

Quality or selection?¹

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The art world knows many different forms of judgement. Either the talent of a (young) artist is the object of evaluation, or a work or performance is being judged. The reviewers may be persons or institutions: collectors, critics, colleagues, curators, committees and members of juries. Reviewers can be divided roughly into two groups: *experts* make an assessment from their professional point of view and provide a *judgement of knowledge*. *Outsiders* or *amateurs*, who are not involved in art by profession, mainly rely on a *judgement of taste*². Both kinds of judgement and reviewers are important for the careers of contemporary artists³.

Judgement based on knowledge indicates the measure of artistic recognition; whereas *judgement based on taste* could be seen as an indicator of economic recognition in the market place. However, both judgements do not exclude each other. In both cases the talent of an artist as well as the quality of their work is being judged. When an artist is pursuing an institutional career, the judgement of knowledge is more important than the judgement of taste. Institutional acknowledgement⁴, which is then pursued, increases rapidly within the first five years of the artist's career, after that it increases until a certain level or ceiling is reached.

All reviewers within the art world function as gatekeepers at a certain level. At all levels (potential) artists are being accepted or rejected by reviewing their work and so influencing the career development of artists.

In the Netherlands government support forms a large part of the art world's financial infrastructure. Although the art market is growing, the Netherlands still lack collectors and private investors, so that more than 40% of average artists' incomes stem directly or indirectly from the government⁵. The allocation of governmental art subsidies is motivated and justified by quality: "quality is and will be the leading criterion for support within art policy"⁶.

By law the Dutch government itself is not allowed to judge quality of art⁷. Therefore a system of foundations and commissions has been developed to execute art policy. The reviewers operating within this system are experts who are expected to independently review due to their knowledge. In doing so, they constantly shape and renew the meaning of quality. The importance of the "verdict" of commissions is binomial in two ways: on the one hand they function as a measure of the artistic quality; on the other hand they give a financial impulse

¹ This article anticipates a research on art reviewing commissioned by the Theater Instituut Nederland (Netherlands Theater Institute).

² As used by Kant (see for instance Braembussche, A.A. Van den (1994), *Denken over kunst : een inleiding in de kunstfilosofie*)

³ See also L. van Heteren (1998), *Theater, kritiek, jury en publiek*.

⁴ Institutional acknowledgement is measured by the amount of publications, national and international exhibitions, grants, orders and acquisitions. Institutional acknowledgement is first introduced by T. Ijden, P. Hamers & H. Vinken, *Kunstuitleen in Nederland. Kunstenaars, collecties en publiek*, IVA, Tilburg, 1993.

⁵ This percentage is based on *visual artists' income* in: N. Brouwer; H. Meulenbeek, *De markt voor beeldende kunst: de markt en financiële positie van de beeldend kunstenaars 1998*, Zoetermeer: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen, 2000.

⁶ *Cultuur als confrontatie: uitgangspunten voor het cultuurbeleid 2001-2004*

⁷ See T. Schiphof, "In het voetspoor van Thorbecke. De verankering van het Thorbecke-adagium in recht en regelgeving". In: *Boekmancahier*, 50/2000, p. 476-489

that enables the artists to continue their work⁸. Furthermore, the reviewers themselves also function as gatekeepers in the supported circuit as well as in the art world itself.

The importance of grants is even greater in media art as media artists in the Netherlands⁹ are totally depending on subsidies. The art and art projects they develop are mostly not suitable for the art market because of their form, sensitivity, constant need of conservation and because of the price tag. The production of media art is costly as the projects require long term research, often involving additional experts besides the artists themselves (comparable to the constructing of a 'state-of-the-art-building') and high financial inputs for equipment and material.

For media artists it is not possible to operate in the regular art market because of the above mentioned peculiarities, which are further illustrated by picture A. Media artists have to operate in a rather small national and international circuit. The Netherlands accommodate two major institutions that are specialised in media art. *Montevideo* is more relying on video art but occasionally shows and finances projects that are more media art related. *V2* in Rotterdam entirely focuses on media art. The Netherlands do not have a special subsidising fund for media-art. Sponsoring by companies is an exception rather than a rule. Artists and institutions have to apply with those regular foundations for visual arts, performing art or film that seem to suit the project best.

This all indicates that media art is more dependant on the professional judgement than visual arts (where there is a market of private persons and corporations). Because there is a lack of experts, the procedure of the reviewing process is very important for media artists. There is no research done which can indicate the number of media artists in the Netherlands. It may be suspected that the division of gender is more obvious than for instance in the visual arts¹⁰ because that media arts require technical knowledge, and it is a well known fact that women prefer alpha to beta professions¹¹. This article will deal with gender bias within the reviewing process of art committees.

Reviewing within an official public institution is supposed to be objective and therefore requires controllability of the process. The question is whether reviewers objective enough not to be bothered by prejudice or personal taste and in what way they can accomplish their task.

⁸ T. Ijdens, W. de Nooy, *Evaluatie-onderzoek Fonds voor beeldende kunsten, vormgeving en bouwkunst: wetenschappelijk rapport*, Erasmus Centrum voor Kunst- en Cultuurwetenschappen, Rotterdam, 1994

⁹ In this case video art is not included.

¹⁰ Information from the V2-Organisation learns that the percentage of women that cooperated with or exhibited at V2 organisation since 1981 is approximately 25 % of all artists.

¹¹ The percentage of female graduates from higher technical education or from technical university is approximately 20%. Percentage from <http://www.cbs.nl/> (Statistics Netherlands). This percentage is lower than the percentage female artists that co-operated/exhibited with the V2-Organisation.



PICTURE A: An example of media art

Spatial Sounds (Van der Heide & De Nijs: ©2000) is an installation which consists of a speaker on a long arm with a counter weight on the other end. The arm is able to spin and can speed up to 100 km/h. A high-speed distance-measuring sensor is mounted close to the speaker and measures into the space around the spinning arm, scanning it for objects and audience. Thus it creates a spatial description of the space, resulting in a continuously dynamically changing map of the space quite similar to a traditional radar map.

I'll send the copyright notes on the photo tomorrow. I already have permission

Art review

Visual arts are being reviewed for several reasons. The most obvious reason is to measure the quality of a work of art compared to another work. But the reviewing takes place from different perspectives: a regular visitor of a museum is looking to enjoy, a gallery owner is looking for art that will please his clientele, a curator is looking for the best quality to support his exhibition, the critic verdicts whether a work of art is good. For all these examples the reviewers appeal their autonomy, so that it is not always clear whether a review of art is based on taste or expertise or on a mixture of both.

Governments allocate public money, and therefore a government that supports art is obliged to justify the money spent: it has to secure a judgement based on expertise. Dutch government supports art to guarantee a certain amount of supply of quality¹². Because of legal restrictions it is not allowed to judge the contents of art and has to rely on advisory bodies. Members of committees are assigned to review and award grant applications in the name of the government. Usually the experts sitting on committees have a good reputation and belong to networks in the art world and are therefore 'natural gatekeepers'. They are gatekeepers at two levels: at the one hand they are gatekeepers in their professional life in the art world and on the other hand they are the ones that decide whether artists will be subsidised or not. In both situations they distinguish themselves as being professionals and therefore interested in the quality of art. But how do they choose art? How do they measure? They make use of the so-called *judgement of knowledge*, while outsiders are said to judge by taste. Is personal taste of no importance for experts? Before I will explain the main differences between judgements of knowledge and taste, I will first explain the difficulties of the concept of quality.

*The concept of quality*¹³

The purpose, which forms the basis of art policy, seems simple at first sight: to support and/or stimulate quality. The venom is seated in the definition of quality: it means something outstanding, special, and something distinctive. In the arts, quality is often connected with innovation. Because "good art" is said to rock your cradle, to give the spectator new insight and so on, innovative art often seems a synonym for quality. But then: what is innovative?

¹² Wet op specifiek cultuurbeleid (Law on specific cultural policy)

¹³ based on: M. Rengers, M. van der Eerden, T. Ijdens, *Literatuuronderzoek beeldende kunst en vormgeving. Inventarisatie van sociaal-wetenschappelijk onderzoek en statistische informatie over de sector beeldende kunst en vormgeving in Nederland*. ECKCW, Rotterdam, 2003.

Changing or adding new artistic elements in art causes innovation. Who can cause such changes and under which conditions? A new generation has new standards and a new vision, so they are expected to renew the arts. But they have no exclusive right to be innovative; innovation can also result from social change. Neither do immigrants have exclusive rights on renewal: innovation can be the result of *anticipating* social changes. Finally, new forms could result from technical innovations, but it is not just media art that causes innovations in art. The definition of art is constantly being renewed and therefore a final definition of quality in the context art will never be possible.

Art critic Anna Tilroe defined that "good art" (at least as it is understood in the Western world) "never fixes existing meanings and feelings, at least not just like that. There must be something extra, something disrupting the enemy as well as the friend. Something unreachable, unfixable, and exactly because of that the work of art stays 'open'"¹⁴. Defining the concept of art is an ongoing process performed by artists and critics. The definition process depends on the context in which art is being created and observed. The ways of redefining art keep it dynamic, but they also determine the conditions under which all participants, including artists and reviewers, operate. Quality remains a difficult concept to define and can at best be approached.

Judgement of taste and judgement of knowledge

Judging art is not unambiguous. On the one hand art is a luxury good for people to enjoy or which can even evoke an aesthetic experience. The level of liking and disliking is determined by subjectivity: *de gustibus non disputandum esse*. The work is being judged at the subjective level: the judgement of taste. This judgement is located within the consuming sphere. In principle this is an individual affair, but at the same time it can be a crucial impulse for the (commercial) art market.

On the other hand, art provides a whole area of work for professional artists as well as non-artists. Experts have the ability (expertise) to judge whether a work of art is "good". This judgement is not simply based on subjective liking or disliking of a work of art. It is based on expertise, professional practise, theoretical backgrounds and knowledge of art history and art theory, that form the basis on which they are recognised as experts. Therefore the judgement of knowledge is considered to be objective.

This judgement, based on knowledge and experience is referred to as the judgement of knowledge and is similar to the 'peer-review' used to judge scientific articles. The importance of this judgement increases with the reputation of the reviewer. The reputation of an artist (artistic recognition) depends on this judgement. The experience of the expert is based on his acquaintance with the art world. The art world has certain conventions, agreements on what is considered "good art".

Interviews with gallery-owners show the existence of "the eye", with which experts are able to quickly scan quality¹⁵. Through experience, the expert understands or recognises the quality of an artwork.

However, true objectivity can not be achieved, the maximum attainable is intersubjectivity.

¹⁴ A. Tilroe, april 1992, voorwoord bij door AIDA georganiseerd forum in kunstenaarsvereniging 'Arti et Amicitiae'.

¹⁵ H. Abbing, *Why are Artists Poor? The exceptional economy of the arts*. Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2002.

In principle it is plausible that the judgement contains a certain sense of objectivity. Objectivity then can best be reached by the measure of agreement (intersubjectivity). In art reviewing the existence of a certain measure of agreement in the judgement of knowledge is confirmed by research that was carried out by Hekkert and Van Wieringen to the judgement of quality by experts and outsiders¹⁶. They composed eleven criteria based on which the respondents were asked to judge art. From these criteria¹⁷, four appeared to explain the agreement regarding the variance in judgement of the experts: contents, craftsmanship, authenticity and development. These criteria are based on knowledge of art history and art-theory. The measure in which a work of art fulfils these criteria determines the quality of the work.

The question now remaining is whether filling in these criteria is sufficiently objective to leave out all subjectivity, including the judgement of taste. Experts in their function of committee members are supposed to be able to give an independent objective judgement of knowledge. Their expertise lies in their ability to subordinate their personal judgement of taste to the judgement of knowledge.

Committee reviewing: organisation and fallibility of judgement

Several phases, factors and actors define the process of reviewing and awarding within art committees, beginning with the announcement of a grant and ending with awarding a grant. All factors, phases and actors are possible moments of fallibility.

Three conditions could diminish the chance of fallibility.

- In the first place, it has to be clear *what* will be reviewed using which *criteria*.
- Secondly, the range of quality should be kept as wide as possible. A wide range of applications should *stay* in the selection process *as long as possible* because this will increase the level of agreement among the reviewers. In other words: reviewers have a tendency to be really good in separating the wheat from the chaff, but when it comes to reviewing what is left they are not that capable to make a gradual distinction¹⁸.
- In the third place the reviewers should come to a judgement independent from each other. It would be influencing to the reviews if the reviewers could discuss the applications. The objectivity of the judgement should be expressed in the measure of agreement among the various judgements¹⁹.

All points must be carefully observed and they need to be transparent in order to secure objectivity at a reasonable level. A hundred percent objectivity is hardly attainable because

¹⁶ P. Hekkert, P. van Wieringen, *Oordeel over kunst. Kwaliteitsbeoordeling in de beeldende kunst*. WVC: Rijswijk, 1993. Hekkert and Van Wieringen carried out a research on art reviewing committees. Their central questions are: By which criteria do committee members judge art and in what way do the several committee members come to one decision?

¹⁷ That is: complexity, dynamics, coherence, craftsmanship, contents, theme, expressiveness, development, authenticity, integrity and quality

¹⁸ Hofstee, W.K.B. "Kwaliteit van beoordelingen in de context van kunstbeleid". In: *Boekmancahier*, 54/2002, p. 422-431.

¹⁹ W.K.B. Hofstee, *Principes van beoordeling. Methodiek en ethiek van selectie, examinering en evaluatie*. Swets & Zeitlinger Publishers, Lisse, 1999 and Hofstee 'Kwaliteit van beoordelingen in de context van kunstbeleid', op. cit.

fallibility lies within the human nature. Keeping in mind that procedure is performed by human beings, it is good to be aware of several "danger points" that occur during the different phases of the reviewing procedure. In principle, the procedure is characterised by the following phases: At first, there will be a public announcement of the reviewing procedure with certain criteria and certain purposes, then the artists decide whether or not to apply for e.g. a grant and the judging of the incoming applications. Fallibility of the procedure can occur at least at four points in this process: designing the criteria, decision making in the relation of budget available and number of incoming applications, set up of the committee and finally the fallibility of the individual members of a committee. The process consists of five points to be considered:

1. Formulating the fund's objective
2. Designing criteria
3. Designing an application form
4. Designing the application review-process
5. Designing panels/committees

The basis of judgement and review is the principle of equal opportunities. This means that the criteria are judged on the potentials of the applicant, not on his features (subject variables). Subject variables like age, gender and ethnicity should be of no importance during judging or reviewing and they should not be confused with qualities like talent and capability. Objective judgement is without prejudice and without stereotyping²⁰. Although these aspects of judging and reviewing seem to go without saying they are not eliminated automatically. This is emphasised by studies of choice models in other fields than the arts. It seems that the academic world favours men over women²¹. But also on the other side of the labour market, employers of low skilled employees favour young healthy men, preferably of the own nationality²².

Studies of the cultural field hardly show traces of gender preferences. Top²³ studied whether the valuation of art is gender biased. Judgement or review by experts is not influenced by gender, not in case of gender of the reviewers and not in case of those being reviewed. There was just one situation in which gender bias occurred: when outsiders judged art *ascribed* to male or female artists they favoured male works over feminine ones. Top also found that women have the tendency to underestimate their capabilities in comparison to men who tend to overestimate themselves²⁴. The confidence of men on their own careers and art could very well make them more assertive to promote their work to build a reputation.

However, reviewer's motives of choice *are not automatically choices of awareness*. They do partly result from stereotyping and partly from 'rational choices' (for instance the chance that a chronically sick employee is bound to be less productive than a healthy employee). So reviewing and judging inevitably evokes the question "was it a fair judgement?".

²⁰ Ibidem pp. 57-67.

²¹ M.L.M. Brouns, *Toegang tot de Top, Onderzoek naar selectie kandidaten KNAW-fellowship RijksUniversiteit Groningen ronde 1996 tot en met ronde 2000*, Universitair Centrum Genderstudies, RuG: Groningen, 2001.

²² K.W.H. van Beek, et al., "Shopping at the labour market: A real tale of fiction". In: *European Economic Review*, 41/1997, p. 295-317.

²³ T. Top, *Art and Gender: Creative Achievement in the Visual Arts*. Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Groningen, 1993.

²⁴ Ibidem, pp. 124-126.

Fallibility of criteria

Criteria have double functions. On the one hand they are the main factors for legitimising the review or judgement. When the criteria are well defined and reasoned it is possible to justify the outcome of a review to the outside world. In the first place, however, criteria are designed to support the purpose of judging. The purpose is related to the objective of the organisation that allocates an amount of money. Usually applications require two types of criteria on which grants will be awarded. The *formal criteria* secure that the applicants belong to the target audience. In case of a government art foundation these criteria would be related to nationality, age, the level of education and income. *The artistic criteria*, which indicate the talent and quality of the applicant, secure the output of quality granted by the institution. Artistic criteria do not just mean quality. They also indicate professionalism and the design of the artist's practice (cultural entrepreneurship).

To avoid problems, criteria have to be clearly defined and publicly announced. Formal criteria are discriminatory because they secure applications from certain selected target group (in Amsterdam, there is for example, a special fund exclusively for women). The formal criteria are in fact personal features, but they are considered as functional criteria because they describe the target group²⁵. Furthermore, they must be very clear and to avoid confusing situations. The artists should know whether they are eligible for the fund and answer the formal criteria, if it makes sense for them apply not.

Artistic criteria, however, are less clear, because there is no clear definition of quality in art but something like a suspicion what good art is. A criterion like craftsmanship, for instance, is much easier to recognise than originality. Top (1993) found that experts have quite a different concept of originality than graduate art students. This is not only difficult while reviewing; it is even more difficult to legitimise the outcome of a review, for it could, for example, be age-biased. To avoid this problem, committees divide the criterion of quality into 'sub-criteria' such as described by Hekkert and Van Wieringen. Quality will thus be reviewed based on content, craftsmanship, authenticity and development. The artists can also deduce what a committee considers to be "quality" by studying which artists had received grants in previous years. One conclusion may be that reviewers are being reviewed themselves, because they have to legitimise their reviews. Another conclusion is that potential applicants perform self-selection by considering their chances on both the formal and artistic criteria.

Fallibility of application forms

Anonymous reviewing is widely believed to be the best way to come to an objective judgement. All applications should be presented to the committee without personal features of the applicant. Information on personal features is only relevant for the fulfilment of formal criteria, and experts need not be involved at that stage. Judging formal criteria takes place at the administration department of the granting institution before the applications are to be divided among the members of the committees. The committees review the artistic criteria and awareness of personal features could influence the outcome of the review. Mixing up features with qualities could reduce the objectivity of a review process and lead to stereotyping.

²⁵ Hofstee, op. cit.

Studies show different outcomes for applications including or excluding personal features. It seems that reviews on applications including features have lower correlations than reviews on applications excluding features²⁶. On the other hand, gender seems to be of little relevance when judging the arts²⁷. Very much disputed in reviewing and especially in 'peer-review' is the influence of the factor 'reputation'. Reputation can be measured by the number of exhibitions, sales, grants received etc. Looking at an artist's exhibition places, collectors, galleries and institutions can refine the measurement. Most grant applications in the art world have to be accompanied by a curriculum vitae with detailed information on previous works. In principle, reputation is a "polluting" factor in reviewing. The present judgement becomes influenced by earlier reviews of "external experts" like gallery-owners and curators²⁸; reviewers may even feel obliged to behave loyally towards these external experts. Names of committee members are public; it could, for example, happen that a curator would not want to be rude towards a gallery owner or even the applicant. There would even be a possibility that a committee member is being approached to take a closer look at one of the applicants. However, in art review as well as in the review of academic papers, there is a certain agreement not to exclude personal features. Reviewers are experts, and they will recognise the identity of the applicants anyway. Finally having personal features at one's disposal can lead towards the utilisation of the features in order to underline a judgement on qualities.

Taking notice of personal features and the details of an artists career influences the judgement of the quality of art. However, quality is not the only criterion being reviewed. In case of grants, it is also exactly the career that is being reviewed. Covering all that is the reasoning that peer-reviewing inevitably evokes a situation where reviewers recognise applicants with or without personal features being made available.

Fallibility because of the composition of the committee

There are several issues in setting up a committee that increase the quality of a review:

- the number of persons seated in the committee,
- the background of the committee members and
- the way they come to a verdict.

Some committee members may be practising artists themselves; others fulfil different positions in the art world (such as curators or critics, etc.). Artists are slightly more negative in their review of colleagues than other experts. But taken as a whole there is enough agreement²⁹. All members are professionals involved in the art world and are therefore considered qualified to judge art. There would be an option to choose members from outside the art world. One reason of doing so might be an attempt to reduce the effect of "peer-review". It could reduce the chance of favouritism by members of the committee because they come from a different circuit and would not be concerned by problems of loyalty or personal interest. However, practical experience shows that this is no good solution: *"At the Stifo³⁰ the sitting advisers have no connection to film or television whatsoever, but that is also criticised.*

²⁶ Hekkert and Van Wieringen, op. cit.

²⁷ See T. Top, op. cit.

²⁸ See Hofstee, op. cit.

²⁹ Hekkert and Van Wieringen, op. cit.

³⁰ Stimuleringsfonds Nederlandse Culturele Omroepproducties

*It is an insoluble problem. There is no question of nepotism. 'It's more the opposite; that old boys are judged more hard-hearted because of fearing the reproach of being biased'.*³¹

An average committee consists of five to six members. The sole fact that there is more than one member increases the chances to come to an objective decision: just one member would practically place that member into the seat of God. In theory two members could disagree for a hundred percent. Having three reviewers hundred percent is not even reachable anymore.³² Hekkert and Van Wieringen find little agreement when the judgements of two reviewers were to be compared. In principle, the chance of agreement would increase with a growing number of reviews. One might conclude now that committees should be as large as possible. Hekkert and van Wieringen find a reliability of $r = .69$ (Spearman-Brown formula) in case of a committee of six persons. More than six members do not provide greater reliability.³³

The level of objectivity increases with "independent judgement", where the committee members come to their decision without discussion. Studies show greater reliability of the reviews if the reviewers review individually (average review) than of a review formulated by a group (joint review). Joint review may lead to a situation where all members conform their review to the opinion of just one member³⁴. The joint review indicates the group process and at least discussion. It might be a possibility that the dominant reviewer just posed good arguments. Another possibility is the professional reputation intimidating other members. Therefore researchers like Hekkert and Van Wieringen are in favour of the average review, but they find little agreement in the field. The argument from the field is that discussions add extra value to the review³⁵. Maybe discussions of art theory could take place within these review sessions, which would contribute to the innovation and development of art and art theory. On the other hand, these discussions could also contribute towards encouraging and spreading stereotypes and negative perception. In practice, members of committees review the applications independently and then discuss their findings.

A committee of six members works best. All members are experts because they are believed to be most capable in judging the quality of art. An average review with no discussions among committee members, increases the level of agreement.

Fallibility because of the relationship budget versus the number of applications

In theory it could happen that there are more applications that suit the given criteria than can be granted because of budget limitations. The other extreme is also possible: there are more funds available than qualified applications. In both cases, institutions and committees have to apply the given criteria in order to allocate the grants to suitable applicants. The relationship between budget and the number of applications can create interesting dilemmas for the institution and the committees. These two possible situations are reproduced in figure 1 as moment X and moment Y.

³¹ K. Wolfs, "Het Nederlands Fonds voor de Film. Poldermodeldrama en nepotisme". In: Filmkrant, 235/2002.

³² Hofstee, op. cit

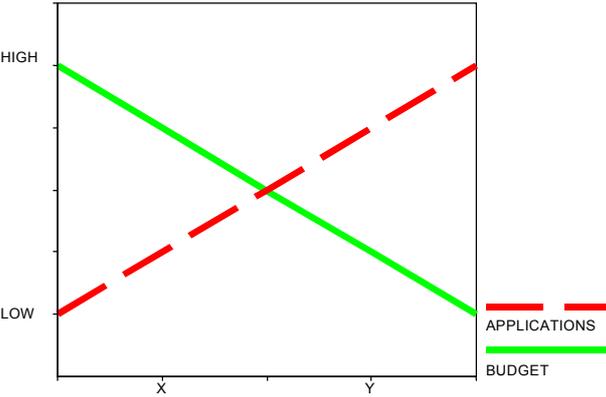
³³ See also Top, op. cit.

³⁴ Hekkert and Van Wieringen, op. cit.

³⁵ M.R. de Vries, G.W.M. Ramaekers, *Kunsten-Monitor 2000. De arbeidsmarktpositie van afgestudeerden van het kunstonderwijs*. ROA/ HBO-raad, Den Haag, 2002.

At the moment X, the budget is large and the number of applications small. Suppose not all applications fulfil the artistic criteria but are promising though. In a normal situation they have a chance not to be granted for instance because the committee finds the applicants are not at the required level of professionalism yet. In this situation, when the budget is sufficient, the committee can consider the option to award grants to all applications. In the opposite situation (small budget and a large number of applications: moment Y) the committee will have to adjust the criteria and choose only to select the best qualified. For both cases, the choices are legitimate. Nevertheless, considering the principle of equality, totally different choices are possible.

Figure 1: Relationship budget-number of applications



In case of moment X, there is the obvious choice to choose for a sharp maintenance of the given criteria. This choice has two advantages: it gives the review legitimacy (consistency) and it secures the availability of means (continuity). Former or future rejected applicants will have no need to feel treated unjustly so it will be to the advantage of the integrity of the granting institution. This choice also secures equal chances for applicants over a longer period of time. Therefore a very important factor of fair judging is to make sure potential applicants are being detailed informed on forehand of the criteria that are to be reviewed. The better the applicants are informed beforehand the better the outcome of the review can be motivated and legitimated.

In case of moment Y there will be no other alternative than the option of (forced) selection. The question in this situation is whether the committee should sharpen the criteria or add an extra criterion. But then what will be the outcome of the selection: a higher mean of artistic quality or a greater diversity of the features of the granted artists? The first outcome, a higher mean of artistic quality, seems very reasonable at first sight. Still arguing committees that are installed by the government brings in mind that they first favour quality. This could create undesirable effect though. This form of selection could please the government in a way that she decides to structurally cut the foundation's budget and the image of the foundation would become similar of a prize awarding institution instead of a supporting institution. The other outcome, based on artist's features would favour social desirability. Traditionally features like age, gender and ethnicity are crucial to this purpose. Again, if these were not the original criteria it remains difficult to legitimate the outcome. Let's take a look at the possible outcomes. Table A shows the division of certificated outflow from art education to gender.

Table A: *Flow of graduates from art education to gender*³⁶

Educational cluster		Gender	
		<i>male</i> %	<i>female</i> %
Visual arts	Autonomous visual arts	41	59
	Applied visual arts/design	46	54
	Applied visual arts/audio-visual	44	56
	Teaching visual arts	26	74
	<i>Total</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>57</i>
Performing arts	Performing music	61	39
	Teaching music	49	51
	Performing theatre	32	68
	Teaching theatre	18	82
	<i>Total</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>51</i>
Total (%)		45	55

The more you think about equal chances, the more prejudice and stereotypes become obvious or visible. In order to alter these patterns of thinking and acting, governments tend to switch these patterns. They choose to favour candidates that are allegedly unfit over the obvious potential candidates (positive discrimination).

The following is a short review of gender bias in art reviewing. For the visual arts, like already mentioned, there seems to be no gender bias in reviewing work of female artists. Applicants for the Fonds BKVB³⁷ are equally granted concerning the basic grants, which are to stimulate the professional artistic career; the percentage of awarded applicants is about 50% male and 50% female. This is clearly according to table A. When it comes to the incentive grants that focus more on the artistic criteria of the applicants, however, the division into male and female is 60-70% male versus 40-30% female awarded artists³⁸. It may be assumed that more than 7% of the women choose full-time parenthood because on a national level 44% of women with partner and children have jobs for less than 12 hours a week or have no jobs at all³⁹. However, there are no data on the percentage of women applying for these grants. The low number of women receiving these grants may be due to less women applying, or it may be due to an actual gender bias in the review committee.

Choosing additional criteria such as gender bias stays a difficult option, however, because the applicants are not aware of this criterion when applying for the grant. The best option in the case of moment Y would be to tighten the criteria. In the case of moment X it would be preferable to keep up the criteria and not to loosen them.

Conclusion

³⁶ de Vries and Ramaekers, op. cit., p.29.

³⁷ Fonds voor Beeldende Kunst, Vormgeving en Bouwkunst (the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture)

³⁸ A. de Wolf et al., *Beeldende kunstbeleid OcenW. Subsidies en aankopen, 1990-1999*. IVA, Tilburg, 2001.

³⁹ W. Portegijs et al., *Emancipatiemonitor 2002*, SCP, Den Haag, 2002.

Reviewing art is a delicate affair. The outcome of different forms of reviewing influences the artistic careers of artists in one way or another. Most reviewing is done on a personal, that is autonomous, title. This is the case for critics, curators, gallery-owners and collectors. The nature of the review changes when these experts are reviewing on behalf of a government institution like a foundation. In this case, the review is supposed to be objective and controllable. In principle the design of official art reviewing processes has all the elements to secure an objective, independent outcome. Especially the use of criteria seems to be crucial to secure a satisfying outcome of the review for all participants concerned. They have to be very well defined before the process of reviewing starts, from announcing the review to the outcome. Moreover, they have to be checked in all phases of the reviewing process. The criteria should also be designed to avoid biases. The fact that a frequently used criterion like professionalism is based on reputation could mean that women will score worse than men because men are presumably better at building up a reputation for themselves (they tend to overestimate themselves and act according to that). Biases, prejudices and stereotyping, however, are difficult to identify and can also occur when being guarded. It is not always really clear whether differences in men-women- percentages are due to men or women themselves or due to a system that does not provide equal chances. The process of reviewing is always fallible, but the main issue is to reduce the chance of fallibility as much is possible. Extern evaluation of reviewing processes could help foundations to be aware of their own acts

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