

# INTERMEDIARIES AND RETROSPECTIVE CONSECRATION: PAINTERS AND COMPOSERS OF THE EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

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## INTRODUCTION

“Cultural consecration” occurs when specific artists or artworks are regarded as truly legitimate representations of their field of production, thus deserving particular esteem and honor (Allen & Lincoln 2004; Schmutz, 2005). Whereas cultural valorization is general and pervasive, consecration produces a rupture (Bourdieu 1991): it separates rare great creators or works from the more frequent, but merely good—highlighting those worthy of long-term recognition and respect from those unworthy.

However, consecration is not fixed, but rather evolving. Time often shuffles the deck of history: Formerly revered creators are discarded, while those previously overlooked are rediscovered and glorified (Corse & Griffin 1997; Dowd et al. 2002). Those that enjoy *retrospective* consecration—where creators are selected from history’s scope rather than just the current landscape—can be deemed more legitimate than those who only enjoy contemporary prestige (Allen & Lincoln 2004; Schmutz 2005). This

increased legitimacy is based on the assumption that the very best survive the “test of time” (Becker 1984: 365). Because retrospective consecration designates what and who should merit attention and respect, the ability to confer such status is, in actuality, the power to ascribe social value and privilege.

Unsurprisingly, then, sociologists have devoted considerable attention to the endurance of artistic reputation (Dowd & Kelly 2012; Lang & Lang 1988); processes of cultural valorization (Corse & Griffin 1997; Tuchman & Fortin 1984); and retrospective consecration (Allen & Lincoln 2004; Schmutz 2005). Such research demonstrates, among other things, that two types of factors shape the consecration process—both in the short and long-term. On the one hand, cultural organizations—like museums and symphony orchestras—are crucial in the consecration process, as they partially base their existence on discernment and maintenance of evaluative distinctions (DiMaggio 2009; Dowd 2011). On the other hand, social characteristics of the creators themselves are implicated in the consecration process—such as gender (Schmutz and Faupel 2010; Tuchman & Fortin 1980) and nationality (Bever 2005; Corse 1995). Interestingly, scholars often do not consider those broad factors concurrently. Our chapter builds on a recent exception (Braden 2009) that examines the retrospective consecration of modern visual artists, and we extend its approach to another group—modern composers.

## **ANALYTICS**

### **Two Populations of Creators**

Having theorized elsewhere about the dynamics of (retrospective) consecration (Braden 2009; Dowd 2011; Johnson et al. 2006), we focus here on our analytical

approach. Studies of retrospective consecration face a thorny issue: In explaining which creators or works are celebrated later, one must also know which creators *could* have been celebrated but were not. Yet, by virtue of being ignored (or forgotten), ascertaining the latter group is difficult. Some scholars use case studies—dealing with how previously ignored or devalued creators become (retrospectively) consecrated by powerful entities (Corse & Griffin 1997; Santoro 2010). Other scholars focus on a range of creators or works that attained some contemporaneous success—whether critically (e.g., positive reviews), financially or professionally (e.g., peer acknowledgment)—and see which also enjoyed retrospective success, thereby constructing a post-hoc sample that bypasses those that success eluded (Allen & Lincoln 2004; Schmutz 2005).

Although both approaches (case study, post-hoc sample) have advantages, our research differs by focusing on two historical populations of creators—who, a century ago, collectively engaged in bringing modernism to the US. The first population is the 308 visual artists exhibited at the 1913 International Exhibition of Modern Art, designated the “Armory Show” after its location in New York City. Armory artists are historically crucial because they introduced “modern art” developments (particularly from Europe) to US audiences—offering a decisive moment when modern art broke upon US shores (Braden 2009; Hartt 1998). The second population is the 201 composers performed at US concert societies (i.e., small enthusiast groups) devoted to modern music. Musical modernism percolated in Europe since 1908 (Boone et al. 2012), and rather than a decisive event marking its US introduction, modernist music gathered momentum through the following societies’ series of concerts from 1920 to 1932: the American Music Guild; Copland-Sessions Concerts; International Composers’ Guild;

League of Composers; Pan American Association; ProMusica Society (Mead 1982; Oja 2000).

These populations identified, the next step involved gathering information on their individual members. The US rise of modernism did not occur in a vacuum—many of the modern artists and composers enjoyed European attention, which could have stimulated US acknowledgment both in short- and long-term. Armory artists' European success is captured by their involvement in three momentous exhibitions—the 1910 and 1912 Post-Impressionist Exhibitions (London) and/or the 1912 Sonderbund (Cologne) (Braden 2009; Brown 1988; Watson 1991). The modern composers' European success is captured by performance at annual festivals of the International Society for Contemporary Music in Salzburg (1924), Venice (1925), Zurich (1925), Frankfurt (1927), Baden-Baden (1928), Geneva (1929), Liege (1930), and Oxford (1931). Fifteen percent of Armory artists (46) and 30% of modern composers (61) enjoyed such European success.

Gender and origin of these creators may also affect US consecration. Previous scholarship suggests women creators are disadvantaged relative to male counterparts in terms of attention and opportunities—given long-standing assumptions equating creativity with masculinity (e.g., DeNora 2002; Schmutz & Faupel 2010; Tuchman & Fortin 1984). Meanwhile, because US art and music of the early-1900s was oriented towards Europe, European-born creators may have advantages their non-European counterparts lacked—both in terms of reputation (e.g., the cache that flows from Parisian roots) and opportunities (e.g., the relative ease Armory Show exhibition was secured by European artists) (Braden 2009; Dowd 2011). Among Amory artists, 83% were men

(256) and 46% were European-born (139), versus 95% male (190) and 65% European-born (131) among composers.

Finally, just as inequities are in the consecration process, there are inequities at a population's creation. We expect those creators receiving the most exhibitions and performances have a "head-start" for consecration (Braden 2009). Indeed, the average number of works exhibited at the Armory Show was 4.1, yet, one artist (Odilon Redon) exhibited 62. Likewise, the average number of performances at US concert societies was 3.5, though Igor Stravinsky had 22 performances. We also examine an artist's posthumous involvement, which indicates an artist possessed living advocates engaging in memory work, affording a head-start on consecration (Craig & Dubois 2010; Lang & Lang 1988). Twenty-seven Armory Show artists exhibited posthumously, and 20 composers were posthumously performed at concert societies. We gathered information on creator attributes from numerous historical resources—though, some creators left little trace and, hence, information on them is "missing" (see below).

### **Intermediary Organizations**

Cultural organizations (e.g., museums, orchestras) typically perform formal rites of recognition and endorsement within an art field (Becker 1984; DiMaggio 2009). Formal recognition serves to legitimize the individual creator's work and promotes the legitimacy of the entire field. Logically, an organization's initial attention may also shape subsequent processes of retrospective consecration.

Regarding modern art in the US, we focus on the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). In the art field, "a key event in shaping the modernist canon was the 1929

opening of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which rapidly assembled the world's finest modernist collection" (Hartt 1998: 925). Now one of the world's most influential modern art museums, MoMA is retrospectively credited as most responsible for developing avant-garde art in the US (Kleiner and Mamiya 2005). As the first US museum of its kind, MoMA's exhibitions were singularly important, both advancing the success of artists selected for exhibition and the US modern art field overall.

Consequently, we inspected all 989 exhibitions offered in the Museum's first four decades (1929-1968)—tracking how MoMA curators evaluated and exhibited some Armory artists, while ignoring others.

The US orchestral music field lacks an analogue to MoMA, as it was years before modernist orchestras emerged (see Dowd & Kelly 2012; Dowd et al. 2002). We thus focus on those major symphony orchestras in operation as musical modernism took root in the US—26 orchestras in cities like Boston, Chicago and New York City. The establishment of these orchestras was key to the development of the field—as their repertoire choices shaped what was deemed “classical music” in the US (DiMaggio 2009; Dowd 2011). Altogether, we tracked the extent to which the 201 modernist composers were heeded in approximately 88,000 performances offered by these orchestras.

Tracking choices of MoMA and major orchestras allow us to examine whether members of the two populations attained attention from these key intermediaries. Among the 308 Armory artists, for example, 126 exhibited in MoMA (1929-1967). Among the 201 composers, 122 were performed by major US orchestras (1932-1969). Clearly, “filtering” was already occurring in early decades—with the majority of creators ignored.

Yet, did the attention provided by these intermediary organizations shape long-term consecration?

### **Retrospective Consecration**

To assess retrospective consecration, we examine the critical reception afforded modern artists and composers by leading college textbooks that survey, respectively, art and music history for US college students. This allows us to see the extent to which influential works acknowledged modern artists and composers nearly a century after both populations emerged in the US. Such curricular choices matter because they bear the imprimatur of a central institution in American life (education), while validating the praise and attention that flows to some (but not other) creators (Berkers 2009; Bevers 2005; Corse 1995; Corse & Griffin 1997).

Our general textbooks for visual arts are Hart (1988), Davies et al. (2006) and Stokstad (2008); for musical arts, Griffiths (2006), Burkholder et al. (2010) and Taruskin and Gibbs (2013). Only 58 visual artists are included in any of these three textbooks, while 75 of the composers are included in any of the three music textbooks. We now address factors that shape inclusion and exclusion processes.

### **RESULTS**

Table 1 contains logistic regression analysis assessing which creators gained attention from intermediary organizations. Before discussing the results, note the following: First, only partial information regarding 30 Amory artists was found (e.g., gender)—hence, Table 1's N of 288. Second, posthumous composers featured at modern

music societies included composers living long-ago (e.g., 1500 and 1600s). Given our interest in “modernists,” we excluded those who died before 1909—a benchmark for modernism’s European emergence (Boone et al., 2010), making an N of 186 composers. As results for the Armory artists were previously published (Braden, 2009), our goal here is to examine the extent to which consecration dynamics are similar across both populations.

Table 1 shows three attributes worked similarly for artists and composers. Participation in seminal European exhibitions (artists) or music festivals (composers) greatly enhanced odds for selection by intermediary organizations—especially for composers, whose likelihood increased more than 9 times. Male creators likewise were advantaged—again, particularly for composers, whose inclusion in major orchestra repertoires was 26 times more likely. Finally, initial attention at pivotal events translated into greater attention by intermediary organizations: each additional work exhibited at the Armory Show raised the odds of MoMA inclusion by nearly 25%, while each composition performed at early concert societies raised the odds of inclusion in major orchestra repertoires by 24%.

Differences were also present. European origins hampered modern composers, while posthumous exhibition aided modern artists. Given that some major orchestras predated the 1920s concert societies, we also controlled for benefitting from early inclusion in major repertoires. As the significant coefficient reveals, initial inclusion in early repertoires positively impacted later inclusion.

Table 2 moves from short-term attention to retrospective consecration. Here, we see the lasting impact of choices made by MoMA and major symphony orchestras. The



more each intermediary featured a creator's work, the greater their likelihood of those creators appearing in textbooks surveying the history of the field. MoMA primarily featured artists in three ways: through general exhibition, group exhibition (e.g., "Picasso, Matisse") or solo shows (e.g., "Paintings of Picasso"). Exhibition of each type greatly enhanced an artist's odds for textbook inclusion—especially group exhibitions. Major orchestras work differently, however, as one creator is featured per performance. Yet, each additional performance garnered in the early- to mid-1900s raised the odds of text inclusion by nearly 1.5%. While seemingly slight, note that Stravinsky, Ravel and Debussy each secured more than 1,000 performances during that period. Meanwhile, for upwardly mobile composers—as determined by the ratio of later to early performances—each increase in mobility doubled the odds of textbook inclusion decades later.

The impact of intermediary organizations is especially striking vis-à-vis creator attributes. The significance of gender in Table 1 is matched by its insignificance in Table 2. That is, women have difficulty gaining entrée into intermediary organizations; yet, for those that do, gender no longer plays a significant role in textbook inclusion. Hence, filtering of women artists and composers happens early in the consecration process rather than later. A similar dynamic occurs for early-1900s European successes: while mattering for intermediary organization's attention, early European recognition is inconsequential for attention from textbooks decades later. Interestingly, however, music textbooks were attuned to those creators with many concert society performances, while art textbooks were unaffected by those creators with many works at the Armory Show.

## CONCLUSION

This work takes advantage of naturally occurring, historical populations of modernist artists and composers in order to determine what factors affect, first, early attention from intermediary organizations and, second, retrospective consecration from textbooks approximately 100 years after these artists' US debut. Both populations were judged by intermediary organizations that served to exult some—leading to further, future recognition in textbooks—while filtering out other artists deemed less worthy. Across the artistic fields of modern art and music, our work demonstrates certain attributes (such as gender) determine decisive intermediary recognition. Had we focused on either case or ad hoc samples of consecrated artists, we would have likely missed the extent to which such things as intermediary organizations and gender mattered for both populations of modern artists. The history of US modernist art and music, then, deals with those who won organizational victories, yet those victories were swayed by the assets (and faults) of their stars as well as their selves.

**Table 1: Initial Inclusion of Creators at Intermediary Organizations**

	Likelihood of Exhibition at Museum of Modern Art (1929-1967)	Likelihood of Performance by 26 Major US Orchestras (1932-1969)
Prior European Success (Yes)	2.151*	9.679**
Male Artist / Composer (Yes)	3.928**	26.978**
Born in Europe (Yes)	1.392	.288**
Number of Armory Art Show Works Exhibited (1913)	1.246**	-----
Number of Concert Society Performances (1920-1932)	-----	1.241**
Posthumous at Armory / Concert Societies (Yes)	2.660*	.002
US Performances Prior to 1920	-----	4.173**
Intercept	.070**	.024**
Chi-Square	67.680	147.979
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	.280	.569
N of Artists / Composers	288	186

Notes: Odds-ratios displayed.

\*  $p < .05$ , one-tailed; \*\*  $p < .01$ , one-tailed.

**Table 2. Retrospective Inclusion of Creators in University Textbooks**

	Likelihood of Inclusion in Three Art History Textbooks (Hart 1998; Davies et al. 2006; Stokstad 2008)	Likelihood of Inclusion in Three Music History Textbooks (Griffiths 2006; Burkholder et al. 2010; Taruskin & Gibbs 2013)
Prior European Success (Yes)	1.290	1.864
Male Artist / Composer (Yes)	.964	.701
Born in Europe (Yes)	.928	.438
Number of Armory Art Show Works Exhibited (1913)	1.051	-----
Number of Concert Society Performances (1920-1932)	-----	1.117*
Posthumous at Armory / Concert Societies (Yes)	12.414**	.742
Number of Unnamed MoMA Exhibitions (1929-1967)	1.255**	-----
Number of Group MoMA Exhibitions (1929-1967)	73.462**	-----
Number of Solo MoMA Exhibitions (1929-1967)	46.772**	-----
Total Number of Performances by 26 Major Orchestras (Up to 1969)	-----	1.014**
Ascendancy in Major Orchestral Repertoire (1932-50 vs. 1951-1969)	-----	2.247**
Intercept	.027	.052
Chi-Square	156.862	147.455
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	.662	.525
N of Artists / Composers	288	186

Notes: Odds-ratios displayed.

\*  $p < .05$ , one-tailed; \*\*  $p < .01$ , one-tailed.

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