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## **ARTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A CONVERSATION**

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### **Abstract**

The co-editors of *Artivate*, Gary Beckman and Linda Essig, have shared an interest in advancing arts entrepreneurship as a field of study since Beckman first interviewed Essig as part of his research toward what has become a foundational article (2007) in the field, "'Adventuring' arts entrepreneurship curricula in higher education: An examination of present efforts, obstacles, and best practices." The current article presents a dialogue between them in which they discuss the nature of the discipline and the challenges and opportunities presented by the launch of *Artivate*.

### **Introduction**

**Linda Essig:** The conversation we had over lunch at the U.S. Association of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE) annual conference about which citation style to adopt for *Artivate* is indicative of the state of arts entrepreneurship as a field of inquiry and practice. What *is* this field? Is it a social science? A humanities discipline? A creative endeavor? It most definitely involves the social interaction of artist and audience or market, so perhaps it is the first. It can be understood as a universal form of human action (Koppl and Minniti, 2008) so perhaps it is the second. It often involves "making," and so perhaps it is the third. It is, legitimately, a transdiscipline, encompassing both point of view and method (see Scriven, 2008).

**Gary Beckman:** You've identified some significant procedural aspects of the field, though I would posit that your larger two-fold conception – a "field of inquiry and practice" – is closer to how the field (in an academic context) is beginning to coalesce and is a useful way to think about *Artivate's* role in helping to articulate our collective efforts. (Should we add "education" to your fields?) I suggest that answering this is a question of perspective: perhaps emerging and working artists would like to be more "entrepreneurial" and those in higher education would like to 1) help students successfully behave in that manner and 2) determine how arts entrepreneurs act in order to help their students "successfully behave in that manner."

The questions of disciplinary positioning concerns those of us in the academy much more than the students we teach – I honestly don't think working artists care what the disciplinary positioning is or is not. Outcome informs process and when we consider where the field "fits in," we fall into the well-rehearsed trap embedded in our arts training: process at all costs.

Perhaps we speak the obvious? The field of arts entrepreneurship is *at least* a hybrid of many possible avenues of disciplinary input – but can stand as its own distinct field of inquiry. We borrow (or should much more) from our 'parent' suffix and process through our prefix. What we tend to forget is that our "product" is aesthetic, thus, our prefix separates us from the business school and our suffix separates us from the arts school, but the beauty of our field is that our title unites the two in a new way.

### **The Higher Education and Working Artist Contexts**

**LE:** There seem to be two distinct strands of thinking about arts entrepreneurship that are each reflected only partially in both the academic and practicing artists milieu. The two strands reflect the most prevalent themes that Gartner (1990) identifies in his definitional article: entrepreneurship as new venture creation and entrepreneurship as behavior characterized by opportunity recognition and innovation. The latter seems to translate in the artistic sphere into individual artist self-management and self-actualization. Complicating the issue of domain is the relationship between entrepreneurial behavior by individual artists and organizations and entrepreneurial outcomes (and their measurement).

The evolution of the policy environment since the "Culture Wars" of the early 1990s appears to have incentivized individual artists, no longer eligible for federal and some state grants, to seek a more entrepreneurial approach to supporting their artistic work. Diverse artist service organizations such as

Fractured Atlas in New York and Springboard for the Arts in Minneapolis have developed to support artists on their paths to self-reliance. Paul Bonin-Rodriguez, in his essay in this issue, unpacks the sometimes tense relationship between the individual artist and the term – although not the actions of – entrepreneurship.

**GB:** It seems as if the popularity of the field spans a wide range of environments: from diverse academic institutional missions to working artists. Seeing how the expressions of arts entrepreneurship education in these environments is a tribute not only to those who develop and champion the effort, but - if I may be so bold – to art itself. Additionally, the nonprofit sector is supporting entrepreneurship education programming expressly for working artists – Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC) (lincnet.net) is one example of such an effort.

**LE:** There are several other fine examples of nonprofit sector contributions to the support and training of entrepreneurial artists. Two others, already mentioned, Fractured Atlas and Springboard for the Arts, are represented on *Artivate*'s editorial board by Ian David Moss and Laura Zabel, respectively.

**LE:** There seem to be several different institutional models for teaching/learning/research about arts entrepreneurship. Some schools have grown an arts entrepreneurship or arts enterprise focus from within a business school (or an arts management program in a business school) outward toward arts disciplines. UW-Madison is an example of such an approach. Others, such as my own institution, Arizona State University, have curriculum and programming that encompasses the whole of an arts college or institute. Elsewhere, entrepreneurship is focused primarily within disciplines, with music entrepreneurship blazing its own philosophical and pedagogic trail.

**GB:** True, and this is both strength and a weakness – depending on how one conceives the field. Returning to your suggestion of a “field of inquiry and practice” (with my suggestion of ‘education’ added), it is easy to see how different arts disciplines appropriate the topic to their specific needs. This is certainly a strength but perhaps the downside to this contextual adapting lies in the fact that if given a choice (or a merger) of “new venture creation” and “entrepreneurship as a behavior,” it seems that we (as a collective of arts disciplines) have not agreed on a core set of competencies. The beauty of new venture creation (a la Timmons and Spinelli, 2006) is that it appears to function as that core in a business school context, yet one wonders if this is the correct set of competencies for the arts. There is certainly every reason to develop a core for our field as well; beyond our artistic impulses, each discipline acts in a marketplace and executes certain behaviors in the act of entrepreneuring. Certainly, these unique processes could be collected, examined and measured with the goal of creating a set core competencies for both working artists and students alike.

**LE:** Premature adoption of core competencies may be a limitation to research in and teaching of arts entrepreneurship given the nascent state of the discipline and the breath of artistic specializations, technologies, and geographies it potentially encompasses. Thus, a merger, as you suggest of new venture creation and entrepreneurial behaviors or habits of mind may present the most inclusive opportunity for disciplinary advancement. To use a familiar social sciences format, this conception of the field can be expressed in a 2X2 grid. Teaching, which is of paramount importance, is not a separate item in the taxonomy, but exists cross all four spaces.

Table 1. Proposed conception of arts entrepreneurship as a field of inquiry and practice

	Practice	Inquiry
Habits of Mind	Tools for artist self-efficacy and self-actualization; provision of environments for artistic exploration and innovation.	Research into the behaviors that support entrepreneurial activity; pedagogy that supports those behaviors.
Venture Creation	Artists creating businesses, both for-profit and nonprofit; teaching the mechanics of new venture creation in the arts.	Research on new venture creation, success rates, evaluation, etc; pedagogy related to audience/market reception.

This 2X2 is a preliminary idea only. I would like to see further development of it as a model for the scope of the field.

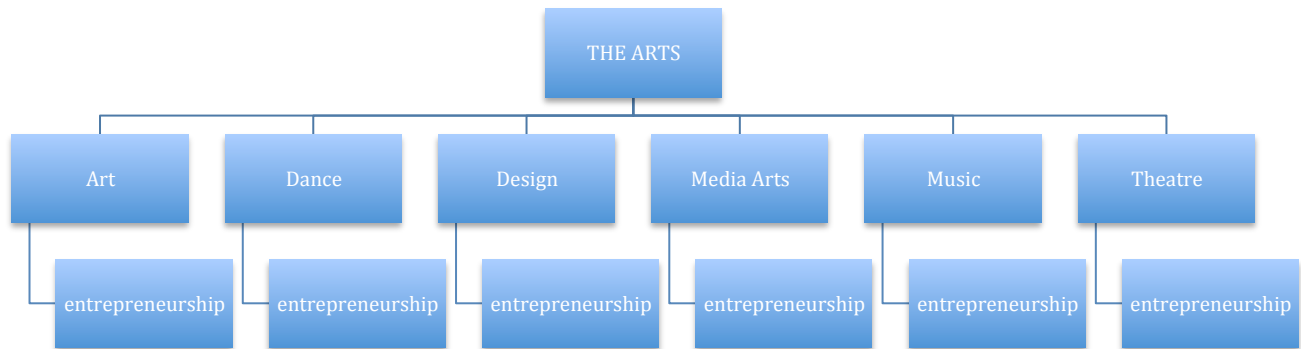
**GB:** I'd like to address your suggestion about being premature. We must start somewhere and I'll mention that the early pioneers of arts entrepreneurship education had absolutely no reference point other than the title, passion, some measure of disciplinary or practical experience and a perception of the field's suffix in the context of its prefix. All concerned are better served by having an adaptive foundation (developed in the near term) with which to build a set of dynamic core competencies for the long term – like other emerging fields. You raise a valid point about a lack of research, though I'd suggest that an initial set of competencies would evolve as the field moves forward in its scholarship.

My primary concern is time. How long should our students wait before the field agrees? In a perfect world, I am sure we would all like to get it right the first time. However, with soaring tuition rates, student loan debt, time to completion pressures, etc., are we doing our students a favor by saying “hey, we're working on this, give us a few years (or decades) to figure this out?” Granted, we may not be as collectively effective in the classroom by acting prematurely, but it seems as if we all have our own set of desired competencies that can serve as a starting point in the near term.

### Conceptions of the Field

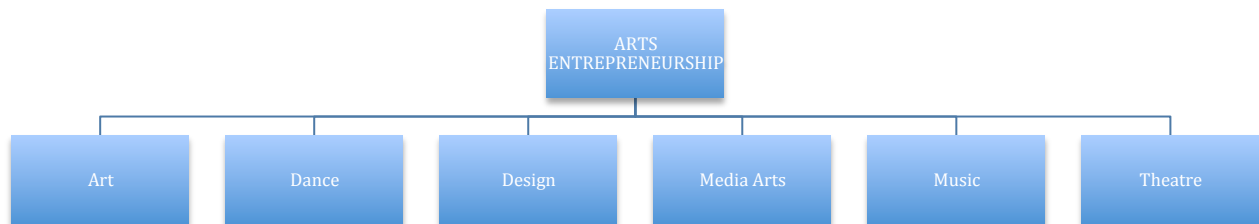
**LE:** The axes of venture creation  $\leftrightarrow$  habits of mind and practice  $\leftrightarrow$  inquiry can be a foundation for developing those core competencies. The College Music Society has jumped ahead in doing so. That a disciplinary organization has jumped ahead is evidence both of your leadership in the field and of another dichotomy in modeling arts entrepreneurship as a discipline. In the first model, entrepreneurship is taught as a subset of individual artistic disciplines:

**Figure 1. Model 1: Entrepreneurship within arts disciplines**



The second model positions “arts entrepreneurship” as the discipline and then applies it to the arts writ large. In this model, in which *Artivate* can have some significant influence, competencies (or outcomes) are developed for arts entrepreneurship rather than within a specific arts discipline.

**Figure 2. Model 2: Arts entrepreneurship as a transdiscipline**



A third conception is that advanced in Europe and as defined in Hagoort’s (2007) short monograph, *Cultural Entrepreneurship*. Hagoort defines cultural entrepreneurship as a form of management that serves the creative industries with the organization as the central actor. In the U.S. there is more focus, unsurprisingly, on the individual actor in an entrepreneurial context. Paul Bonin-Rodriguez addresses some of the complexities for individuals of the entrepreneurship label in his article in this issue while Jeff Nytch’s article explores the entrepreneurial behavior of an organization. One could also examine arts entrepreneurship at the systems level at the intersection of the public, nonprofit, and private sectors. I would like to think that *Artivate* would welcome scholarship that addresses the topic at each of these levels.

### **Historical and Disciplinary Contexts**

**LE:** The nineteenth-century conservatory model of arts education certainly seems to be waning as economic pressures on both educational institutions and artists graduating from them increase. An explosion of graduate programs in the arts in the middle of the twentieth century based on the nineteenth century model has led to a proliferation of graduates narrowly trained in specific artistic disciplines at the

beginning of our current century. Arts entrepreneurship, at least in some small part, endeavors to teach arts graduates to think beyond the traditional career trajectory for which conservatory training is designed.

**GB:** Agreed - to an extent. I think “waning” is too strong, however, and trying to include all the arts disciplines would be over-reaching. (We don’t see Julliard or Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) shutting down for lack of eager students waiting to enroll, after all.) To demonstrate how the conservatory model has *adapted* to new challenges, we simply have to look at the number of dedicated arts conservatories that now boast some form of entrepreneurship programming. This is a significant step and should not be taken lightly. As younger (and perhaps more enlightened) decision-makers assume their roles, I expect to see more and more academic efforts. Concurrently, as successful arts entrepreneurs emerge, their stories will help to inspire emerging arts entrepreneurs.

**LE:** It’s interesting that disciplinary differences are somewhat assumed in this context. My classroom includes students from all arts disciplines as well as arts administration and design. Having reviewed the College Music Society student learning outcomes, I find them to be applicable across those multiple disciplines and not necessarily specific to music entrepreneurship studies.

**GB:** To be clear, the endorsed outcomes are for *arts* entrepreneurship programs. The title requested was “Suggested Outcomes for Arts Entrepreneurship Education” and the Executive Committee both considered and endorsed the outcomes in that frame. This provides an opportunity for other organizations, such as Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE), USASBE, and others, to become aware of the field and begin conversations with their membership concerning their need for arts entrepreneurship education.

**LE:** There is another area where we see distinct disciplinary differences. Music schools, which tend, generally, to be larger and more well-endowed financially than, for example, schools of dance, have been slower to adapt the conservatory model to something more flexible. A good example of that kind of flexibility is seen in the School of Dance here at ASU, where tenure-track faculty funding has been converted to funding for visiting faculty with ties to professional artistic practice and where community-based arts practices provide opportunities for students and faculty alike to learn to engage a broadly construed definition of “audience.” The community arts movement, which chronologically parallels the development of music entrepreneurship programs, can actually be understood to be an enactment of social entrepreneurship in the arts. We can see that connection at Eastern Michigan University and elsewhere.

**GB:** The recent institutional impetus for the field emerged from music schools. I’d cite the Eastman School of Music’s original *Arts Leadership Program* (since subsumed by their *Institute for Music Leadership*) and the University of Colorado at Boulder’s *Entrepreneurship Center for Music* as examples. These two programs (a recognized conservatory and, like most music schools in the country, a conservatory-based public institution), launched in 1997 and 2001 respectively, has given the field significant legitimacy. By their example, we now see virtually every major music conservatory in the country with entrepreneurship programming – a percentage not replicated at our state and private institutions.

**LE:** The roots of entrepreneurial arts training can be traced to earlier endeavors. For example, the New York Foundation for the Arts’ programs to provide business training to visual artists dates back to 1971; film schools have long included new venture creation in producing curricula; similarly, programs in theatre management, most notably the Yale School of Drama, have included finance, business formation, and the like in their programs of study combining Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) and Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.) degrees. MICA’s social entrepreneurship efforts include the founding of the Community Arts Project in 1999.

**GB:** Conservatories serve an important role in the arts and I'd posit that their adoption of entrepreneurship education is reflective of a number of issues - some shared between the arts disciplines and some distinct. A failure to recognize and embrace both disciplinary similarities and differences may serve only to delay the field's disciplinary status. In short, our diversity is both a strength and a challenge and without it, our field risks sub-disciplinary isolation.

**LE:** Beyond the realm of higher education, artists, arts organizations, and the cultural sector as a whole also find themselves in a very different economic climate than fifty years ago, let alone the nineteenth century. The shift away from public funding for the arts and culture sector that resulted from the neoliberal politics and culture wars of the 1980s has been magnified by the current financial crisis that has caused both foundation and individual donors to decrease and/or re-prioritize their giving to the sector. The economic situation has forced arts organizations to diversify their business plans and individual artists to proactively seek alternative revenue streams in order to survive. At the same time, more tools are available for artists and organizations to do just that via partnerships, social media, crowd funding, and the like.

**GB:** To support your suggestion that *organizations* are seeking alternative revenue streams (and organizational / managerial entrepreneurship appears to be one) we need only to see the number of arts entrepreneurship academic minor degrees emerging primarily from Arts Administration programs recently. (There are three that I know of: The Ohio State University, Southern Methodist University and most recently, the University of Michigan. Note that my home institution, North Carolina State University offers this degree campus-wide). Perhaps we see Hagoort's definition of *cultural entrepreneurship* expressed in Arts Administration programs?

**LE:** Yes. Yet, as Bonin-Rodriguez points out in his article, many individual artists still find the term "entrepreneur" distasteful for its smell of crass commercialism and economic oppression. There is an opportunity for *Artivate* to dispel that view as a misperception of what instead can be viewed as a universal human action for good (see Koppl and Minnitti, 2008). The reality is that the Medici family is long deceased, or rather the patronage system synonymous with their name is dead. While some art, even that by living artists, can command the highest of prices, most art and most artists do not. Most artists work diligently in their studio (be it a writing studio, design studio, practice room, etc.) creating work, but need to find the financial means not only to make work, but also to stock the refrigerator. An entrepreneurial mindset accompanied by entrepreneurial skills can help them to do that.

**GB:** Though you have given the readers some significant fodder for future articles, I will address only your observation of Bonin-Rodriguez's point. Anecdotally, I have not met a student in any of my classes who eschews the term entrepreneur – likely because if they did, they would not take the classes. I am unclear whether this is a generational or pragmatic shift based on the romanticized "starving artist" *or* the modern media, which deifies some artists *or* something else in combination with the above. However, my students certainly have a significant distaste for those artists who abuse the system with what is colloquially referred to as "bad art." That is, they all agree that artists need to be fairly compensated, yet have a vile reaction when art that is viewed as "less than" or "inferior" (or some other adjective) earns a disproportionate slice of the market's currency of the realm. The late Thomas Kinkade and the pop-cultural-icon-gone-wild-du-jour are my students' favorite targets of such stiletos

### Relevance of Business School Scholarship

**GB:** As both a co-editor and educator, I am extremely excited to read submissions from those arts entrepreneurship educators emerging from our business schools. Since both disciplines are approaching entrepreneurship education in distinct contexts (arts from a professional (if not survival) perspective and business from a disciplinary core perspective), I think that *Artivate* will facilitate a long overdue dialog about pedagogical techniques. The field needs to determine how best to teach and research the myriad of

topics the field encompasses and my guess is that our colleagues in the business school will offer some strategic and important insights.

**LE:** Yes! I would extend that hope to an even wider dialogue or, rather, a network of related dialogues around the topic of arts entrepreneurship. In addition to pedagogic techniques, how can business school research – and for that matter, research on non-market entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, business psychology, etc –inform *entrepreneurial* techniques and behaviors in the arts and culture sector. There is also work in the cultural policy area that is both conceptually and materially related to the focus of *Artivate*.

**GB:** I certainly agree with you and further hope that *Artivate's* authors will engage existing entrepreneurship scholarship in a meaningful way. As I've written elsewhere (Beckman, 2006) our Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) colleagues have contributed a rich and vast amount of literature that can hone (at the very least) the philosophical foundation for the field. I look forward to future submissions by *Artivate* authors who embrace this resource and demonstrate how their discoveries will inform our field.

There are several publications, for example, that might help our future contributors: "Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture" (Ginsburgh & Throsby, 2006) is one. This epic tome addresses significant issues that impact the field. *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research* is an annual compilation of the Babson College Entrepreneurship Research Conference and remains a progressive source of theoretical content well suited to our context. Add to this the journal *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice* and we have an extremely rich foundation for a portion of the field's scholarship. Just these three examples alone constitute a significantly broad palette with which to develop the field.

This said I also hope that our authors can help to position the role of the business school to one of support and guidance. Our field needs to take off the training wheels and leverage this scholarship. By its nature, arts entrepreneurship is interdisciplinary and by refusing to engage holistically, we run the risk of intellectually self-segregating; in the long term this hurts not just the field but our students and our communities.

### ***Artivate's* Opportunities and Challenges**

**GB:** As the first peer-reviewed platform for arts entrepreneurship scholarship originating in the U.S., the responsibilities of *Artivate's* co-editors and editorial board are significant. Conceived broadly, what *Artivate* publishes is aimed at assisting scholars, educators, decision and policy makers, emerging and working arts professionals, and the public in their understanding of the field. Ultimately, *Artivate* is both a step in disciplinary emergence and a platform for conceiving of new possibilities for artists, arts organizations, and arts education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

One of the challenges we face as *Artivate* helps to lay the foundation of the field's scholarly inquiry is balancing the diversity of needs, traditions and trajectories of the arts and other disciplines. "Nuts and bolts" mechanical issues such as citation style is an obvious example, although stickier issues abound. For example, arts historians typically compose their academic papers with a different narrative and compositional style than those in the social sciences. Further, determining the role and weight of the literature review common to social science scholarship in writing about arts entrepreneurship has yet to be determined. This tedious example (of importance to academics only, I imagine) is indicative of how important the discussions are concerning what we leverage (or jettison) from our home and other disciplines as the field engages with *Artivate*.

Regarding disciplinary differences, I am writing about the education of future arts academics and how we are trained to write and pursue different research methodologies within each arts sub-discipline. Modest differences exist in the style, research methodology and scholarly tradition between each arts discipline and those differences - as we reach out to our peers across campus - are magnified and made clear by simply opening the latest issue of *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice*. My point here is that as the field's scholarship will be built by a collaboration of scholars with backgrounds both inside and

outside the arts (including working artists in various stages of their careers) and that these discrete mechanical differences (based upon an author's disciplinary training) will require the field to coalesce around not only a style (or two) but what research and writing methods are appropriate to the field.

**LE:** This last returns us full circle to my remembrance of our conversation in New Orleans. One of the options we considered for *Artivate* was letting authors write using the style guide of their "home discipline." In choosing not to go that route, I think we, in a not insignificant way, position arts entrepreneurship toward Model 2 – a discipline in its own right, but one that is networked across multiple other disciplines both within and without the arts.

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