



On equality

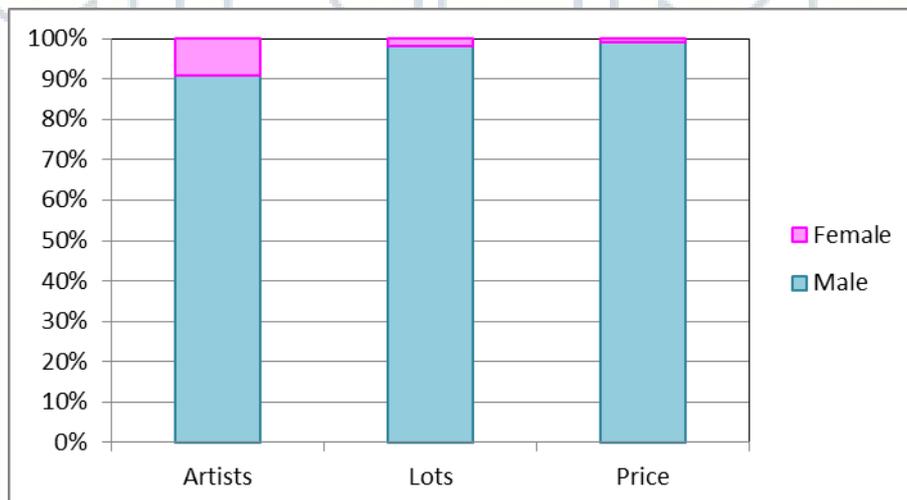
by Marta Inez Rodrigues Pereira

Ok, let's face it, believing that globalization means that people from all corners of the world are playing the same game doesn't really work, does it?

Let's take a quick look at what we can see from data recently made available by Artnetⁱ on their 'Top 100 Lots by Living Artists' and 'Top 100 Living Artists', which lists artists by total volume sold.

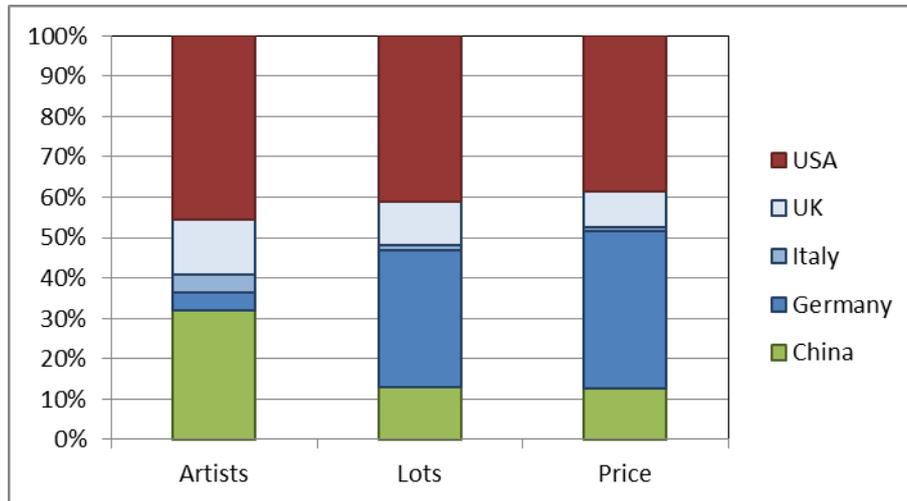
From the highlights (i.e. top lots):

- ❖ Top artists are male
 - Out of the 22 artists within the 100 top lots, only two are women (each with one lot), i.e. 98% of the top lots are from male artists
 - Considering the two women are ranked 79 (Cady Noland) and 85 (Jenny Saville), women artists account for only 1% of the money transacted with these sales (USD 19 million in USD 1,791 million)

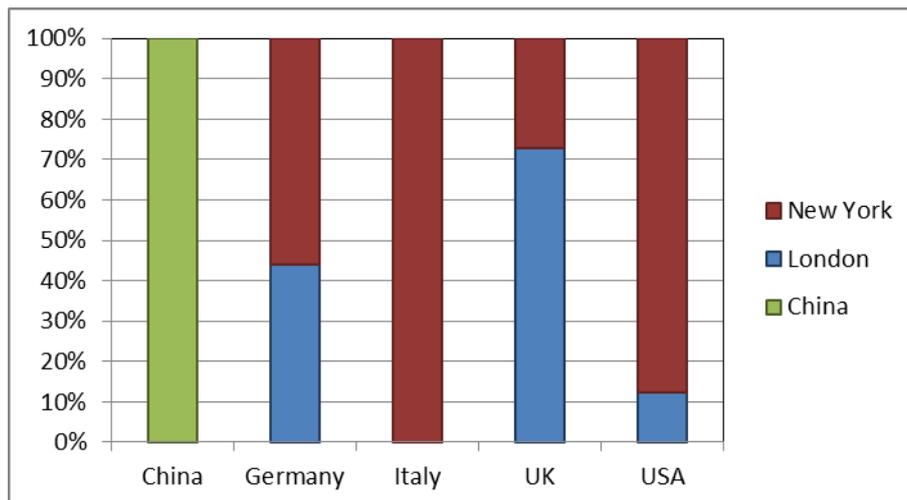




- ❖ Top artists come from Europe, the USA and Chinaⁱⁱ
 - One single German artist – ok, it’s Gerhard Richter – accounts for 34% of the lots and 39% of the money transacted
 - The group with most top-lot artists is that of Americans (10 in 22), but they provide only 41% of the top lots and 39% of the money

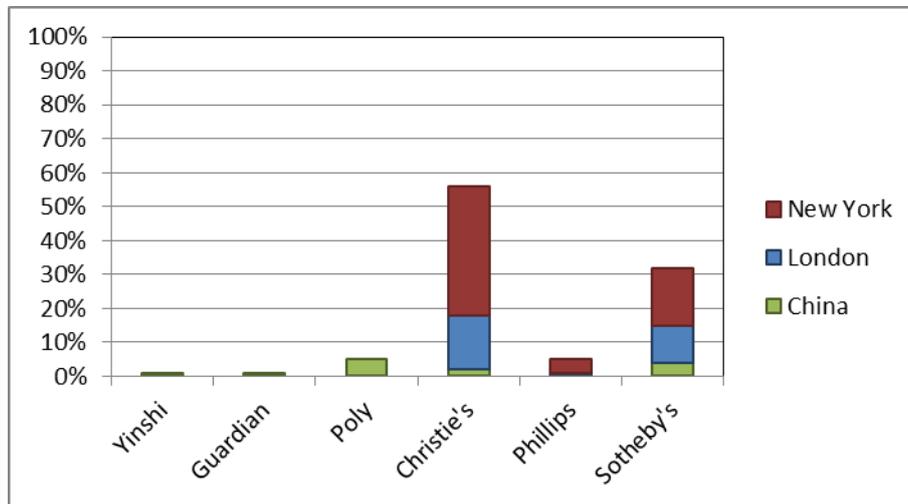


- ❖ Top Chinese artists only sell their top lots in China; Americans, mostly in the USA; and Europeans go global (i.e. if ‘The Globe’ is considered as Europe and the USA)

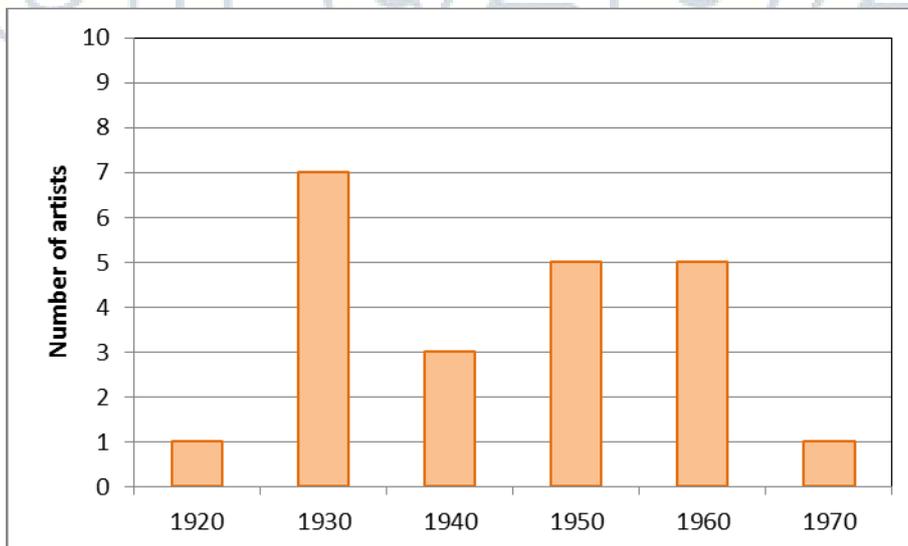




- ❖ China has three top auction houses, all selling only in China; the rest of 'The Globe' has three (two with a small foot in China)



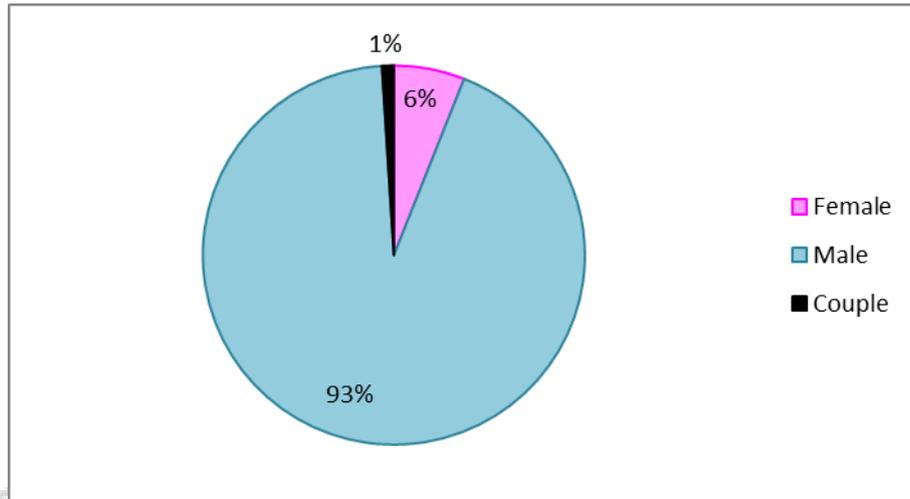
- ❖ This one makes good sense: top artists are mostly well established, being around 50-80 years old (not many on their 70's, though)



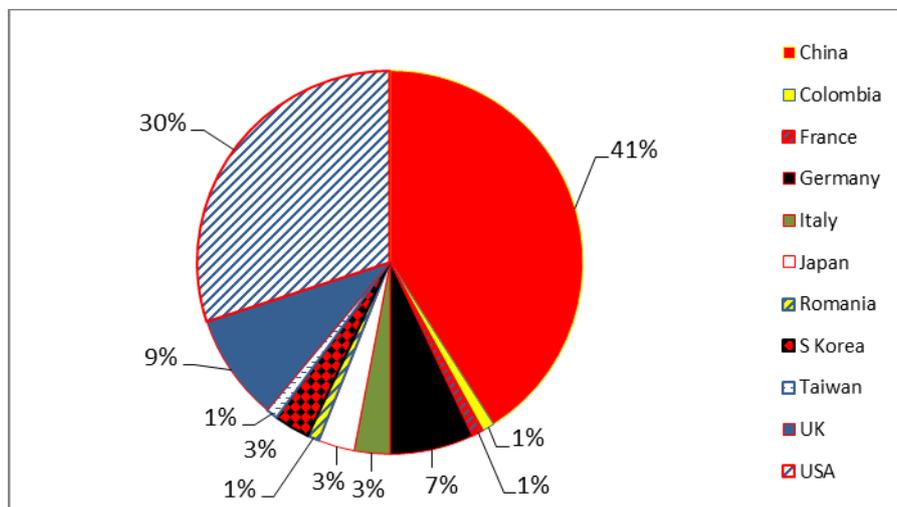


From the “oeuvre” (i.e. total volume of sales):

- ❖ Oh, here women do far better!
 - Six women are among those generating a lot of money from sales and one more (Jeanne-Claude) shared it with her partner (Christo), i.e. 93% of those with top volume of sales are males

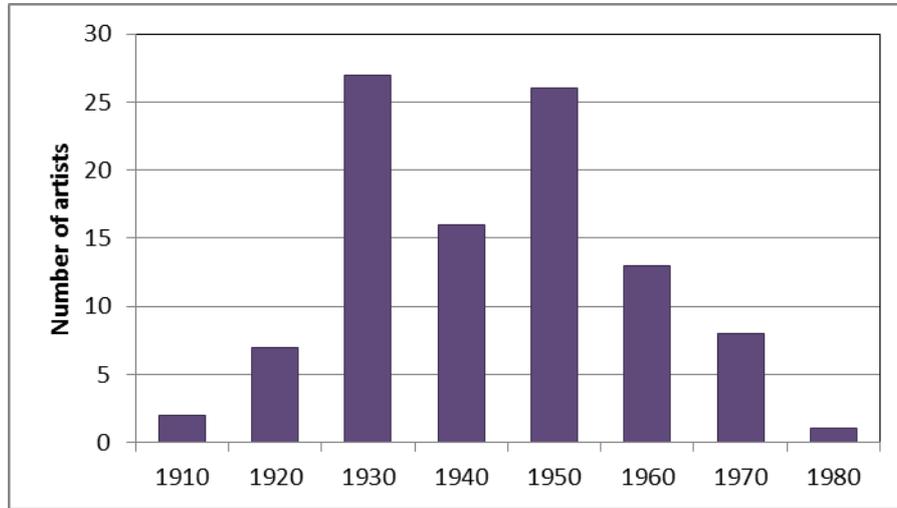


- ❖ Here too we have a much greater variety!
 - 41% of artists with top volume of sales are Chinese; 30% Americans
 - 9% from the UK and 7% from Germany
 - Italy, Japan and South Korea have 3 artists each
 - The remainder of the world (i.e. Colombia, France, Romania and Taiwan) have only one artist each





- ❖ The good sense: top-volume artists are distributed fairly normally in relation to age, except for a low number of artists in their 70's, as seen for the top-lot artists – why should that be?



The celebrities (i.e. top volume and top lots):

- ❖ Only 20 artists are in both lists
 - None of them women – surprise!
 - There does seem to be some relation between their top-lot and top-volume ranks, i.e. top artists are top whether you measure it by “best” work sold or by the totality

Lot Rank	Artist	Vol Rank
1	Jeff Koons	2
2	Gerhard Richter	1
3	Cui Ruzhuo	4
5	Jasper Johns	18
12	Ed Ruscha	10
13	Christopher Wool	3
22	Peter Doig	7
27	Zeng Fanzhi	5
33	Robert Ryman	13
39	Maurizio Cattelan	63

Lot Rank	Artist	Vol Rank
57	Jin Shangyi	42
59	Frank Stella	17
65	Zhang Xiaogang	24
72	Brice Marden	43
75	Huang Yongyu	11
80	Richard Prince	9
89	Liu Xiaodong	82
90	Glenn Brown	72
95	David Hammons	85
97	Fang Lijun	61



The most efficient (let’s try something different and take the average selling price for each artist):

- ❖ And the winner is... Glenn Brown, ranked only 72 in top-volume and 90 in top-lot – with only 16 lots sold, his works fetched USD 33 million (an average of USD 2 million per work)
- ❖ Only 11 of the top-lot artists are among the 20 with highest average sale price (this does include the three top top-lot artists: Jeff Koons, Gerhard Richter and Cui Ruzhuo)
- ❖ From the 20 with highest average sale price, the average-rank seems unrelated to either volume or lot ranks, i.e. whether the artist is efficient or not, this does not determine that he (not she, because there are no women in this list) will sell much or reach one of the highest prices

Avg Rank	Artist	Vol Rank	Lot Rank
1	Glenn Brown	72	90
2	Robert Ryman	13	33
3	Mark Tansey	52	
4	Christopher Wool	3	13
5	Jin Shangyi	42	57
6	Mark Bradford	44	
7	Zeng Fanzhi	5	27
8	Cui Ruzhuo	4	3
9	Mark Grotjahn	28	
10	David Hammons	85	95

Avg Rank	Artist	Vol Rank	Lot Rank
11	John Currin	60	
12	Gerhard Richter	1	2
13	Rudof Stingel	16	
14	Peter Doig	7	22
15	Liu Xiaodong	82	89
16	Urs Fischer	79	
17	Wang Huaiqing	98	
18	Wade Guyton	39	
19	Jeff Koons	2	1
20	Yang Feiyun	51	

Conclusion:

So, at the high end of the art-auction farm, it seems that some artists are more equal than others: basically, to be really successful, artists have to be male, American, European or Chinese. And be aware that their works go on sale on the right continent.

N.B. I have no doubt these artists do exceptional work, and some are, indeed, among my favourites. However, it does bother me that the art world is still so biased, although I do understand it is part of a general system and that there are explanations for this.

ⁱ Kinsella, E. (2016). Artnet News names the 100 most collectible living artists. Retrieved on 24 Oct 2016 at https://news.artnet.com/market/artnet-news-100-most-collectible-artists-717251?utm_campaign=artnetnews&utm_source=102516daily&utm_medium=email&utm_term=artnet%20News%20Daily%20Newsletter%20USE

ⁱⁱ Where the artist comes from is here taken as the place where s/he lives