

Joana Vasconcelos: Managing an Artist's Studio in the 21st Century

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Introduction¹

Located in one of Lisbon's port areas, Joana Vasconcelos's studio employs 36 people and the focus is both industrious and creative. It is here that the essential ideas for all of the artist's work are conceived and the majority produced, the only exceptions being special projects like the *Trafaria Praia* ferryboat, which was created for the 2013 Venice Biennale. The studio is involved in every stage of artistic creation, from the birth of an idea to its design and technical assessment, implementation, sale and shipment. The functional nature of the studio provides a balance between the creativity of the artist and the management of the entire production cycle. This is a place where administrative and financial matters are handled with professionalism and where a communication department operates effectively. How this balance of creativity and management is constructed will be addressed in this article.

The Artist

Despite her uneasy relationship with art critics and Portuguese institutions, Joana Vasconcelos (b. 1971) is both the most popular and the most international of Portuguese artists. Her exhibitions are the most visited in Portugal (their popularity easily outstripping that of exhibitions by other contemporary artists).² On the international front, she is an artist who regularly

participates in major cultural and commercial events in the world of contemporary art. One can gain insight into both her character and her art when one looks for the reasons behind her poor relationship with Portuguese critics and other representatives of the Portuguese art world. First, she is an artist who pleases both the consumer of high art and the consumer of popular culture, a mixture that does not respect the conventions of the Portuguese art world. Second, she has an entrepreneurial and pragmatic spirit that does not fit the conformist business rules of the Portuguese art market. Early in her career she quickly dispensed with Portuguese intermediaries, choosing instead to sell her artwork directly from her studio. Abroad, she chooses her galleries carefully and currently works with Nathalie Obadia (France and Belgium), Casa Triângulo (Brazil), Horrach Moya (Spain), and Seomi / One and J Gallery (South Korea).

Trained at Lisbon's Ar.Co school of arts, where she studied drawing, jewellery design and visual arts from 1989 to 1996, Vasconcelos, by her own admission, was not an outstanding student nor a particularly promising young artist.³ Yet between 1994 and 1999 she participated in 22 collective exhibitions – virtually all focused on young artists – some of which enjoyed visibility in terms of media coverage and criticism. This persistent focus, and the *corpus* it generated, led the prestigious Serralves Foundation to offer Vasconcelos her first solo exhibition. Although this involved just a single piece, *Ponto de Encontro*, it represented

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the all-important institutional recognition of her work. The exhibition (held in 2000) and her first major critical success in Portugal (the EDP Young Artists Award) were two crucial events for her standing in the Portuguese art world (Chougnet, 2012a). Since then, a little over a decade ago, Vasconcelos has become a major player on the global art scene – particularly in Europe – with her exhibitions making a major impact.

As noted by Lipovetsky and Serroy (2011), the astonishment that her work produces generally comes from the unexpected appearance of familiar objects whose functionality, scale or contextualization has been radically changed. In some cases these are pieces that expand in a free and apparently random way, using the flexibility of the material from which they are made to adapt to the places where they are exhibited. In other cases her pieces suggest an intelligent irony, sometimes light and playful and sometimes rather caustic. These cases are usually related to traditional male and female roles, distinguishing between the erudite and the artisanal, while using different values of popular culture, often considered inferior. In these instances the title of each piece plays a vital role, contrasting with the “Untitled” formula widely adopted in the field of contemporary art. Vasconcelos’s work is made even more unusual by how her pieces are constructed, combining detailed and painstaking, essentially feminine, construction with fast, mass and masculine industrial production geared towards hyper-consumerist society, sometimes blending the past and the present in a creative hybrid (Lipovetsky and Serroy, 2011). Her work is also distinguished by the artist’s intervention in relation to commonplace objects and themes, producing intensely poetic artworks, very often through the appropriation of traditional techniques used to create glamorous pieces from

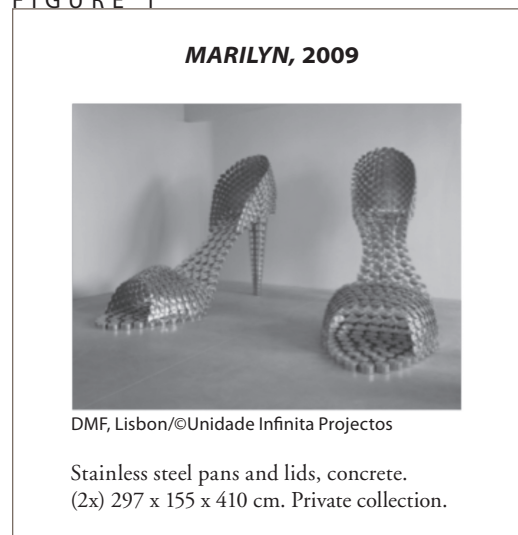
the trivial and disposable. Vasconcelos uses common, kitschy or disposable objects and equipment and gives them a delicate veneer, multiplying and combining them hyperbolically to create large-scale works that are aimed at breaking down cultural stereotypes or works that are visually or semantically paradoxical. *Marilyn* (Figure 1), for example, consists of two enormous silver stilettos, each measuring 297 x 155 x 410 cm, combining the sophistication and sex appeal associated with the famous film star. However, the piece is actually a monumental sculpture made up of numerous stainless steel cooking pans of different sizes with their respective lids. Here, Vasconcelos makes reference to two clichés of popular culture: the piece recalls the cinematographic sensuality associated with Marilyn Monroe while also evoking the stereotypes of female domesticity/ domestication implied by the pans and cooking, particularly in Mediterranean societies.

This ability to surprise, creating art through reconfiguration and the cannibalization of

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FIGURE 1



ABSTRACT

Although still relatively young, Joana Vasconcelos is a respected artist on the international contemporary art scene. Her career has included a number of impressive achievements, such as a prestigious solo exhibition at the Palace of Versailles in 2012. Her success belies the romantic view of art and artists in which success is attributed to a combination of luck, talent and improvisation. This study demonstrates that Vasconcelos’s management skills are virtually as important as her creativity. Her management and business talents and skills include an ability to work with a top-quality team; delegate tasks and responsibilities; engage in rigorous planning of the production process; maintain diligent communication with the media, collectors and other interlocutors; and cultivate social and institutional relationships with various markets.

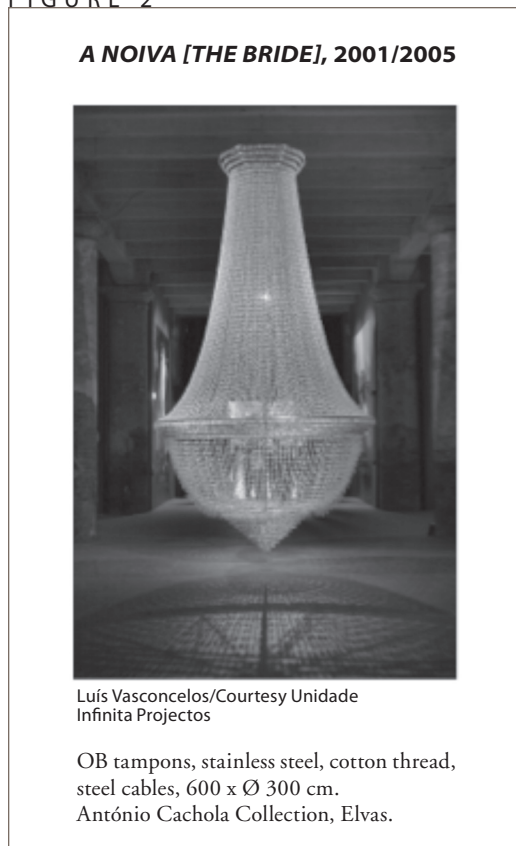
KEY WORDS

Art markets, artists’ studios, management, Joana Vasconcelos, fundraising

everyday objects, has been a constant feature of her work (Silva, 2009). These characteristics are clearly present in the iconic piece *The Bride (A Noiva)* (Figure 2), the work that put Vasconcelos on the radar of international curators and that some critics found reminiscent of the Dadaist art of Marcel Duchamp (Amado, 2010; Serrão, 2012). Measuring 600 x 350 x 250 cm when assembled, the work was constructed by the artist in her first studio, which was very limited in terms of workspace. The piece is made up of some 14,000 OB tampons (donated by the company that owned this brand in the Portuguese market), painstakingly linked together in long threads. The threads run for six metres, creating shapes determined by a structure of metal rings, imitating the imposing crystal chandeliers of the 19th century and, by the same token, traditional white wedding dresses with their veils and long trains. The production and logistical challenges posed by this piece left an indelible impression on Vasconcelos. It was executed especially for a competition for young artists held by the D. Luís I Foundation in 2001. The artist's vehement disapproval of the placement of her work in the show upset the critics who were on the panel.⁴ The other artists exhibiting acknowledged the exceptional quality of her work in relation to everything else on show. Vasconcelos felt that, in not awarding her first prize, the panel was responding to her strong reaction to the placement.⁵ After the competition the piece was exhibited for a year in a Lisbon nightclub. From there it was featured in a number of exhibitions in different countries, from Hungary to Spain, until it was bought, in 2003, by António Cachola, a prominent Portuguese collector of contemporary art.⁶

The artist experienced her first taste of international recognition at the 51st Venice Biennale, in 2005. At the time, *The Bride* was

FIGURE 2



subject to an overly feminist interpretation due to its placement next to the works of the Guerrilla Girls in the *Always a Little Further* exhibition. This work and its history are a reflection of the qualities that have made Vasconcelos successful: remarkable creativity, the ability to transform her most extravagant ideas into feasible pieces, persistence in the pursuit of an objective, and a belief in the “truth” of her artworks.

In recent years Vasconcelos has racked up a number of achievements, from both a cultural and a commercial perspective, in the

RÉSUMÉ

Bien qu'elle soit relativement jeune, Joana Vasconcelos est une artiste respectée sur la scène internationale de l'art contemporain. Depuis le début de sa carrière, elle a à son actif de nombreuses réalisations impressionnantes, telles qu'une prestigieuse exposition solo au château de Versailles en 2012. Son succès fait mentir la vision romantique de l'art selon laquelle le succès est attribuable à un mélange de chance, de talent et d'improvisation. Cette étude démontre que les habiletés de gestion de Vasconcelos se révèlent aussi importantes que sa créativité. Ses talents et ses habiletés de gestionnaire et de femme d'affaires comprennent une aptitude à travailler avec une équipe exceptionnelle, à déléguer des tâches et des responsabilités, à planifier de façon rigoureuse le processus de production, à maintenir une communication régulière avec les médias, les bailleurs de fonds et les autres interlocuteurs, et à cultiver des relations sociales et institutionnelles avec différents marchés.

MOTS CLÉS

Marchés de l'art, studios d'artistes, gestion, Joana Vasconcelos, collecte de fonds

ruthless world of contemporary art. Among the several collective international exhibitions in which she has participated, a highlight was the famous *The World Belongs to You*, presented at the Palazzo Grassi in 2011 by the François Pinault Foundation. This show was curated by Caroline Bourgeois and included artists such as David Claerbout, Jeff Koons, Takashi Murakami and Maurizio Cattelan. But the peak of Vasconcelos's career was undoubtedly her 2012 solo exhibition at the Château de Versailles (Chougnat, 2012b), which succeeded individual exhibitions by artists like Jeff Koons (2008) and Takashi Murakami (2010). With this show Vasconcelos was able to establish a rich dialogue between contemporary art and Louis XIV's absolutist Baroque gem, resulting in one of the most successful exhibitions of its type. Visited by 1.6 million people during its relatively short run, from 18 June to 30 September, it was Paris's most visited solo exhibition in 50 years. From a more institutional perspective, she exhibited at two Venice Biennales, first with her 2005 solo exhibition and then, in 2013, as Portugal's official representative with the country's first itinerant pavilion and the Venice Biennale's first itinerant installation, *Trafaria Praia*, a ferryboat that once connected the banks of the River Tagus (Amado, 2013). Vasconcelos's international success is impressive, especially considering that she is still in mid-career and has created virtually all her work in one city and in a single country, both of which are peripheral to the art world.



The Studio

Given the quality of *The Bride*, one of her most acclaimed pieces, and *Trafaria Praia*, it cannot be said that Vasconcelos has become more creative. What *has* changed is her ability to transform ideas into works of art and how

those pieces are created, moving from the individual and direct to the collective and indirect, as well as how the communication of her works and projects is processed. The international reputation that Vasconcelos has achieved within the art world has resulted in exponential growth in the demand for her work. To satisfy this demand from collectors, she enlarged her team and turned her studio into a company, which has allowed her to increase production and streamline the different phases of creation. Thus her studio is the result of a combination or fusion of different spaces, their functions, their coordination, and the people who work in them and bring them to life. It is the sum of the physical space, the architecture and the people, each with his or her own area of specialization, moulded to suit both the needs of the team and the needs of production.

Her first studio was a shared space that offered little in the way of proper working conditions. Rented from the Lisbon Council, it measured just 20 square metres and was located in a rundown area of the city. In 2004, in the knowledge that *The Bride* had been chosen for the Venice Biennale, Vasconcelos moved to a much more spacious studio (some 2,000 square metres) in an old industrial area on the outskirts of Lisbon. Although this studio was roomy, with high ceilings, and had excellent natural light, various limitations remained. Its practicality was compromised by considerable overlap among the different spaces and functions.⁷ At the time, the team consisted of only six people and Vasconcelos's status was that of self-employed professional. However, by the end of 2006 the growth in studio work forced her to change her legal status. She founded the company Unidade Infinita, Projetos, in order to manage her work in a more professional manner and allow her to hire permanent staff. In 2007 the volume of sales began to increase considerably, which meant the hiring of more staff.

RESUMEN

A pesar de su relativa juventud, Joana Vasconcelos es una artista respetada en el ámbito internacional del arte contemporáneo. Impresionantes logros marcan su carrera, entre los cuales cabe destacar una exposición individual en el Palacio de Versalles en 2012. Su éxito se contrapone a la visión romántica del arte y de los artistas que atribuye el éxito a una combinación de suerte, talento e improvisación. Con el presente estudio se demuestra que las capacidades de Vasconcelos en materia de gestión son casi tan importantes como su creatividad. Entre sus talentos gerenciales y empresariales merece notar su capacidad de trabajar con un equipo de alto calibre; delegar tareas y responsabilidades; emprender una planificación minuciosa del proceso de producción; mantener una comunicación atenta y asidua con los medios de comunicación, los coleccionistas y otros interlocutores y finalmente cultivar relaciones sociales e institucionales con varios mercados.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Mercados del arte, estudios de artista, gestión, Joana Vasconcelos, recaudación de fondos

This growth, along with the need to make the workplace more productive, led her to move to her current premises. At the time of the move, in late 2007/early 2008, the team comprised 10 people, including the artist. Since then, as shown in Table 1, the increase in staff has been virtually constant.

The way that Vasconcelos's studio is constructed, in terms of both staffing and the division of space, partly explains her success as an artist and particularly her businesslike approach to artistic endeavours. This means high productivity as well as strict control over how the pieces are produced. In most cases Vasconcelos devotes her time solely to devising the piece, imagining it, sketching it, deciding on its size, the type of material and the colours to be used and their combinations, as well as the specific tasks to be carried out by each staff member. However, certain pieces, even those that are part of a series like *Shoes* and *Independent Hearts*, call for her direct intervention, as there are various artistic and technical decisions that only she can make if the end result is to reflect the original idea. The need for Vasconcelos to be involved in everyday studio work means that she must decline countless invitations to participate in artistic residencies, severely limiting her foreign travel.

Vasconcelos selects her staff carefully, choosing people with a range of different skills and personalities, seeking to balance the complementary nature of her team and the best solutions for studio operations. Alongside those who work most closely with her, she develops solutions case by case to meet the different needs of a studio that is increasingly international and subject to sustained growth. This is why she selects people who are adaptable and flexible and why she delegates a great deal of responsibility to those closest to her. She is keenly aware of the need for a positive collective dynamic and invests much effort in creating a good working atmosphere. For example, the team's meals are ordered from a catering company that delivers them to a small refectory in the workplace. The whole team eats together, thus consolidating the group's cohesion.⁸ In the same vein, for those interested, the refectory area is used for group exercise sessions in the late afternoon, with individual massage also available in the studio.

The studio covers an area of 1,500 square metres on two floors, the ground floor being larger than the first floor (Figure 3). Here,

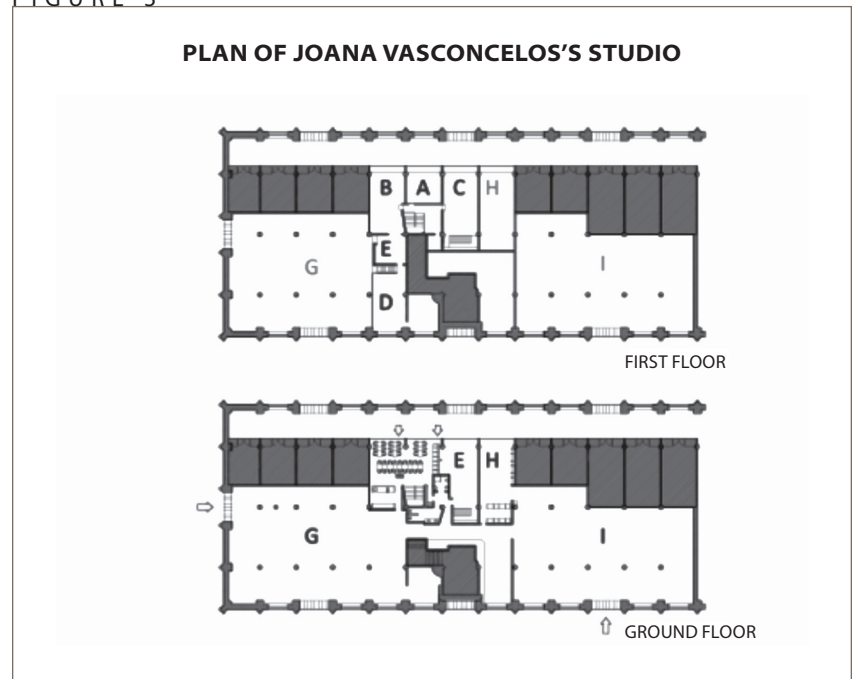
TABLE 1

STUDIO STAFF, 2007-13							
Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of staff	1	10	10	17	22	28	36
Increase (%)	-	900	0	70	29	27	28

36 people work in different spaces and offices. The most important areas are Vasconcelos's office, the architecture office, the finance and production office, the communication office and the production areas. Vasconcelos designed the entire space herself, taking into account her previous studios and the need to make the workspace as efficient as possible. It is important to explain how fully the production cycle and the studio space are coordinated in order to demonstrate how the art comes to fruition.

The production cycle for each piece begins with sketches. This task is undertaken personally and spontaneously by the artist, both in the studio and externally. In the case of site-specific interventions, the sketches are often begun with the first visit to the location of a future exhibition or intervention. Vasconcelos sometimes revises the sketches in her office (A), a comfortable, quiet space overlooking the river, on the upper floor between the finance and production office (B) and the communi-

FIGURE 3



cation office (C). When ideas and sketches come about independently, their implementation may take place immediately or at a later, more opportune, moment, particularly if it implies high production costs. When the ideas and sketches emerge in the context of a special commission or as part of a site-specific intervention, production begins within a well-defined timeframe.

In every case, production begins with the sketches being sent to the architecture office (F) on the ground floor. Here, they are converted into a highly detailed technical drawing, which includes the desired scale and all the information required for the execution of the piece. The drawings are then discussed in the engineering workshop (G) or in the textile production zone (H). During this phase the artist also meets with technicians to determine the work's material viability. When all the technical aspects have been checked and adjusted, the project goes back to the first floor, this time to the production office (B), which is responsible for coordinating the different production stages and purchasing the materials for all projects. During this stage, the production office determines the materials and means necessary to execute the artwork or project and draws up a budget. This part of the process is undertaken in partnership with the finance office, which shares the same space (B). The financial viability of the project is analyzed and the cost calculated – per exhibition if applicable. Also during this stage, Vasconcelos, working with each office coordinator, allocates the various tasks to the production staff; she is keenly aware of their individual abilities and preferences, which are recorded in the work plan.

The project then moves to the communication office (C), where a draft presentation is drawn up. Here, the options to be presented to the artist are analyzed. This is also where (if applicable, as in the case of special projects) the communication process geared towards fundraising begins, as well as where publicity for the artwork is drafted. This office is a kind of entrance and exit for the studio's productions. Fundraising is conducted in partnership with the finance and production office (B). From here, the project moves downstairs once more, and is physically created in the textile production zone (H) or the engineering workshop (G), the latter occupying an area of over 300 square metres, while the deadlines and costs for the production stages are controlled by the production office. On the upper floor there is a multi-

purpose space (D) (a mezzanine overlooking the engineering workshop), which is the location of her foundation, Fundação Joana Vasconcelos, and photographic and workshop support. Contiguous to this space is a small meeting room (E). Finally, after completion and internal cataloguing, the piece is placed in the gallery (I), an area covering 350 square metres that is increasingly being used for production. Here, it is photographed, documented and exhibited for potential buyers, awaiting shipment to a gallery or to one of the exhibitions in which the artist constantly participates. In the case of the latter, the piece is individually analyzed in order to devise the most appropriate packing system and format.

In the case of major exhibitions, such as those at Versailles and Ajuda, the production process is more elaborate and complex, involving a task force. What requires the most care in these projects is the planning and control of production, transport, and *in situ* setting up and disassembly, particularly in the case of site-specific installations such as those involving large textile pieces as in the *Valkyries* series or the *Contamination* series. The production office plans everything so as to avoid any logistical or budgetary hiccups. The former arise from a mismatch between the size and weight of the piece and the technical and safety limitations of the place where it will be exhibited. The latter result from poor budgeting; it is necessary to properly account for the time each office will need to complete the tasks it has been assigned.

Bearing in mind the model developed by Mintzberg (1979), which describes how organizations are managed, Vasconcelos's studio can be considered a hybrid of the simple and adhoc-racy models. The studio retains characteristics of a simple structure in that all major decisions are made by the artist, whose strategic decision-making is fundamental to the organization, extending to such basic matters as who will do the crochet for a particular piece. She speaks informally to all her staff in order to keep a firm grip on the progress of the different pieces being constructed, thus making it possible to manage information effectively.

The studio also reveals characteristics of an adhoc-racy. The work of a successful artist necessarily implies constant innovation; however, the physical creation does not have to be done by the artist herself. As Vasconcelos considers the most crucial aspect to be the original idea, and not its physical creation, she recruits

professionals with specialized knowledge and skills, which ensures the viability of the artworks and their rigorous execution according to the model defined by the artist. The structure of the studio is very much based on the needs of the staff members who carry out and coordinate the work, both within and between teams. The professionals working in the studio enjoy autonomy and often suggest changes to the artist's initial ideas. However, the last word is always hers, which reinforces the simple structure. In short, it appears that this is a company that has managed to build a hybrid structure combining the simple and adhocracy models, responding appropriately to demand while possessing the flexibility necessary to ensure constant creativity and innovation throughout the process of producing artworks.



The Markets

Traditionally, the art market is divided into the primary market and the secondary market (Poli, 2006). The former involves works sold for the first time, whether by the artist or her representative. The latter involves the subsequent sale of these pieces, whether in a gallery or at auction or even between individuals. Generally speaking, Vasconcelos's relationship with these two markets has been very positive, especially since 2007. That year, the artist's sales in the primary art market, either directly through her (in her studio) or through her gallery representatives abroad, garnered hundreds of thousands of euros. Since the founding of her company in 2007, turnover has grown consistently (see Table 2). Comparing the years 2007 and 2013 in terms of turnover, one can see that there was growth of 849% and that this growth occurred over a five-year period, despite dips in 2009 and 2011, which were compensated for in other years. With regard to the last year shown in the table, it is worth pointing out that income from

external markets represents 73.5% of turnover, which clearly demonstrates the internationalization of Vasconcelos's markets.

As for the secondary market, in the specific case of auctions the results also indicate the importance of international buyers. The first major success came on 30 June 2009, when *Golden Independent Heart* (Lot 31) was auctioned at Christie's of London for £163,250,⁹ exceeding the catalogue estimate of £80,000 to £120,000. After this success, other important pieces by Vasconcelos were auctioned with positive results. The largest sum paid for a Vasconcelos was £505,250, when *Marilyn* (Lot 3) was auctioned at Christie's on 11 February 2010. This figure by far outstripped the catalogue estimate of £100,000 to £150,000. It stimulated the market's appetite for Vasconcelos works, and a few months later Christie's auctioned another piece from the same series, *Carmen Miranda* (Lot 41), which was a single stiletto. This work was sold on 14 October 2010 for £229,250, once again exceeding the catalogue estimate (£120,000–£180,000). The publicity generated by these sales attracted new collectors. The new buyers were reassured by the example of the famous French millionaire and art collector François Pinault, who had been buying Vasconcelos works since 2008. In 2010 Christie's primary market branch, the mega-gallery Haunch of Venison, became the artist's representative, and remained so until 2013, when it closed its doors.

This reference to the secondary market is important, because auctions, by their public nature, are the only barometer (albeit an imperfect one) of the market value and liquidity of a particular artist. As prices on the primary market are confidential, auctions are the main means of obtaining data on this type of transaction. Equally, artists or their gallery representatives are unable to control the market for works auctioned, in terms of both price stipulated and available supply. Therefore the

TABLE 2

REVENUES, 2007–13							
Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Revenue (€)	466,887	797,760	683,867	2,079,485	1,648,505	2,047,410	4,430,733
Growth relative to 2007 (%)	–	71	46	345	253	339	849
Growth (%)	–	71	-14	204	-21	24	116

data referred to above reveal to us the demand for works produced by Vasconcelos, particularly those in the pricier segment of the market.

Nevertheless, despite the importance of the secondary market, issues related to this market are less important for our present examination. Our main focus is how the artist interacts with the market, in the broad sense, and not just the art market. According to Colbert's (2012) model, an artist like Vasconcelos targets segments of four different markets:

- end consumers: private art collectors (individual or corporate), sporadic buyers, professional decorators and art investors (this corresponds to what is usually called the primary art market)
- the state: the central government and its departments or regional and local bodies; this market can provide direct financial support for artistic creation or can commission artistic interventions and exhibitions
- sponsors and patrons: those bodies in the private sector that sponsor, support or become partners in artistic projects and exhibitions without buying the artworks
- other partners: distribution intermediaries such as galleries and dealers, co-producers such as museums and art galleries, specialized and mass media, and other distributors. All of these partners can share the risks of promoting an artwork or exhibition. In Vasconcelos's case, this market also includes several consumer goods companies that can promote their own products if these are used in her artworks.

For Vasconcelos, as for the majority of visual artists, the end-consumer market is clearly the most important. Production for this market includes both independent works, usually executed for a specific patron, site or occasion, and works that are produced in a series. Some series are closed, meaning that no more works in that series will be produced, while others are open, meaning that production is still running. However, it should be noted that in the majority of series each work is unique. This is evident in cases where the work includes handmade woollen or cotton crochet, because these pieces feature different patterns and colour combinations, allowing for variations among the objects in the same series. In addition, each series has specific features and comprises a limited number of works. Naturally, prices in each series

vary according to the costs of production, in terms of both materials and labour, as well as the number of works that will be produced. At the time of writing, Vasconcelos has developed more than 40 different series and produced over 700 works, with prices ranging from €7,500 to €500,000. The most popular series are those made from Bordalo Pinheiro faience sculptures (frogs, serpents, wolves, dogs, cats, bulls' heads and horses' heads), which Vasconcelos covers with handmade cotton crochet. These series so far comprise around 140 artworks. The most exclusive series are the *Independent Hearts* and the shoes made of cooking pans. In these cases, the artist has produced only six of each, plus one or two artist's proofs. These pieces are sold only at her studio or at the galleries that represent her abroad. They must be ordered in advance, as the studio has few artworks in stock. Those readily available are usually less affordable or are part of a less popular series that can take longer to sell. Usually, production matches orders received from the galleries and private collectors. The waiting period varies according to studio capacity. The production of new artworks and new exhibitions always takes priority.

In addition to the sale of artworks, Vasconcelos has developed her own merchandising, with prices starting at €1. The merchandise is available at selected outlets, such as airport shops, as well as at the shops of museums that feature her exhibitions. The main goal of the merchandising is to offer anyone visiting her shows the opportunity to own a small and affordable item associated with Vasconcelos. While merchandising counts for a mere 1.5% of turnover, it is very important in terms of offering access and ownership of works associated with her.

Due to the scale of her special projects and major exhibitions, the investment needed to produce them is often considerable. Generally, neither the artist nor any of her associated galleries has the financial capacity to develop them alone. Vasconcelos is an artist who needs to develop different fundraising strategies in order to produce her major projects and to minimize any inherent financial risks. Fundraising naturally involves monetary donations, although it can also include large quantities of materials and industrial consumer goods that the artist uses to produce her works, such as tiles, cooking pans, steam irons and pharmaceutical blister packs. Vasconcelos therefore targets all available markets to raise funds: the public sector, patrons and sponsors, other

partners. Without this fundraising strategy, many of her special projects, namely those presented in the public sphere, as well as her major museum exhibitions, would not be possible.

The public sector is a minor market for Vasconcelos. However, it is a market that she does not neglect and one in which she is more successful than most of her Portuguese peers. Since she is an ambassador for Portugal and her work implies intervening within the public domain, she is naturally more involved with political interlocutors. Sporadic public support for a piece or an intervention of hers is a guarantee of a good return, in terms of media exposure and the multiplier effect that politicians appreciate. Whatever the case, we must point out that public sector funding is never crucial to the execution of her work. The percentage of funding she receives from this market is much lower than the total sum entailed in a particular project, which means that the subsidies and support she receives are always relatively unimportant.

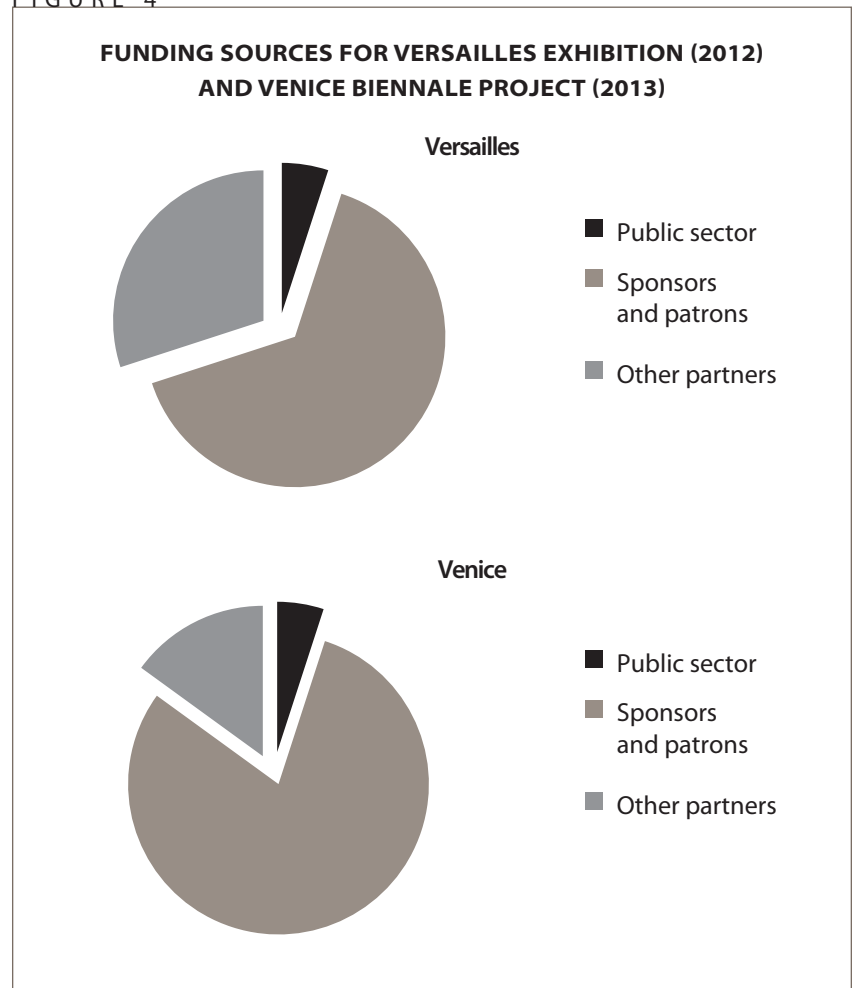
The sponsors and donors market is the most important one in terms of special projects. Vasconcelos's special projects are financed mainly by corporate sponsors and patrons who expect to reap promotional benefits. Her fundraising success in this market is notable. Without it some of her most challenging creations, such as the Versailles exhibition in 2012 and the Pavilion of Portugal at the Venice Biennale in 2013, would not have been possible. These two examples are all the more significant because they originated in a country without a tradition of philanthropy in the arts and one in dire economic straits, with a 3.2% decrease in GDP in 2012 and 1.5% in 2013. Yet Vasconcelos obtained 75% of the funding for the Versailles exhibition and 100% of the funding for the Venice Biennale project in Portugal. For these sponsors, the association with Vasconcelos means media exposure, public success, cultural innovation and prestige.

Finally, in relation to the "other partners" market, the main agents are the galleries that represent Vasconcelos abroad. In Portugal she represents herself, using no intermediary whatsoever. Her relationship with Portuguese gallery owners has always been troubled, with the artist finding it difficult to deal with what she sees as their amateurish approach and small-scale thinking.¹⁰ Therefore, Portuguese and foreign collectors interested in acquiring her work have to visit her studio. Outside

Portugal she is represented by four galleries in five countries. Sometimes these galleries are asked to contribute to the funding of large-scale exhibitions. This was the case with the Versailles exhibition, where the French-Belgian gallery and the British gallery that represented her at the time each contributed approximately 10% of total costs, through the advance purchase of the artist's work. An unusual partner in Vasconcelos's work is the consumer goods industry, which provides the raw materials that she uses in her productions. For instance, for *The Bride* her partner was Johnson & Johnson and for *Marilyn* it was Silampos, a Portuguese manufacturer of stainless steel cookware.

Figure 4 illustrates Vasconcelos's relations with these three markets. It shows the contribution of each market to the production of the Versailles exhibition and the Portuguese pavilion (*Trafaria Praia*) at the Venice Biennale, each of which had a budget of €2 million.

FIGURE 4



Conclusion

The essential focus of Vasconcelos's work is the creation of original art. The quality and importance of her artistic creations are increasingly being recognized by institutions, markets and the public. However, the artist combines her creative bent with a number of management skills. According to Mintzberg's (1973) model of the 10 management roles, Vasconcelos plays roles in the informational, interpersonal and decisional categories. She mainly plays the role of spokesperson, representing the studio to outsiders; the role of figurehead, performing ceremonial and symbolic duties; the role of leader, directing, motivating and advising her team; and the role of entrepreneur, spotting opportunities for business development and initiating new projects. This combination of roles has allowed her to achieve an exemplary balance, true complementarity between creativity and the realism necessary to create and implement artworks and projects, ensuring sustainability and the ability of both the artist and her team to work successfully.

Because of the scale and diversity of the materials and techniques used in her creations, from an early stage in her career Vasconcelos has needed the support of different specialists in order to implement team projects. When she started out in 1996, she worked on an ad hoc basis with just two other people in a small studio, which contrasts sharply with her current situation: a permanent staff of 36 working in spacious premises. The combination of increased demand for her work and her desire to engage in ever more complex and ambitious projects led her to transform her studio into a small company. This step had to do with the artist's demanding attitude towards planning, organization and control of her work, factors that have dictated the functional and efficient layout of her studio. Her charismatic leadership, her ability to identify well-defined objectives and the career opportunities she offers her staff mean that she can surround herself with top professionals who are responsible for the planning and crafting of her artworks.

In addition to her leadership role in the studio, her engaging personality, innate optimism and positive energy are key factors in her market success. Her company's healthy financial situation is a result also of her efforts to develop personal relationships with her clients, institutional interlocutors and commercial representatives, similar to what successful art-

ists have done in the past (Muniz, Norris and Fine, 2014). These qualities are also important in her various fundraising endeavours, allowing her to create artworks and engage in projects on a larger and more complex scale. Her persuasiveness, pragmatism and creativity mean that she can find solutions to apparently insoluble problems.

In short, similar to artists of the past who had large studios, such as Giotto, Pietro da Cortona and Rubens, and similar to living artists such as Damien Hirst and Takashi Murakami, Joana Vasconcelos is a complete artist, an artist whose creativity and technical abilities combine with a set of business skills that allow her to efficiently manage her studio and her relationships with clients and patrons.

Notes

1. The authors conducted unrecorded interviews with Joana Vasconcelos (14 February 2011, 20 June 2011, 17 January 2014); Lúcio Moura (30 October 2012, 4 October 2013); Paula Leitão (9 January 2014); and Jacinto Simões (9 January 2014). They also made visits to Vasconcelos's studio (7 February 2011, 20 June 2011, 30 October 2012, 25 January 2013, 3 May 2013, 17 January 2014).

2. In a country of 10 million inhabitants and relatively low levels of cultural interest, Vasconcelos's shows have been a huge success. The attendance figures for her most recent solo exhibitions in Lisbon, at the Berardo Museum in 2010 and Ajuda Palace in 2013, were 168,000 and 232,000, respectively. The 2013 event was the most visited solo exhibition in Portugal's history.

3. "I was always the last in line, always the bad Ar.Co student. I never had scholarships, I was never bought by the collections, I was never part of groups, never elected nor chosen by an entire structure that exists (and has always existed) to elect its own kind. It had both a good side and a bad side. It was good because it gave me room to grow alone, to map out my career with no constraints; however, it was constructed with very low esteem" (Lima, 2013, p. 191). Nevertheless, for six years, from 1999 to 2005, Vasconcelos was a part-time teacher at that same institution.

4. Because the space was small, the curators wanted to put the paintings of one candidate on the white walls that served as the backdrop for Vasconcelos's piece, which was detrimental to the work of both artists. Vasconcelos threatened to cover her work with black plastic and on the day of the opening the other candidate's paintings were moved to another location in the exhibition.

5. Opinion expressed by Joana Vasconcelos during an in-person interview on 14 February 2011.

6. Due to the poor condition of the piece, the artist agreed with the collector to destroy the original and substitute it with a new one in 2005, which was larger than the original in height and width. This is why the piece has two execution dates, 2001 and 2005.

7. "The office was far from the workshop, the workshop mixed with the gallery, etc. . . ." (Lima, 2013, p. 191).

8. "In karate, I learned to compete, both as an individual and in a group. I was a top-level athlete and champion, both

individually and in a team. At the age of 17, I gave classes to groups of around 200 people. What I did in karate I bring here. The group has its own particular strength and something was needed to unite the group.” (interview, 17 January 2014)

9. All prices cited in this paragraph include the buyer's premium.

10. Opinion expressed by Joana Vasconcelos during an in-person interview on 14 February 2011.

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