focus in cultural policy discourses. Creativity to the modern individual implies expressing oneself (Negus & Pickering, 2004). While economics entails the need to make a living and that implies ‘sales.’ The future of the arts and the role of the artists can be contested. The barriers to become an artist are low. In fact, anyone can become an artist; however, in the Art World only a few will make it. It is clear from the respondents that the demands to sell make it difficult to succeed, in terms of making a living from arts. Few artists become full-time professional artists, since “no art has sufficient resources to support economically or give sympathetic attention to all or any substantial proportion of those trainees in the way customary in the art worlds for which they are being trained” (Becker, 2008, p. 52). The problem arises when thousands of artists hope to become “stars.” But the arts might be, and have at times been, organized so that these were not the available or reasonable goals to aim for (Becker, 2008). Thus many artists still cling to the romantic ideal of the starving artist as a bohemian creature who suffers for
his art, hoping the sheer magnitude of his or her creative work will catch the eye of a sponsor and his/her path will turn into fame and fortune (Sinatra, 2010). Thus, there is a need for artists to think seriously about entrepreneurship (Sinatra, 2010). In reality, the artists and their work, in this sample, have been commodified and they have become the result of their commercial oeuvre. Moreover, in order for visual artists to stand out and capitalize on the creative economy philosophy of today, I argue, they need to strengthen or become “commercial agents” with more effective business skills than ever before. Those artists who handle the C.O.M.M.E.R.C.I.A.L. model well will be able to capitalize on creative economy discourses, while those still idealizing the romantic notion of the arts will not. As Stolarick (2011, Interview) affirms, the role of the artist is to be a ‘salesperson’ and in the creative economy they need to show ‘impact’ (Stolarick, 2011, Interview). Thus, the role of the visual artist in Toronto’s creative economy as a Creative, Observer, Money-raiser, Marketer, Entrepreneur, Reason for their existence, Connect, Ideas, Authentic, and Labour of love is important and complex, which indeed add demands on artists to survive as a full-time professional or trying to become one. Nevertheless, the advent of the creative economy ethos have opened spaces and brought up more attention to artists and their roles within cultural policy frameworks in the City, and it is then, up to the artist to assume his or her role and take the opportunity of the open space and stand out.
References


Appendix 1

Exhibit 1 - Open-ended Questionnaire via e-mail

1. How long have you been a professional visual artist (making a living from your art)?
2. What do you think your role in society is as an artist?
3. In your opinion, what is the creative economy? Or what is your understanding of it?
4. What do you think your role as an artist is in the creative economy?
5. In your opinion, has the creative economy added new demands for visual artists? Please explain how.
6. Please feel free to add any other relevant information you would like to share. Your name will not be identified without your consent.

Exhibit 2 - Interview with Dr. Kevin Stolarick

1. In an interview with CBC, Stolarick affirms that arts are seen as dollars and cents and artists are being trapped in the creative economy. Please develop.
2. What is the creative economy?
3. Who is part of the creative economy?
4. In your opinion, what is the role of the artist in the creative economy? In your opinion, has the creative economy added new demands for visual artists? Please explain how.
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