The Contribution of *Finer* Art in Karachi’s Society Towards the Creation of a Cultural Hegemony.

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Does the *Finer* Art in Karachi’s Society Contribute Towards a Cultural Hegemony?
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Abstract

Living in a capitalist society, dreaming of surviving as a fine artist, I juggle between trying to comprehend how a work of art is judged or classified. The two main art forms that spring up are the commercial arts and the finer arts. One is treated to be an inferior form of art and the other a superior one. Much similar to the treatment of people it becomes targeted to. The following discourse presents, an understanding of the basis of this demarcation. The factors examined are both economic and cultural perspectives of the two art forms. After this examination, a conclusion, that being a visual language, Art also becomes a resource for the industrialist who thrives on using all resources to churn out optimum monetary output.
Introduction

Cultural hegemony was a theory originated by Marxist philosopher, Antonio Gramasci. It talks about how a “culturally diverse society can be ruled or dominated by one of its social classes.” (“Cultural Hegemony”)

In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels had put forward the theory that after facing a time of domination and suppression, the proletariats would eventually retaliate by forming ‘unions’, helping them fight for their rights, which would then eventually lead to the overthrow of capitalist society and mark the beginnings of a communist society – a centrally planned economy, where the class system would be abolished and, resources would be allocated effectively and equally. A major flaw in this theory however, is that it exists only as a model/theory of an ideal world and therefore, cannot really exist in the real world. The power over the factors of production would eventually fall in the hands of a few – be it a few industrialists or the centrally planned government- both can very much misuse their power to allocate in whichever way they would want. So the overthrow of the industrialist by the dominated ‘proletariat’ would only mean a change of a set of people, the title and the traits of the ‘bourgeois’ will still be carried and not eradicated as predicted.

“Although Marx and Engels had famously predicted this eschatological scenario in 1848, many decades later the workers of the industrialized core still had not carried out the mission.” (“Cultural Hegemony: Encyclopedia – Cultural Hegemony”) According to Antonio Gramasci the proletariats do not always revolutionize and overthrow the bourgeois. The laws of the dominant class become ossified so much so that the dominated class follows blindly without questioning. Strinati explains, "...Dominant groups in society, including fundamentally but not exclusively the
ruling class, maintain their dominance by securing the 'spontaneous consent' of subordinate groups, including the working class, through the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups." (Stillo; chapt.3) The constructed laws sometimes even take the form of ‘common sense’ – unquestionable for the society that follows them blindly. (Stillo)

The two powers that make the bourgeois ‘superior’ to the proletariat is economic power – power over the factors of production; and intellectual power – the power that comes with ‘knowledge’ – the bourgeois assumes to have all knowledge. (Stillo; chapt.3) He uses his power of knowledge to suppress the already dominated in such a way so as the dominated comply to whatever is being said, thinking and again assuming that the bourgeois would know more since the bourgeois has the power of all/more knowledge which the proletariat can only strive to achieve. (Stillo) Cultural ideology of a nation therefore is the, “shared ideas or beliefs [or practices] which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups.” (Burke)

In the research to come, we will understand if the art society of Karachi creates a cultural hegemony within and also outside its circle. Within the art society, the finer artist proclaims to be the creator of the finest art form as opposed to the creator of the inferior art - the commercial artist. Therefore, we will begin by exploring the difference between the two as understood by various sources, and the validity of these understandings.

After this, the research will explore the conscious demarcation between the finer art and commercial art on the society through the different marketing strategies the finer arts adopt. After this the research will understand why the finer artist fears to be associated with the term ‘commercial’. Then we will apply the knowledge gained relating to cultural hegemony and
understand if the *finer* arts in any way contribute in creating the cultural ideology (as defined above) present within and outside Karachi’s art society.
The central question throughout the research is ‘whether the arts contribute in creating a cultural hegemony in Karachi’s art society.’ As mentioned in the Research Methodology chapter, the research is divided into four parts. Let us begin with the first part - understanding the term cultural hegemony.

Anne D’Alleva in her book ‘Methods and Theories of Art History’ (Laurence King Publishing, 2005) writes, “The dominant class asserts its cultural hegemony by persuading subordinate classes to accept its moral, political and cultural values, convincing them that these values are right, true, or beneficial to them. The dominant classes use the arts, common sense, culture, custom, taste, etc. to maintain their hold on power.” (D’Alleva 51; chapt.3)

Dominic Mastroianni explains, “‘Social hegemony’ names the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group [i.e. the ruling class – in Gramsci's Western Europe, the bourgeoisie]; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.” (Mastroianni)

Some internet sources define cultural hegemony as, “a concept [where] a diverse culture can be ruled or dominated by one group or class, that everyday practices and shared beliefs provide the foundation for complex systems of domination… cultural innovations such as compulsory schooling, mass media, and popular culture…indoctrinate workers to a false consciousness. Instead of working towards a revolution … [the people] listen to the…leaders, seeking consumer opportunities and middle-class status, embracing an individualist ethos of
success through competition, and/or accepting the guidance of bourgeois…leaders.” (Stillo; “Cultural Hegemony: Encyclopedia – Cultural Hegemony”; “Cultural Hegemony”)

Monica Stillo further explains, that the dominant group (the group in power) imposes its “supremacy” through: “a. economic domination; b. Intellectual and moral leadership.” (Stillo; chapt.3)

She points out one of the critiques of the theory of cultural hegemony, explaining, “it tends to imply a false consciousness of the working class, which suggests that the masses of people are gullible and easily manipulated.” (Stillo) However, the masses being “gullible,” holds true according to Edward L. Bernays in his book ‘Propaganda’. (Bernays10; chapt.1)

The second part of the research involves understanding the difference between the finer and the commercial arts.

In his book ‘Art as Image and Idea’, Edmund Burke Feldman, (Prentice Hall, Inc.: Copyright 1967) writes, commercial (graphic) art is, “designed to persuade, to sell” and therefore, “is regarded as inferior.” (Feldman 62; chapt.2) Consequently, it is, “considered less pure, less idealistic, less fine than [the finer] art which just is.” (Feldman 62; chapt.2)

Similar to this, other opinions state – “The biggest difference [between the two art forms] is, that, contrary to commercial art, fine arts main propose isn't economical.” (“What is the difference between fine art and commercial art?”); “You could say you pamper yourself with fine art and you bring home the bacon with commercial art!” (“What is the difference between fine art and commercial art?”); “Fine art is art for art’s sake, usually to be displayed in galleries or museums. Fine art is there for expression, portraying a feeling or emotion, displaying a scene… Commercial art is art for selling purposes.” (“What’s The Difference Between Fine Art and Commercial Art?”)
However, in the book, ‘*Economics of Art and Culture*’, James Heilbrun and Charles M. Gray write, “no matter how highly we may value them, art and culture are produced by individuals and institutions working within the general economy, and therefore cannot escape the constraints of the material world.” (Heilbrun and Gray 3; part 1) Tyler Cowen adds to this argument in her book, ‘*In Praise of Commercial Art*’ (Harvard University Press. 2000), “Specifically, artistic independence requires financial independence and a strong commercial market. Beethoven wrote: “I am not out to be a musical usurer as you think, who writes only to become rich, by no means! Yet I love an independent life, and this I cannot have without a small income.”(Cowen 16; chapt.1)

Thus as Ernst Fischer writes, “In such a (capitalist) world (fine) art, too, became a commodity and the artist a commodity producer. Personal patronage was superseded by a free market whose workings were difficult or impossible to comprehend, a conglomerate of nameless consumers, the so-called ‘public’. The work of art was subjected more and more to the laws of competition…Art became an occupation that was half romantic, half commercial.” (Fischer)

Another understanding of the term *commercial* is, “A commercial artist is one who takes the goal of a company and portrays it to the public.” (“The Role of a Commercial Artist”)

Feldman writes, “Whereas public art very plainly performs a social function, other works less clearly reveal social intent or effect… Some persons, including artists, regard art which influences social behavior as impure, as “mere” propaganda, as applied sociology, as debased art.” (Feldman 38; chapt.2) Modern Propaganda as defined by Edward L. Bernays is, “a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an
enterprise, idea or group.” (Bernays 25; chapt.2) We will further analyze in our Discussions chapter how the finer arts also fit in this definition of the term ‘Modern Propaganda’.

A lot of people see the commercial arts as being restrictive since they are easily accessible to the public, therefore certain censorship laws and morals are followed to avoid instigating the public to react adversely especially in a city like Karachi where the society’s culture dictates the unacceptability of many arts (particularly those involving the nudes) due to religious and cultural reasons that have been drilled in the minds of the general public. Instances of censorship however, can also sometimes be seen in the finer arts displayed in Karachi’s galleries. The Metropolitan published an article by Madeeha Syed, titled, ‘4 Photographers and Fifteen subjects’ on April 13th 2007. The article reports the censorship of Tapu Javeri’s work that was exhibited in The Indus Valley School Gallery. “The exhibition [had] managed to generate controversy even before it [had] opened, with the administration of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture finding a photograph of Meera by Tapu Javeri a little inappropriate.” Due to which the artist decided to censor the photograph by cross-hatching the bare legs of the model (the cause of the inappropriateness). (Syed) Another incidence was reported by Nafisa Rizvi in the 19th April, 2009 edition of The News. She reports, “On the opening day of the Festival, a group of PPP workers stormed the Arts Council claiming that their martyred party leader's memory had been vilified by an objectionable art work and thus they justified the wantonness that ensued with stalls being wrecked and visitors having to escape in fear of their lives.”(Rizvi)

Other than this, the forces of demand and supply also restrict the work of art as “the arts are rapidly attracting interest in Karachi as a viable career path.”(White) “In practice, professional artists need public acceptance.” (“Definition of Art”) Thus, to be accepted the finer arts also complies with the forces of demand supply. Let us look at the example of miniature art
being practiced in Karachi, Allison White in her article, ‘Contemporary Visual Culture’ writes, “Representation of contemporary Pakistani art has been dominated over the past decade by the neo-Mughal miniature painting movement.” (White) Salima Hashmi writes, “The genre known as the ‘contemporary miniature’ (or ‘the neo-miniature’) grabbed international attention more than a decade ago… Since then many others who trained in the same department. (Hashmi) Salwat Ali notes, “Thematically as well, the new miniature has changed… with another viewship in mind as these are popular issues of debate in the west.” (Ali)

Other than this to keep up with the increasing demand, “painters, including senior ones paint fast to sell quickly,” (Ahmed) as noted by Sultan Ahmed in his article, ‘Better Galleries now’. In his article ‘Prices soar for Modern Pakistani Art’, Illyas Khan writes, “…pressures of demand are leading some artist to increase their output,” as seen in the case of Mashkoor Raza, who “starts work on four new canvases every day [and] wastes no time waiting for an inspiration… often dream[ing]up [the] ideas in sleep.”(Khan)

In relation to commercial arts, Feldman writes, “the arts of information and communication design are so specialized that very few advertisements, packages, posters, or labels are ever the work of a single person. Art which serves commerce and industry is collective art, just as almost all phases of industrial engineering, manufacture, and distribution are team enterprises…We are inclined to regard collectively created works less seriously than works done by an individual.”(Feldman 61-62; chapt.2) However, in contemporary capitalist art society, the commercial arts are not the only form of art that have become a victim to the Division of Labor or the Division of expertise, the finer arts also suffer from the, “capitalist wealth demand[ing] constant accumulation and concentration, incessant self increase… [and] expansion of
value,” (Fischer) as written by Ernst Fischer in his comment of the effect capitalism had on the finer arts.

The third part of the research deals with understanding how the finer artist maintains the difference between the commercial and the fine arts.

Quddus Mirza explains that after the Zia regime ended, his laws of censorship were left behind. These laws, “seeped into the very souls of those it affects… Subsequently, censorship becomes the normal, natural state, such that one is no longer aware of its presence… [the] visible impacts on the art and culture of Pakistan. First, they have generated the creation of a small number of private galleries… [which]… also encouraged a sense of commercialism in Pakistani art… [as a result]… the activity of art is today perceived as an important practice in the elitist world.” (Mirza) As a result the demarcation between the two kept on building on with time.

Today, “…private galleries have grown apace,” (Hashmi) according to Salima Hashmi in ‘A New Generation of Artists from Pakistan’. Sultan Ahmed in his article ‘Better Galleries Now’ labels galleries as being, “simple sale outlets with soaring prices” (Ahmed) ‘Critical Space: Global concerns’ reads, “Art has become an integral part of the culture industry since once the art prices soared, so did the number of art dealers and galleries who were ready to optimize gains from this bullish market.” (Farukh) The old art collectors of this commodity have also been replaced by the new consumers. The article ‘On Source’ reads, the “local art market driven by young collectors from Karachi’s new upper class.” (White) “Major buyers often do not even find it necessary to look at what they are buying ‘I know buyers who have been sending their servants to book entire shows before they open,’ says Saquib Hanif.” (Khan) The material age evolved not only the work of art but also the art collector and the artist.
Research Methodology

My dissertation research can be divided into four sections: 1. understanding the term cultural hegemony; 2. understanding the two - the finer art and the commercial and how the two are seen differently (even if they might not be); 3. how the demarcation of the two arts encourages class disparity if any in the society today; 4. how this contributes to the creation of cultural hegemony if any in the society? My dissertation will primarily be a library based dissertation where I will be reading contemporary as well as classical texts. However, in order to understand the marketing mix of the finer arts, I will also be carrying out interviews of gallery managers or owners through the telephone.

It is important for me to understand the difference between the finer arts and the more commercial arts. For this I will be reading different points of view to better understand and be able to demarcate the two. For this I will be examining: a. The involvement of finance and commerce; b. The restrictions present (if any) within the practice of both the art forms, and the promotion of a business, person or belief, carried out (if any) through both the finer and the commercial arts; c. The forces of Demand and Supply, and their impact on the two - fine and commercial; d. The impact of Division of labor (if any) on both the arts. After understanding the difference, I will venture on to understanding how the finer art comes to label itself to be more superior and why the finer artist fears being labeled a commercial artist. For this I will be examining the marketing mix of the finer art (which includes – the price, placement, and promotion) of this particular commodity. The theory of cultural hegemony, being derived from economic theories, is the reason why I chose to divide the research of my understanding of the
differences and similarities between the *finer* and the *commercial* arts into economic and business categories.

From the gathered information, I hope to understand whether a class disparity is being encouraged as a result of the distinction made between *fine* and *commercial* art.

By the end of my examination I wish to reach a conclusion of whether artists do play a role in creating a cultural hegemony within the arts. As well as the class difference that can be created by the absence or presence of certain artworks.
Understanding Cultural Hegemony:

The term ‘culture’ has various meanings – “cultivation”; of or dealing with “refinement” (“The Chambers Dictionary”); “the attitudes and values which inform a society” (“The Chambers Dictionary”); and lastly “a crop of microorganism.” (“The Chambers Dictionary”). For this research, the third definition, culture as comprising of “the attitudes and values which inform a society” (“The Chambers Dictionary”) applies. Culture comprises of, “language”; “arts and sciences”; “thought”; “spirituality”; “social activity” and “interaction”. ("Definition of Culture") Art makes up one part of culture, the one that will be focused on for this research.

Hegemony, is defined as, the “preponderant influence, esp of one state over others”. (“The Chambers Dictionary”) Hegemony is created when, “dominant groups in society, including fundamentally but not exclusively the ruling class, maintain their dominance by securing the 'spontaneous consent' of subordinate groups, including the working class, through the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups.” ("Cultural Hegemony")

When combined, the word created is Cultural Hegemony. Cultural Hegemony (as mentioned earlier) is a philosophic and sociological concept, originated by Antonio Gramsci - a Marxist philosopher. It explains how “a culturally diverse society can be ruled by one of its dominant classes.” ("Cultural Hegemony") Anne D’Alleva explains, “The dominant class asserts to cultural hegemony by persuading subordinate classes to accept its moral, political and cultural values, convincing them that these values are right, true, or beneficial to them. The
dominant classes use the arts, common sense, culture, custom, taste, etc. to maintain their hold on power.” (D’Alleva 51; chapt.3)

One of the criticism for the theory notes that the masses are seen as “gullible” and easily manipulated. (Stillo) However, the masses might actually be “gullible” and easily manipulated as portrayed by the theory. In his book “Propaganda”, Edward L. Bernays exclaims, “In theory, every citizen makes up his mind on public questions and matters of private conduct. In practice, if all men had to study for themselves the abstruse economic, political, and ethical data involved in every question, they would find it impossible to come to a conclusion about anything.” (Bernays10; chapt.1)

In the information age of the 21st century, we are bombarded with information through various forms of technology every day of our lives. The validity of the information, however, remains unknown. With this information over load, it becomes very easy to trick or manipulate a group of people. As stated above, it is impossible for a person to have power over the knowledge of all things around him/her. Thus, we see a division of expertise (similar to division of labor that came about with the advent of industrialization) in different fields of knowledge. The experts in their particular field can always misuse their knowledge while the masses can remain in oblivion and follow blindly thinking that the experts would know better. The power of knowledge is one of the elements that can help in creating the hegemony. Their beliefs and ideals can become so concrete within the society that they might eventually be labeled as ‘common sense’.

Understanding the difference between the commercial arts and the finer arts:
Coming back to the research question, we will be looking at arts creating a cultural hegemony within and outside the art society of Karachi. To understand this further, let us understand what we mean by the term ‘arts’. In simple terms, ‘art’ is known to be a means of communication – a visual language. For the purpose of this research we will divide the arts into two categories. The first is the one which is present for private use and the latter for the public use. Let us further understand what we mean by the two.

Private art is art created for private collections and private uses and thus exhibited in private spaces. This type of art includes artworks that we usually see in galleries and is created for private viewing. It is also termed as the finer art. The other form of art is public art. As the name implies, it is out there for everyone to view. One of the most basic forms of public art present in contemporary Karachi is architecture - due to its functional use of providing shelter (one of the basic human needs). Other than that we see the arts in the form of textiles; graphic art - posters, media, advertisements; political art in the form of sculptures, pictures, paintings, etc.; then we also see sculptures, paintings, and pictures present for aesthetic pleasure. For this research, we will be focusing on graphic art from the various public art forms. Being present for public viewing, graphic art is considered to be restricted within the bounds of what the public would want to see. Usually this public art is termed as being commercial (and sometimes labeled as the inferior (Feldman) kind of art) also because its creation is backed by a function. To understand both the types of arts more, we will now look at the similarities and differences between the two.

The involvement of commerce and finances

In his book ‘Art as Image and Idea’, Edmund Burke Feldman writes, “We have been conditioned to regard art as nonessential, as the product of man’s surplus energy and
wealth.” (Feldman 2; part1) Art has found many functional uses in our contemporary society. However, the purpose of the finer art remains questionable. Its history begins with the advent of human existence. Being a kind of language – a visual language, it is seen as a means of communication, a social necessity for the human kind. A dictionary definition of fine arts defines it to be, “Art produced or intended primarily for beauty rather than utility.” (“Fine Art”) Feldman explains, that the finer art is usually considered to be the more pure form of art, since (as the artist claims) the production of the work of art is to fulfill his/her needs of expression, and thus, it is considered not to be reliant on the audience viewing it and in turn on any commercial/financial benefit that the artist may achieve from its creation. (Feldman) The finer arts are seen as being “created simply for the purpose of fulfilling the artist's need to create.” (“What is the Difference between Fine Arts and Graphic Design?”)

On the contrary, commercial art is considered as an “inferior” (Feldman) form of art as the commercial artist is seen to be driven by what the audience requires and also because of the ‘commercial’ association that the artist very apparently shares and strives for.

Let us examine the validity of this difference between the two art forms. “Karachi is the financial and commercial capital of Pakistan.” (“Economy of Karachi”) With the importance of commerce and finance, Karachi’s society falls closer to the description of a capitalist society. Functioning within the bounds of this capitalist society, the fine artist does not hold back. We have seen a creation of an art market in Karachi’s society. The term ‘artist’ itself has grown into a profession rather than just a hobby or a side passion. (White)

Feldman writes, “…a poster which is designed to persuade, to sell is regarded as inferior, a prori, to a painting or sculpture which was never soiled by commercial motivation.” (Feldman) Further he writes, “We are all more or less convinced believers in the motto caveat emptor – “let
the buyer beware” – because we do not in our hearts entirely trust salesmen, even if our society rewards them munificently. Art which persuades or sells is considered less pure, less idealistic, less fine than art which just is.” (Feldman) The word market in the term ‘art market’, itself defines the coming together of a buyer and a seller. (“Market”) The artist becomes the creator and the sales person of the art work. Living in a capitalist society, it is almost next to impossible for the finer artist to not be involved in the commercial society. The finer artist also needs to be able to earn enough to create the ‘finer art work’. Other than that, the mere act of placing a price on the artwork, results in the involvement of finances and commerce. The fine artist could very well also be just a “seller” trying to trick the viewer/consumer more cunningly than the commercial artist since the consumer/viewer remains in oblivion of the trickery.

Ernst Fischer in his book ‘The Necessity of Art’ says, with capitalism, art becomes “an occupation that (is) half romantic, half commercial.” So the statement that the contemporary finer artist of Karachi unlike the commercial artist is carefree about the monetary aspect becomes irrelevant.

Restrictions and Propagations

Commercial art is also commonly seen as propagating a business, a person or a belief (“What is the Difference between Fine art and Graphic art?”) which might be another reason for it to be an inferior art in comparison to the fine arts. The finer arts, however, are also an announcement or expression of the fine artist’s beliefs or ideals. Therefore, underhandedly it also propagates a certain set of beliefs and ideals of a person (the finer artist). Other than that, the kind of work the artist creates might also result in promoting the art works created at a later stage. The artist’s name becomes the brand and the artwork becomes the promoter as well as the product of this brand.
Being a promoter, the importance of the viewer/consumer is considered to be much more in the case of commercial art than in the finer arts. However, this might not be completely true. For either of the two, the viewer/consumer is equally important since the art in question (as mentioned earlier) is a kind of language – a means of communication. For any language, the importance of the person the idea is being expressed to, is vital, since the artwork remains incomplete without him/her.

Feldman in his book writes, “Public art [might] very plainly performs a social function, other works less clearly reveal social intent or effect.” (Feldman 38; chapt.2) We see commercial art as being the one that very openly addresses the audiences/consumers and therefore, might have to follow certain restrictions that are present in the society – restrictions such as nudity for instance or certain political statements that might result in an adverse effect. On the other hand, the finer art in theory is considered to be a less restrictive form of art. In practice, however, we still do see instances of censorship for instance of works displayed in private spaces in Karachi. For instance let us look at the incidence of censorship of Tapu Javeri’s artworks exhibited at Indus Valley School Gallery in April 2007 (Mentioned previously in this discourse). (Syed) As well as the incidence that took place in the Arts Council in 2009 - “On the opening day of the Festival, a group of PPP workers stormed the Arts Council claiming that their martyred party leader's memory had been vilified by an objectionable art work and thus they justified the wantonness that ensued with stalls being wrecked and visitors having to escape in fear of their lives.”(Rizvi) There were different point of views printed in the 19th April, 2009 edition of The News, one where the artist talked about their being a need for freedom of expression (as said by Adeela Suleman – a practicing artist and head of Fine Arts Department of Indus Valley School Of Art and Architecture) – “…Freedom of expression is the most integral factor of art practice…
Once censorship is imposed, there will be no limit to boundaries of restriction because of the subjective nature of art…” (Rizvi) The other point of view expresses censorship to be an integral part of public art – “I understand that in public art spaces people’s sentiments must be taken into consideration.” (Rizvi) (Auj Khan – artist); “The diversity of opinion and reaction has opened me to the idea that the boundaries of censorship for public art must be set through a process of negotiation and not arbitrarily.” (Rizvi) (Durriya Kazi – practicing artist and Head of the Fine Arts Department of The Karachi University.) Being in a pseudo democracy, the fine arts can not escape censorship laws (even though as you will read further on, the need for private spaces sprang from here). Therefore the belief that the finer arts allow freedom of expression might not prove to be true in Karachi’s society. Other than this as much as the fine artist claims not to be effected by the forces of demand and supply, in the next section, we will delve into understanding how the artist’s claims might not be completely true.

The forces of Demand and Supply

With the direct association of commercial art with - as the name suggests – commerce, commercial artwork, is seen as being market oriented (“market-driven” (“market-oriented”)). The commercial artist becomes restricted to what the market demands because at the end of the day the purpose of this art is to be sold. Even though the finer art, produces commodities that supposedly fall in the category of being product oriented (where the production of the commodity is not dependent on the market but instead dependant on the product itself) - as the artists claims to create ‘art for art’s sake’ - we still see a creation of trends of styles of art.

Let us pick the example of miniature art (a type of fine art). “The genre known as the ‘contemporary miniature’ (or ‘the neo-miniature’) grabbed international attention more than a
decade ago…since then many others who trained in the same department.” (Hashmi) With the increase in demand and a limited supply, the prices of this commodity eventually have increased (as the economic law of demand and supply explains ("Supply and Demand").) Being a luxury product, the soaring prices attract both consumer/viewer and the producer. In her article, ‘Miniature Exodus’, published in December 2005, Salwat Ali writes, “The genre's popularity level, especially in the UK and USA, continues to soar, endowing it with a 'hot property' status, while generous prices in foreign currency when translated into rupees render the art form well out of reach for the average Pakistani buyer.” (Ali) Further she writes, “Thematically as well, the new miniature has changed… with another viewership in mind as these are popular issues of debate in the west.” (Ali) Clearly the forces of demand and supply have affected miniature art. The individual prices however, are determined by the individual brands (comprising of the fine – in this case miniature art - and the artist creating it.).

In the weekly Gallery section of the Dawn Newspaper (May, 24th 2003), Sultan Ahmed notes, “…painters, including senior ones paint fast to sell quickly” (Ahmed) The culture of mass production exists not only in the commercial arts but also seeps in to the finer arts of Karachi. The finer artist “wastes no time waiting for an inspiration,” (Khan) says Ilyas Khan, as he talks about Mashkoor Raza and his work practice, commenting on the “…pressure of demand leading some artists to increase output.” (Khan)

Division of Labour in the creation of the Art work

In his book Art as Image and Idea, Feldman point out, “the arts of information and communication design are so specialized that very few advertisements, packages, posters, or labels are ever the work of a single person. Art which serves commerce and industry is collective
art; just as almost all phases of industrial engineering, manufacture, and distribution are team enterprises…We are inclined to regard collectively created works less seriously than works done by an individual.” (Feldman 61-62; chapt.2) The contemporary fine artists of Karachi are seen to be working in a similar fashion.

The fine artist has taken the form of a designer of the artwork where the execution of the artwork is done by other hired personnel and the artist’s work is limited to designing, much similar to that of the architect whose involvement is limited to just the design of the architecture. For the creation of a piece of fine art, the process of creation and the execution of the work of art evolve the idea, and the thought process.(Hussain) The process of the creation is sometimes more important than the finished piece. Here we see the seeping in of the culture of division of labor and expertise to obtain the optimum result in the field of the finer arts, allowing the artist to increase profit with the increase of output and high pricing. Division of labor eradicates the connection that the work of art shares with the artist. The artist might no longer feel the pain of losing a painting, that intimate romantic and passionate connection that was once shared between the finer art and the finer artist.(Hussain) This breaks away one of the differences between the two art forms – commercial and the finer arts. Why is it still that the commercial art is considered inferior?

Why are the finer arts still finer than the commercial arts and Why does the fine artist fear being labeled a commercial artist?

To understand this better, let us examine the Marketing Mix of the finer artworks. This will include the pricing, placement, and promotional strategies applied.
As mentioned earlier in the research, the *finer* arts are usually exhibited in private spaces as opposed to the *commercial* arts which are easily accessible and displayed in public spaces. Today we see an increase in the gallery culture in Karachi. Let us look back in history to see how this culture began. Partially in retaliation to Zia’s regime which ended in August 1988. The aftermaths of his censorship laws resulted in “the creation of a small number of private galleries… because some artists were unable to exhibit their works in state-run venues.”(Mirza) This establishment of private art galleries also “encouraged a sense of commercialism in Pakistani art.”(Mirza) As Nafisa Rizvi points out in her article ‘Are we ready for Public Art?’ dated 19th April, 2009 in The News, “the usual gallery shows (that) are done by a few for a few.”(Rizvi) The masses not being exposed to the uncensored works of art reinforce the ideals of censorship such that these ideals take on the form of ‘common sense’ and without questioning, the general public abides blindly by the rules and belief system of censorship established earlier, in turn encouraging the separation of the two even further.

The act of exhibiting the work in a gallery space makes the artwork a luxury – a precious item, there to be privately indulged in by the more privileged members of society – “the elitist world.”(Mirza) Today, forty-six galleries are present in Karachi. Out of these, a total of 33 i.e. approximately 72% of galleries are located in the “elite” (“Dha Karachi” and “Clifton, Karachi”) or the posh areas of Karachi – Clifton and DHA. As a result the *finer* art can easily be accessible for the few elites of the city who then form an interest towards the artwork being exhibited. The private gallery space becomes a “simple sales outlet with soaring prices.”(Ahmed)

On the other hand, *commercial* art is easily accessible and available for the masses/general public. Being mass produced, this art can be seen on walls; in and on shops; billboards;
media; newspapers; magazines; buses; etc. which contributes in terming commercial art as inferior in comparison to the finer art.

However, there are instances when the fine artists display their work in public spaces. For instance we see works like that of Naiza Khan and her henna figures (Lithgow); Asim Butt and his murals near the Abdullah Shah Ghazi Mazaar (“Asim Butt”); and projects like Aar Paar, where “artists from Karachi & Mumbai, made work which was swapped between the two cities and shown in public spaces” (“About”); etc.

The image of the finer art is also created with the high pricing. The high pricing stirs interest only among the upper classes of the society – the elites. This instantly results in a segmentation of the consumers.

Ilyas Khan notes “the traditional art collector has been replaced by speculators from the corporate sector.” (Khan) Sultan Ahmed writes, “It appears that too many persons are buying paintings as investment after seeing how prices of paintings had shot up in the city instead of their love for the painting or the artist” (Ahmed) Clearly showing the evolution of the finer art as an investment.

“Pakistan's art market has gone crazy over the past year, with prices multiplying 10 to 20 times over. And famous artists are not the only beneficiaries.” “I know buyers who have been sending their servants to book entire shows before they open,” says Saquib Hanif, a collector and art critic based in Karachi.” (Khan)

Zohra Hussain writes, “Many investors in the stock market and real estate sectors have realized that investment in art is comparatively more reliable and secure,” and Ilyas Khan adds, “…the net worth of today’s artist is based on his or her economic viability rather than aesthetic
“A great artist is the one who sells, it is a simple theory of supply and demand.” (Khan)

The commercial art on the other hand being mass produced on a bigger scale is less costly for the consumer/viewer. Usually paid with the product it promotes. The fraction of the cost once divided becomes minute per consumer/viewer.

Commercial art today is omnipresent, so much so that it starts being taken for granted and its creator loses his/her actual worth in this. This omnipresence eradicates the need to promote this art. The placement of the commercial art itself then becomes the promoter of it.

Unlike the commercial arts, the finer art has adopted a promotional strategy that specifically targets the upper classes of Karachi’s society. Usually galleries derive a list of contact information visitors of the gallery leave behind (usually comprising of visitors living in the posh areas as established earlier on in the research.) Also contact information of already known collectors (comprising mainly of people from the corporate sector) can be easily obtained through personal contacts. (Interviews) The invites are sent through the internet, by post, text messaging and personal phone calls – all these mediums in turn emphasize the need for the invitation to be for only the specific consumers.

Some galleries also post advertisements in newspapers, usually the Dawn newspaper for an upcoming exhibition (an English newspaper that itself targets the upper classes of the Karachi society).

The contemporary fine art remains nothing more than a commodity specifically targeted to the upper classes of the society. The difference between the finer and the commercial art is maintained with a tactful marketing mix. The association of the term commercial with the term
inferior art is what scares the artist. Since this term can hamper the ‘growth’ and the ‘life’ of the fine artist in the art world.

How is this creating a cultural hegemony within and outside the art society of Karachi?

The Finer arts in Karachi have evolved with time. What might have started of as art being created for art’s sake as we see in the times of Sadequain for instance - where the artist’s entire life revolted around his work, even though, the artist then also felt the need to put a price on the work in order to be able to continue the passion - in contemporary times has been affected by industrialization, capitalism and thus commercialism and evolved into a product. The love of the art for the consumer and the artist has been replaced by the love of money as art becomes a mere investment. Ernst Fischer best describes this in his book, ‘The necessity of Art’, “In such a world art, too, became a commodity and the artist a commodity producer. Personal patronage was superseded by a free market whose workings were difficult or impossible to comprehend, a conglomerate of nameless consumers, the so-called ‘public’. The work of art was subjected more and more to the laws of competition.”(Fischer)

“Art has always been a commodity; [artists] just refuse to accept it.”(Hussain) Like all commodities, art has also segmented its consumers into different slots. In Karachi’s art society, the finer arts are seen as the highest form of art, explaining why it is seen to be very precious and valuable. As we have examined in our research above looking at the economic and cultural aspects that demarcate the two art forms, there is not too much difference between, the commercial art and the finer arts. However, a conscious wall is created between the two
subdivisions of the arts in order to portray the superiority of one (the finer art) and the inferiority of the other (the commercial art). The message that the finer art is not meant for everyone, is conveyed by the division which is created by the fine artists and their allies. To stay in power, the resources are kept in the hands of the allies (in this case, the new collectors and the gallery owners). The fine artist in contemporary times has evolved into a brand. His/Her price of the work (which also reflects the demand for the work); education; and number and place of exhibitions, help in building the image of the brand. The artist has become a profit generating machine, taking part in optimizing profits in the economy.

Functioning within the capitalist society of Karachi, the artist has succumbed to the rules and ideals that capitalist society instills. The artist in turn, reflects these ideals through his/her work on to the general public. In other words, after creating hegemony within the art society, the finer arts now pass on their newly adopted ideals outside the art society. As observed by Niilofer Farukh, “art has become an integral part of the culture industry.” (Farukh) The absence of the supposedly finer artwork further pushes the general public away from it. The masses not accustomed to viewing it, fail to draw a connection with the finer artworks. At the same time the image of being a member of the upper class by owning fine work of art, creates the want to be able to connect to it.

“From Gramsci’s view, the supremacy of the bourgeoisie is based on two, equally important, facts: Economic domination; Intellectual and moral leadership.” (Stillo) We see the existence of both. As mentioned above, resources are in the hands of the few who dictate the functioning of the society. The investors create the want, the gallery owners (the middle men) are the promoters, and the artists - the suppliers and the mass producers – all work towards optimizing profits.
Also, political and religious laws instilled in the general public contribute in creating this cultural hegemony. As we researched, the censorship laws instilled in Karachi’s society gave the artist the platform to build a wall that could demarcate the classes.

Bushra Hussain points out, “It all comes down to education.” (Hussain) With education even, the arts have been targeted very selectively. Not much attention is given to art education in Karachi. The few, who have been educated in this field, and achieved experience, are taken as the leaders. Their ideals and beliefs eventually take the form of common sense within the art world as the rest of the art society adopts these ideals and beliefs readily thinking that the leaders know better as pointed out by Edward L. Bernays, “we have voluntarily agreed to let an invisible government sift the data and high-spot the outstanding issues so that our field of choice shall be narrowed to practical proportions.” (Bernays 10; chapt.1) After a certain time period they take the form of common sense, not to be questioned. “[These] set of ideas will constitute the hegemony that will be expressed as the nucleus of culture. (Stillo)
Conclusion

In the book, ‘Economics of Art and Culture’, James Heilbrun and Charles M. Gray write, “no matter how highly we may value them, art and culture are produced by individuals and institutions working within the general economy, and therefore cannot escape the constraints of the material world.” (Heilbrun, Gray 3; chapt. 1) Karachi’s society is predominantly a capitalist society, thus it becomes ever more difficult not to adopt the principles of this capitalist society. As seen the art society of Karachi has also complied with these principles.

Feldman writes, “…money is a very potent symbol in our culture, all the activities leading to or following the purchase of works of art have enormous cultural significance.” (Feldman) As seen in the research, the finer arts can contribute quite a bit in instilling the hegemonic ideals in a society. However, it might not be the creator of the hegemony. What might be creating a cultural hegemony within a society is money and the key players would be the few who are privileged enough to be abundant with this resource. Being a means of communication, it is ever more important for these players to take control of this resource, in order for them to hold stronger to their ground. The finer arts can thus also become a ‘mere’ tool and not the creator of the cultural hegemony. They could be communicating to the masses the cultural ideology (“shared ideas or beliefs (or practices) which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups” (Burke)) of the money generating machine that survives on class disparities. The artist would lose his/her entire purpose of creation and like all other things in a capitalist society, the artist and his/her artwork would become material.
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Appendix

ART CHOWK

Name of interviewee: Bushra Hussain (curator/owner) – has studied as an artist (miniaturist) and a colleague and friend of Bani Abidi.

“The gallery started in 2007 and started becoming famous 5 months ago. Art Chowk is the only Gallery that provides an online virtual tour of the gallery. This service started of in October 2009. Besides Karachi the gallery also exhibits in Dubai. Every month an exhibition takes place in Karachi and Dubai. For an upcoming exhibition, the clientele is informed of the exhibition through the internet – emails, facebook; personal invites; text messaging. The list of people to whom these invites are sent to are collection of the people who leave their contact information with us to be informed at a later date of any upcoming exhibition etc. Usually the clientele these days are coming from the corporate sector of Karachi. Usually galleries do not display works done by masters due to the problem of insurance. Also only collectors in Karachi, I feel, do not exhibit their collections. Today everybody is a commercial artist, since you are selling your work. The identity and the image of the artist has become more important than the artwork because galleries want to know whether you are commercially viable artist or not. Today the Pakistani art market has become very vibrant thanks to the Indian art market. Unfortunately, as much as I regret to say this, the Soaring Indian art prices in the international art market drew attention towards Pakistani art market. Now the International recognition that Pakistani art has gained has resulted in the vibrancy of the art society. I believe for one to be able to understand an artwork and appreciate it, your education becomes very important.
Today what has become important for the artist is the skill to market himself/herself more than the artwork he/she is creating. You don’t really require that much skill. All you need is a concept, a dash of marketing and pseudo-ism and voila you are to go. Today a lot of gimmickry is involved. The work is no longer only executed by the artist, which is very important. Studying as an artist you should be familiar with the fact that the work of art evolves in the process of its creation and execution. A fresh graduate today demands a price of nothing less than Rs.30, 000. I just remembered an incidence that took place right after the death of the artist Mansur Aye. Before he was even buried a man called in to find out how much a Mansur Aye would cost, now that he has died. Art has always been a commodity I feel but people refuse to accept it. Look at the prices of Jamil Naqsh for instance, he charges 20 to 50 lacks per painting. This could also be something like the phrase, “keep up with the Jones”. To keep up with the increase in prices by the upcoming junior artists, some senior artists feel the need to charge higher prices in order for their image as an artist to stay higher on the top. The price of the artist and his artwork also tell the value of the artist in our contemporary art market.”

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**ART PLUS**
Interviewee: Mohammad Rehan Zaqai (owner) – has been working for thirty years in the arts but has no prior art education.

“This gallery had started in 2003. The works of art are on a general display. We do not have monthly exhibitions or any exhibitions. The arrival of a new artwork is informed to the
client via emails, personal phone calls and text messaging. The clients to be informed are the ones who leave their contact information with us so that they can be informed of the arrival of new artworks in the gallery. Art today, I feel has become very commercial. The upcoming artist tends to just copy either certain trends without questioning or copy the works of masters. The lowest priced work that we have in our gallery today would be as low as 10,000 – a Hamid Alvi piece. The higher ones can go all the way up to 4 lacks, or as high as 19 to 20 lacks.”

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ART SCENE
Interviewee: Amjad Syed

“This gallery exhibits work ten or twelve times a week. So we have at least one exhibition in a month. For an upcoming exhibition we inform the clientele through, catalogues, brochures. For senior artists we print a book with all their previous works in it. We utilize the facility if the internet (emailing) to invite our customers for an exhibition. Then we also give out an advertisement in the Dawn Newspaper. The people usually leave their contact information with us so that we can inform them at a late date of an upcoming exhibition. We exhibit artworks of both masters and upcoming artists. To pick a piece of artwork for an exhibition we look at the quality of the work of art. By quality I mean, we look at the profile of the artist, the institute they come from the kind of training they have received, and information on their previous exhibitions.”
ARTASTE GALERY

Interviewee: Rizwan (manager)

“This gallery started in 2009. We haven’t had any exhibition to date.”

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CHAWKANDI ART GALLERY

Interviewee: Zohra Hussain (owner)

“This gallery started in 1985. In a year, the quantity of exhibitions we have had, range from 14, 15 and sometimes all the way up to 20. For an upcoming exhibition, we inform our clienteles through emails, text messaging, invitation cards, we also print the advertisement on dawn news. To select the works of art to be exhibited we look at the artwork and the artist’s profile. At one point people would say that our gallery would dictate the prices of the artwork but today, the prices are not under our control anymore. The artist has the opportunity of an international market. After the auction of one of his/her artwork, the artist starts to raise prices. The recession however, has I believe still controlled some of the prices. It could have been worse. Galleries as we all know are commercial at the end of the day. So gallery owners should maintain a balance when it comes to being commercial. You can not just have a commercial
gallery for the gallery is there to promote art and works of art which takes on a completely
different turn once the gallery becomes completely commercial. I tell you Zahoor-ul-Ikhlaq was
always a tough one for me to sell but persistently I kept on hanging it on the wall and way to go I
got him to sell. Today very few people remain who do not look at an art work as an investment.”

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Fax: (92 21) 587 5912
Email: chawkart@cyber.net.pk, chawkandi@yahoo.com
Website: www.chawkandi.com

DREAM ART GALLERY

Interviewee: Rashid Hussain - no art background, working since 1994.

“This gallery started in 2006. We have a total of 6 or 7 exhibitions in a year. For an
upcoming advertisement, we inform clients through Emails, invitation cards, text messaging,
brochures which we send out to our already existing list of customers which includes names and
information of people who left their contacts with is in order to informed of upcoming
exhibitions at a future date. Then we also print an advertisement in the Dawn newspaper and in
the beginning we also would print our advertisement in Jang newspaper but then there was no
point so we stopped. We exhibit both upcoming as well as our senior artists. To pick a piece of
artwork to be exhibited, we look at the quality of the artwork. The quality would be how I
understand the art work, the profile of the artist, his/her previous exhibitions and also the
artwork. The price of the work of art is determined by the artist himself/herself and this in turn is dependant on how recognized the artist is.”

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Phone: (92 21) 3 584 4109

FRAMERS

“Framers started in 2002. It is connected with the gallery Art Scene. Art Scene is where all the exhibitions take place. Here we frame the works of art. However, we also have a constant display (which consists of works that are for sale). This collection comprises of masters/ senior artists as well as few contemporary artists. The artists themselves leave the work with us to sell.”
Phone: (92 21) 3 534 1653, 3 585 6703

IMAGES ART GALLERY

“The gallery started in 2005. This is not a permanent gallery. As you know it more of a show room, we sell furniture pieces, household items, etc.”

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J.I. GALLERY (JAVED ISMAT GALLERY)
Interviewee: Thompson Eotta (Manager) as the owner was out of the country (owner’s name – Ismat Kahlom)

“This gallery started in the year 2002. We have four to five exhibitions in a year. We concentrate on exhibiting works of the upcoming artists but we also exhibit senior artists. The name and the quality of the work of art are important for us when selecting the works that need to be displayed. Usually people leave with us their contact information. We send invitation cards, emails. We also print our advertisement on Dawn Newspaper and Daily Times. Other than Karachi we also exhibit work in England and Dubai.”

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Phone: (92 21) 586 8650
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KUNJ ART GALLERY
Interviewee: Fahad Rafique (manager)
Owner: Razia Hussain Khan

“This gallery started in 1994. We have a minimum of 4 exhibitions and a maximum of 8 exhibitions in a year. For an upcoming exhibition we inform people through Emails, posts, text messaging for those people who have left their contact information with us. We also print an advertisement in the Dawn newspaper and Daily Times. Samaa usually covers our shows. We usually display works of artists who never really get a chance to exhibit their work and we feel if their work is good enough to be exhibited then we should provide them with the platform. A lot of now senior and well acclaimed artist who previously weren’t getting a chance to exhibit their
work had their first shows in our gallery. I can not disclose any names however. We select artwork to be displayed on the basis of its quality, by quality I mean the life, power – the *jaan* of the art work. I recall, we once exhibited an 89 year old unknown artist’s work (who came from the interiors) because he never was given a chance to exhibit his work. His name was Adam Khan and he basically displayed all the work he had made in his lifetime. Over here I would like to mention Mr. Raffique Soomro who was unrecognized before and had his first exhibition in our gallery and then gained recognition. We have also exhibited new upcoming artists like the NCA 2007 thesis show that we had. In this show however, (unlike our usual shows) prices were as high as 5 lacks for a fresh graduate.”

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Email: kunj@cyber.net.pk, rhkhunjct@gmail.com

SHAKIL ISMAIL ART GALLERY

Interviewee: Shakil Ismail (owner and artist)

“This gallery started in 2006. We have around 12 exhibitions in a year. For an upcoming exhibition, we inform our clients through invitation cards, emails, personal phone calls and fax. The contact list is made out of information of people who leave their contacts with us then we also have contact information of known collectors. This is very easily obtained; you can get them from other personal contacts of yours. We usually display works of senior artists but in a year we make it a point to exhibit works of at least 2 or 3 upcoming artists who have never gotten a chance to display their work previously. We like to promote the introduction of new talent. We
judge a work looking at the creativity of the artist which for us determines the quality of the artwork.”

Address: DC-1, No. 3, Ground Floor Marine Point, Block 9, Clifton, Karachi, Pakistan.
Phone: (92 21) 3 530 9040

THE ART GALLERY
Interviewee: Farooq Laljee (owner)

“The Art Gallery started in 1993. We carry out around 8 to 12 exhibitions in a year. For an upcoming exhibition, we inform our customers through Emails, text messaging and previously we used to post invitation cards but now we have reduced that. Our contact information is derived from our own database. We usually exhibit works of upcoming artists who are not known and the selection is purely based on the artwork itself.”

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