FLANDERS ARTS INSTITUTE

The Flemish Contemporary Art Market

A Survey of Flemish Private Galleries and Flemish Artists with Galleries in Belgium and Abroad (2005-2015)

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This is the first detailed survey of the Flemish[01] contemporary art market by the Flanders Arts Institute. The focus is on two actors within the Flemish art market: private galleries[02] and the artists.[03]

Where are the private galleries established and how long have they been active? How many artists are represented? What is the percentage of Flemish artists and how long does the representation last? What art fairs do the galleries attend? Where and how many are there? And how many Flemish artists are represented at these fairs? To answer these questions, data was collected from 87 private galleries active between 2005 and 2015 in Flanders or Brussels.

In addition, data was collected on 633 professional Flemish artists from the Flanders Arts Institute artist database. For each artist we investigated which gallery (galleries) represented them in 2015 and what kind of gallery it was (or they were).

1. Where were the private galleries established and how long had they been active?

For this part of the research, data was analysed from the period between 2005 and early 2015 about place of business, age, launch year and possibly year of closure of the 87 private galleries that were active between these years.[04] A total of 23 of these also ceased their activities during this period, while 64 were still active in early 2015 as private galleries.

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01 'Flemish' here relates to the Flemish Community, and thus Flanders and Brussels. 'Brussels' here refers to the Brussels Capital Region.

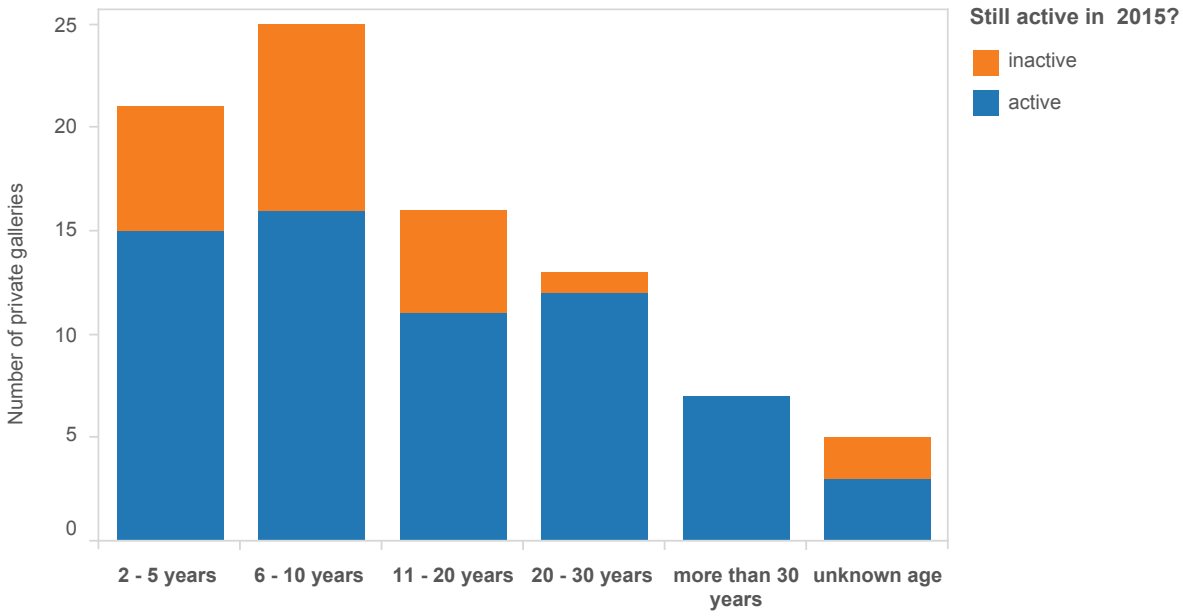
02 Only private galleries were taken into account that have (or had) an active policy of promoting their artists on the (inter)national art scene and that are (or were) located in the Flemish Community – regardless of the nationality of their founders or whether the place of business of the gallery is in Belgium or abroad.

03 By 'Flemish artists' we mean artists born in Flanders or Brussels, but also foreign artists who live and/or work in Flanders or Brussels.

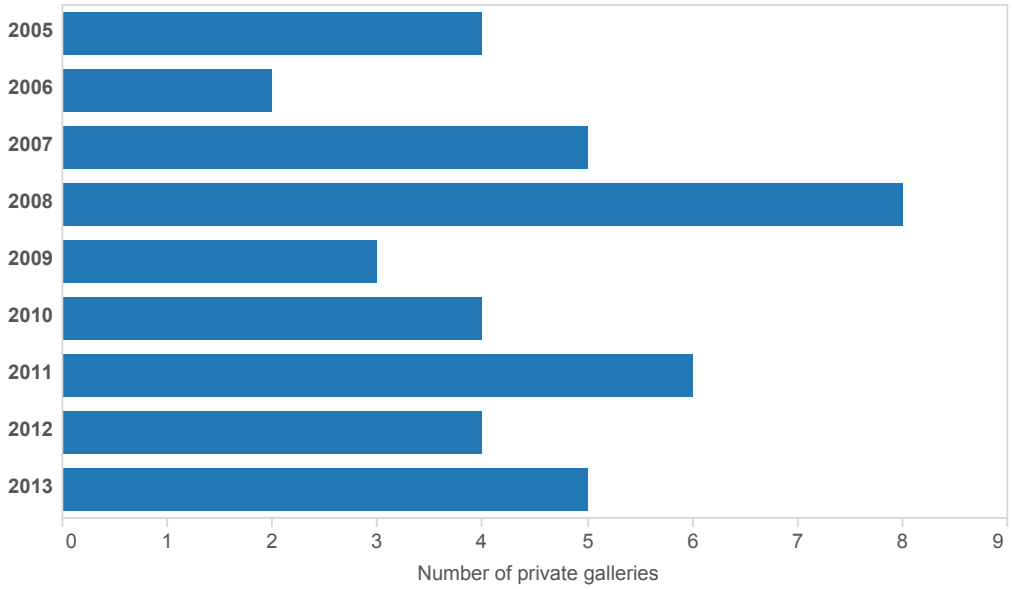
04 Aeroplastics Gallery, Albert Baronian, Alice, Aliceday, Almine Rech Gallery, André Simoens Gallery, Annie Gentils Gallery, Anyspace, Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Base - Alpha Gallery, Bodson Gallery, Catherine Bastide, CLEARING, closed art gallery, Crown Gallery, D+T Project Gallery, Dagmar De Pooter Gallery, Dépendance, Deweer Gallery, Elisa Platteau Gallery, Galerie Annette De Keyser, Galerie c. de vos, Galerie Daniel Templon, Galerie De Ziener, Galerie De Zwarte Panter, galerie el, Galerie Erna Hecey, Galerie Fortlaan 17, Galerie Greta Meert, Galerie Het Vijfde Huis, Galerie Jamar, Galerie Jan Dhaese, Galerie Les filles du calvaire Bruxelles, Galerie mariondecannière, Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Galerie Pascal Polar, Galerie Patrick De Brock, Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Galerie S&H De Buck, Galerie Sans Titre, Galerie Transit, Galerie Van De Weghe, Galerie van der Mieden, Galerie VidalCuglietta, Galerie Zwart Huis, Gallery FIFTY ONE, Geukens & De Vil Gallery, Gladstone Gallery, Harlan Levey Projects, Hoet Bekaert Gallery, Hopstreet Gallery, In Situ, Jan Mot, Jozsa Gallery, Koraalberg, Kristof De Clercq gallery, Kusseneers Gallery, Levy.Delval, Light Cube Art Gallery, Maes & Matthys Gallery,

In **graph 1.1**, the 87 private galleries are grouped by age category. **Graph 1.2** presents 41 galleries launched between 2005 and 2015, grouped by launch year. The 23 private galleries that closed between 2005 and 2015 are given in **graph 1.3** *(next page)*, with mention of the year of closure.

1.1 Age of the 87 private galleries

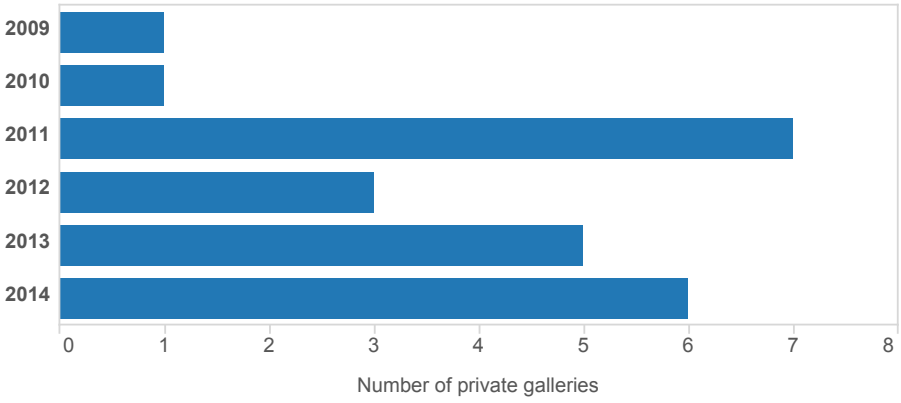


1.2 Number of private galleries launched between 2005 and 2015, clustered by launch year



Meessen De Clercq, Michel Rein Brussels, MOTINTERNATIONAL Brussel, Mudimadrie/Galerie Gianluca Ranzi, Mulier Mulier Gallery, MX7 Gallery, NK Gallery, NOMAD Gallery, Office Baroque Gallery, Ottilia Pribilla Gallery, Ricou Gallery, Rossicontemporary, Sorry We're Closed , Stella Lohaus Gallery, Stephane Simoens Gallery, Stieglitz 19, Stilll, Super Dakota, Tatjana Pieters Gallery, Think.21, Tim Van Laere Gallery, Twig Art gallery, Vincent Verbist // Actionfields Gallery, Waldburger Wouters, Xavier Hufkens and Zeno X Gallery. See: http://bamart.be/en/organisations/index/16/. The galleries that are no longer active no longer feature in the public interface of this database.

1.3 Number of closed private galleries per year of closure



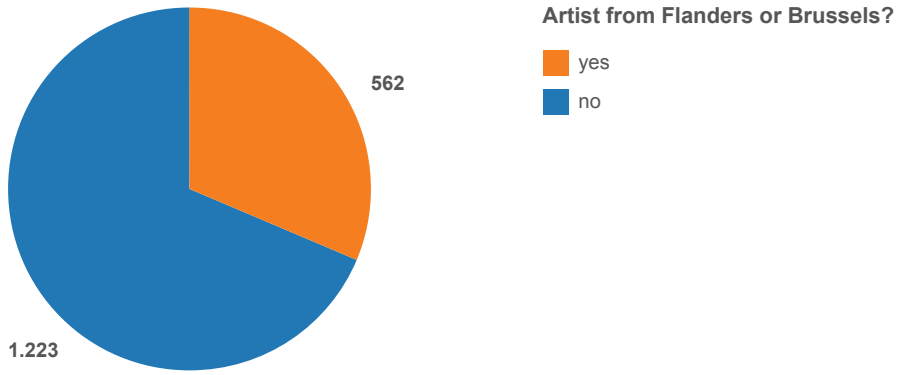
For each of the 87 galleries surveyed, we examined where they were located in early 2015 or – if they had already closed before early 2015 – where they were last located. Among the places of business of the 87 galleries surveyed, Brussels represents just over half (44). Antwerp comes second with 25 galleries. Other places of business are Ghent (6), Knokke (5), Aalst (2), Asse (1), Mechelen (1), Otegem (1), Ronse (1) and Welle (1).

The capital's appeal is heightened by the presence of (branches of) foreign galleries (9 out of 87). These are from Paris, London, New York or Luxembourg, and they all settled in Brussels. These galleries are Almine Rech Gallery, CLEARING, Galerie Daniel Templon, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Gladstone Gallery, Michele Rein Brussels, MOTINTERNATIONAL, Galerie Les filles du calvaire Bruxelles and Galerie Erna Hecey (the latter two are no longer active in Belgium). Five other galleries moved in the period 2005-2015 from another Belgian city to Brussels: Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, Hopstreet Gallery (previously Grusenmayer Art Gallery), Kusseneers Gallery, Office Baroque Gallery and Galerie van der Mieden (the latter moved back to Antwerp in the course of 2015).

2. Relation between the private galleries and the artists they represented

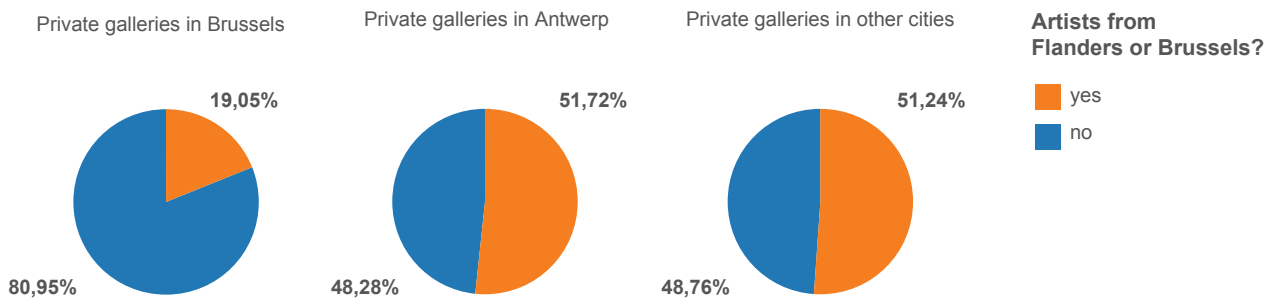
What artists do the galleries represent? How many are there and how long does the representation last? To provide answers to the first two questions, we studied the official websites of each of the 87 galleries in 2013 and 2015 to see what artists the galleries represent on a permanent basis. This yielded a representative image of the artists that were attached to the surveyed galleries during these years. Insofar as possible, this data was confirmed with staff of the galleries. In some cases, the galleries also provided the names of artists who had left their gallery before 2013 and were not mentioned on the gallery website during the collection of data. However, this concerns a limited amount of data about these artists, whereby the following graphs are not representative for the period before 2013. For private galleries that were already closed at the time, reference works were consulted with information about their pool of artists.

2.1 Number of artists attached to the 87 private galleries, with indication of the number of Flemish artists (= artists born and/or living and working in Flanders or Brussels)



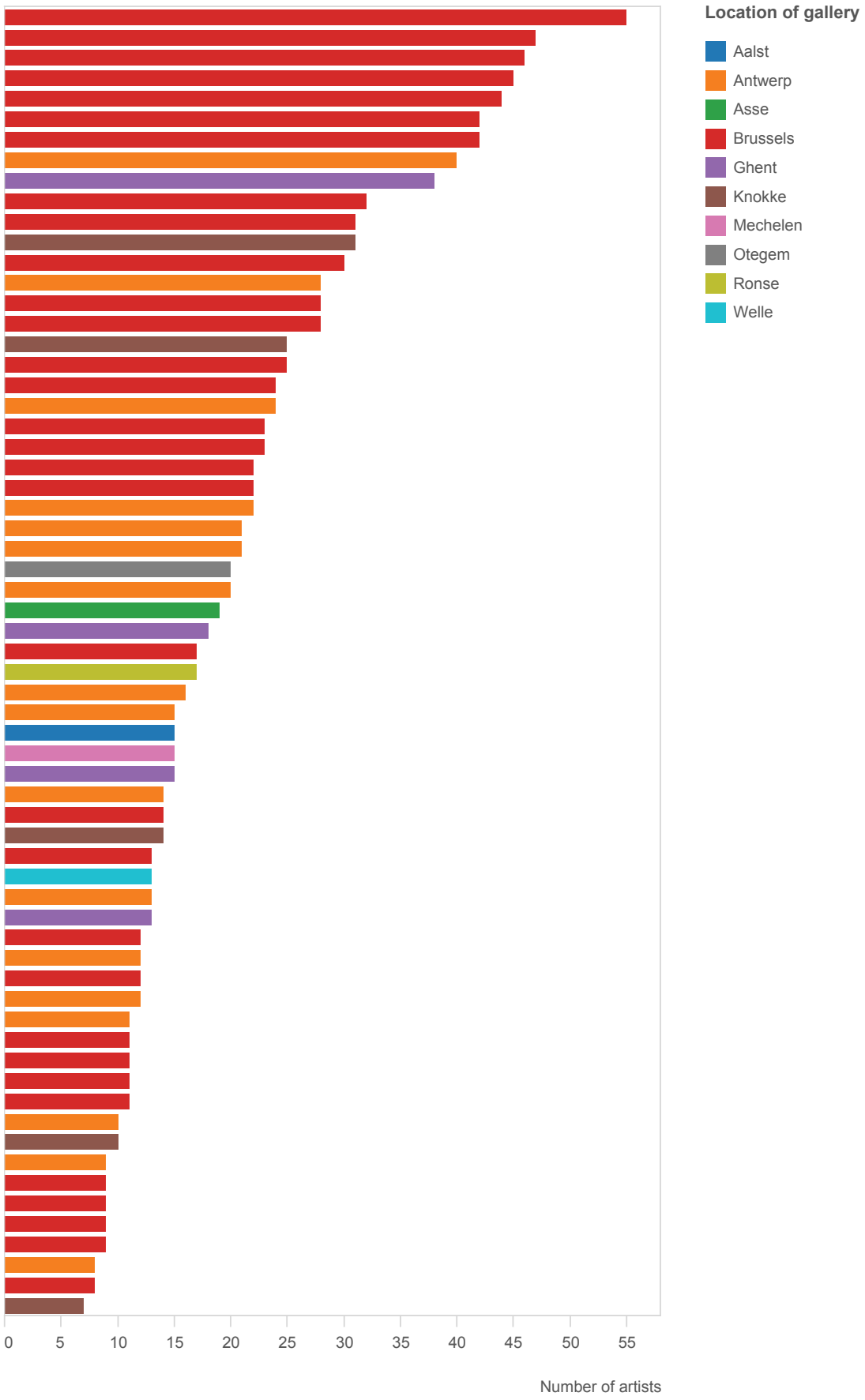
Graph 2.1 presents the 1785 artists of whom it is known that they were once attached to one or more of the private galleries surveyed. A total of 562 artists (31.48%) are from or live and/or work in Flanders or Brussels.

2.2 Number of artists represented by the 87 private galleries, clustered by place of business of the galleries



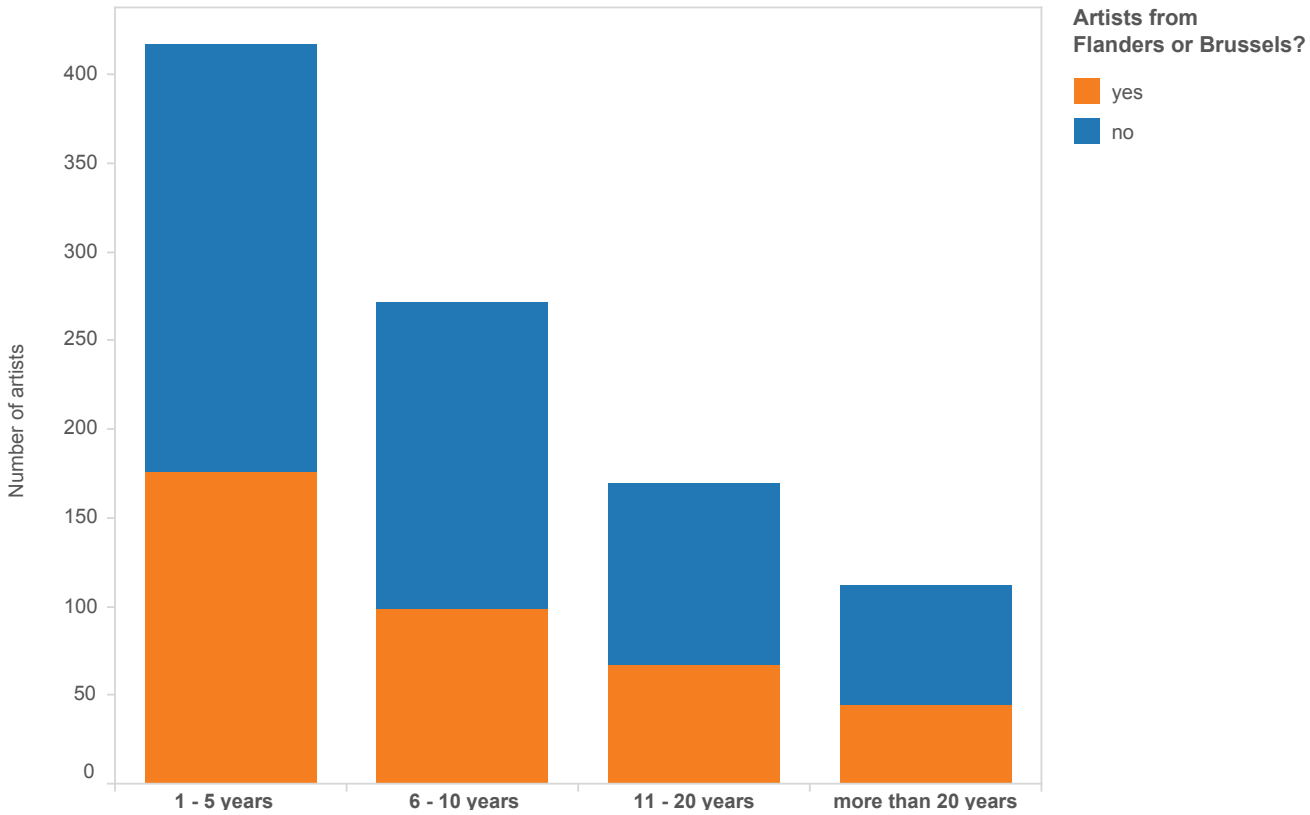
In **graph 2.2** the artists are divided into three groups: those with a gallery in Brussels, those with a gallery in Antwerp, and those with a gallery in another Flemish commune. When an artist is represented by several galleries, he/she is listed several times in this graph. Flemish artists represent 19.05% of the artists represented by Brussels galleries, while in the galleries in Antwerp and the other communes, a bit more than half the artists are Flemish.

2.3 Number of artists per active private gallery in early 2015 (anonymous), with indication of the place of business of the gallery



We also studied the number of permanent artists per private gallery (**graph 2.3** - *previous page*). From this it appears that galleries with a large pool of artists are/were mainly established in Brussels.

2.4 Number of artists represented by a private gallery between 2013 and 2015, clustered according to the length of their representation in years

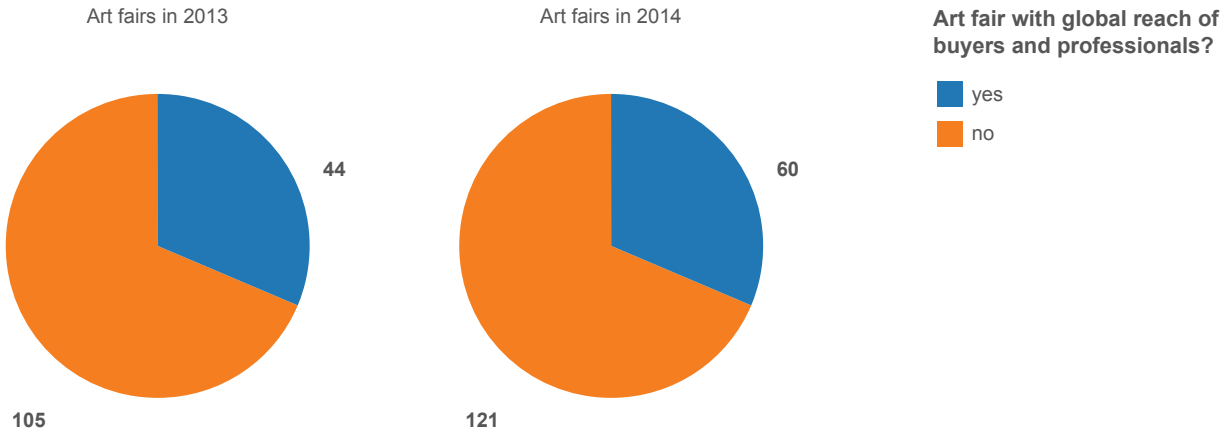


For 971 artists that were represented between 2013 and 2015 by the private galleries, the length of their representation by these galleries could be calculated. In **graph 2.4** the length of representation of each artist is subdivided into one of four categories: 1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-20 years, and 20+ years.

3. Art fair attendance by private galleries in 2013 and 2014

The 64 private galleries that were still active in early 2015 were questioned about their art fair attendance in Belgium and abroad in 2013 and 2014. We were able to collect data from 58 private galleries about their attendance of fairs.

3.1 Number of art fairs attended in 2013 and 2014



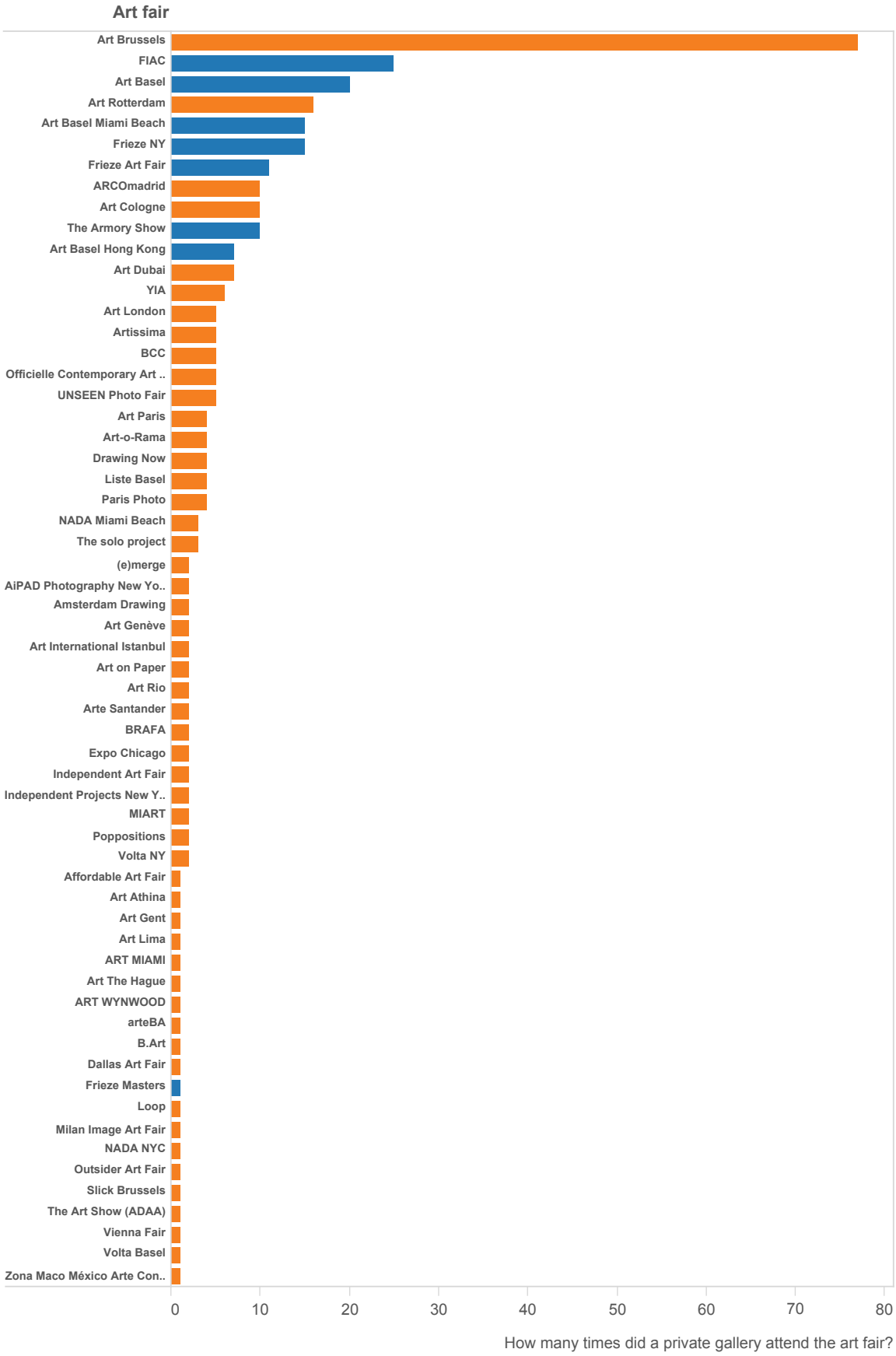
Each disc in **graph 3.1** represents the number of times that one of the surveyed galleries attended an art fair. The 2014 disc is larger than the 2013 one, indicating an increase in the total number of art fairs attended (from 149 in 2013 to 181 in 2014, a 21.48% increase). Within the two discs, attendance of art fairs with a global reach of buyers and professionals are indicated in orange. These are Art Basel, Art Basel Miami Beach, Art Basel Hong Kong, The Armory Show, FIAC, Frieze London, Frieze New York and Frieze Masters.

In **graph 3.2** *(next page)* the level of art fair attendance by the private galleries is compounded for 2013 and 2014 and classified per art fair. **Graph 3.3** *(page 11)* collects the same data per city of location of the fair. This also indicates whether it is a city in Belgium, another country in Europe, Asia, North or Latin America.

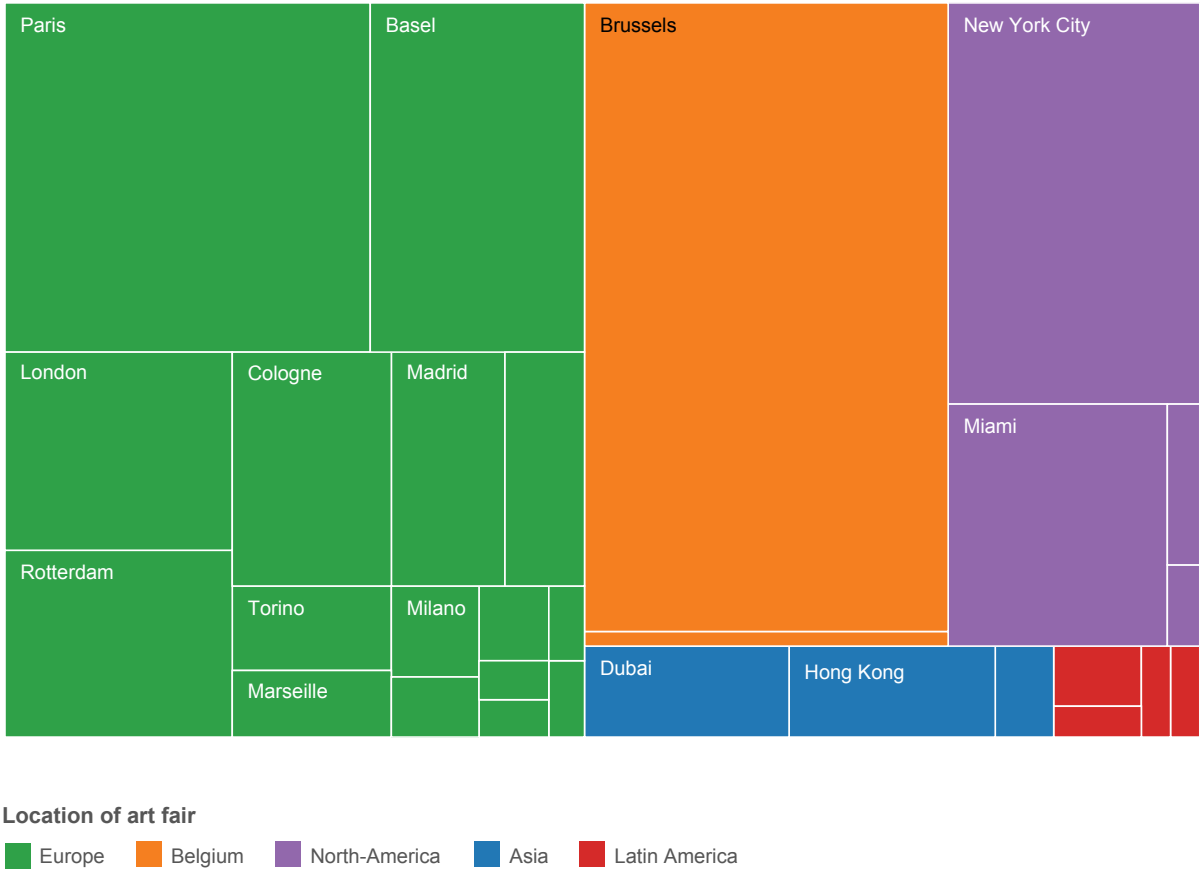
Graph 3.4 *(page 11)* collects the levels of art fair attendance in 2013 and 2014, and indicates where the participating gallery was established at the time. The left disc shows the attendance of art fairs in Belgium, the right disc shows the attendance of art fairs in other countries. The graph shows that Brussels private galleries focus more on foreign art fairs.

In **graph 3.5** *(page 12)* the level of art fair attendance in 2013 and 2014 is compounded, but is represented for each gallery separately (without mention of their names). Attendance of fairs with a global reach of buyers and professionals is indicated in orange. The more art fairs a gallery attends, the greater the chance that this gallery attends fairs with a global reach.

3.2 Level of attendance per art fair in 2013-2014 (both years counted jointly)

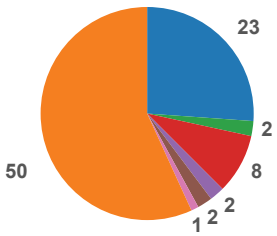


3.3 Level of art fair attendance per location of the art fair in 2013-2014 (compounded)

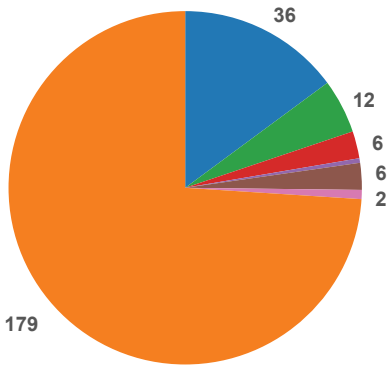


3.4 Level of art fair attendance in Belgium and abroad in 2013-2014 (compounded), subdivided according to the place of business of the galleries

How many times did a private gallery attend art fairs in Belgium?



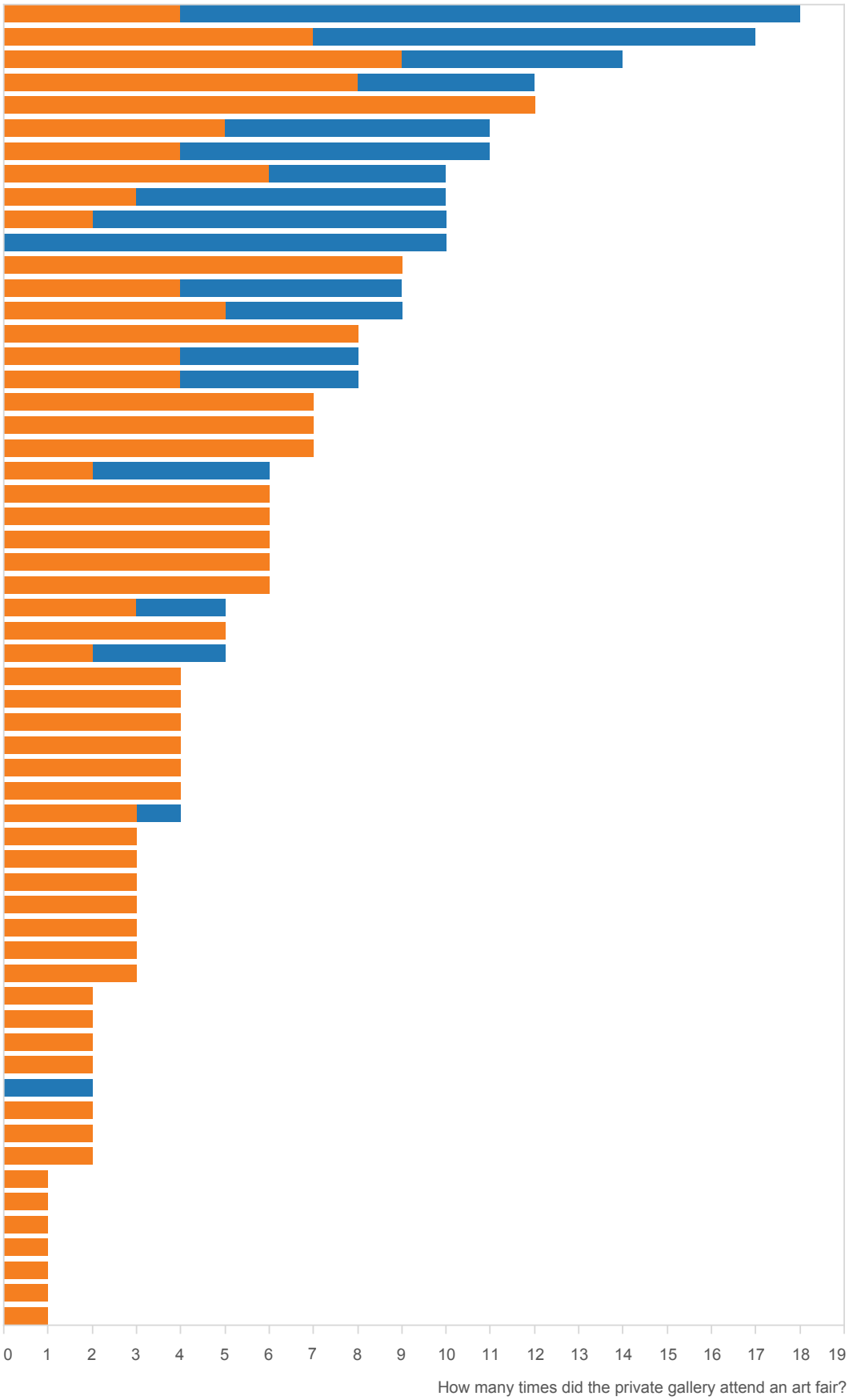
How many times did a private gallery attend art fairs abroad?



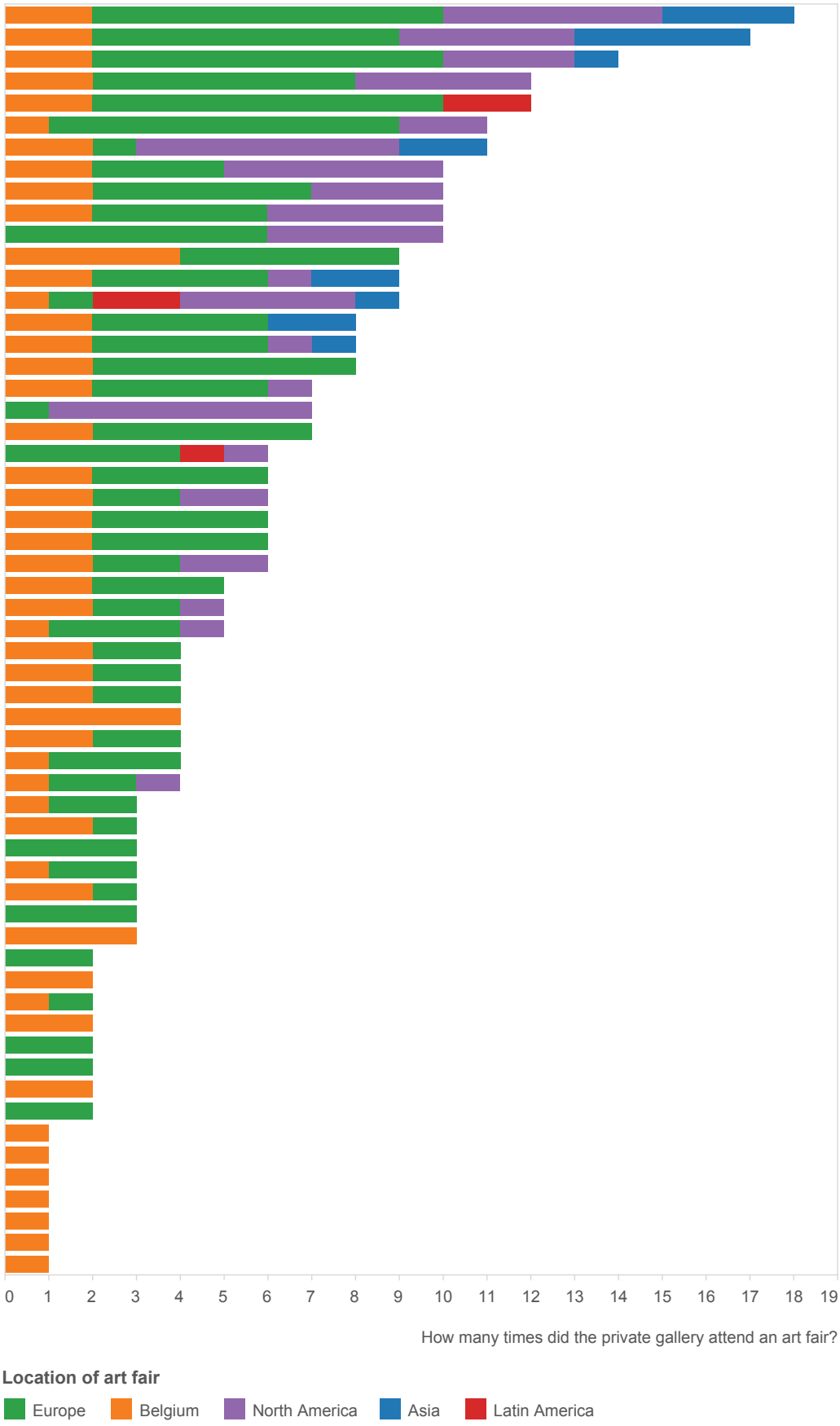
Location of private gallery

- Antwerp
- Ghent
- Knokke
- Mechelen
- Otegem
- Ronse
- Brussels

3.5 Level of art fair attendance in 2013-2014 per private gallery (anonymous)



3.6 Level of art fair attendance in 2013-2014 per private gallery (anonymous), subdivided according to the location of the fair



Graph 3.6 *(previous page)* again represents the level of art fair attendance per private gallery (anonymous). A distinction is now made according to the location of the art fair. The more art fairs a private gallery attends, the greater the chance that this gallery also attends fairs outside Europe.

3.7 Number of Flemish artists represented by private galleries at art fairs in 2013 and 2014

Art fair	2013	2014
Art Brussels	97	103
Art Basel	13	16
FIAC	11	17
Art Rotterdam	15	8
BRAFA	10	10
Frieze Art Fair	3	17
ARCOmadrid	8	9
Art London	12	2
Frieze NY	2	9
Art Cologne	4	6
Art Basel Miami Beach	2	7
Art-O-Rama	2	6
Amsterdam Drawing		7
Art International Istanbul	3	3
The Armory Show	1	5
Affordable Art Fair		5
Art Dubai	2	3
Art Lima	5	
Art The Hague		5
Drawing Now		5
Officielle Contemporary Art Fair		5
Poppositions		5
The Solo Project	1	4
Art Gent	4	
Artissima	1	3
B.Art	4	
NADA Miami Beach	2	2
UNSEEN Photo Fair	1	3

Art fair	2013	2014
AiPAD Photography New York	2	1
Art Paris	1	2
Vienna Fair		3
Art Miami	2	
Arte Santander	1	1
YIA	2	
(e)merge	1	
Art Basel Hong Kong		1
Art on Paper	1	
ART WYNWOOD	1	
BCC		1
Dallas Art Fair		1
Liste Basel	1	
MIART	1	
NADA NYC	1	
Paris Photo		1
Slick Brussels	1	
Volta Basel		1
Volta NY	1	

Art fair with global reach of buyers and professionals?

- yes
- no

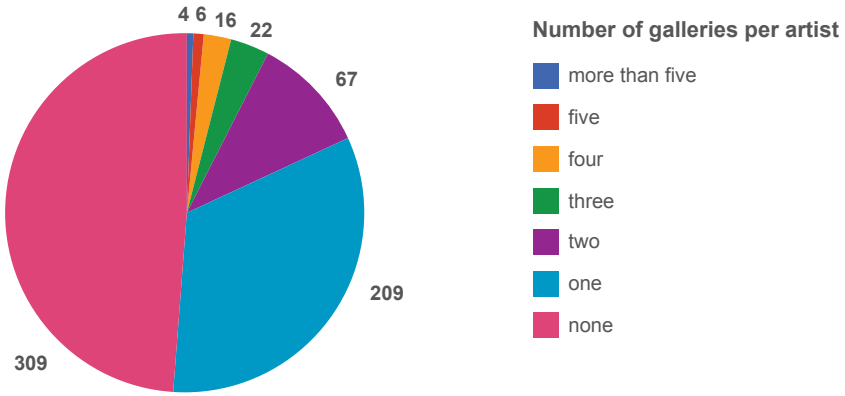
The numbers besides the names of the art fairs in **graph 3.7** *(previous page)* refer to the number of Flemish artists whose work was represented by the private galleries at these fairs. The numbers are mentioned separately for the 2013 and 2014 editions. The orange numbers refer to Flemish artists that were to be seen at fairs with an international reach of buyers and professionals.

4. Representation of Flemish artists by galleries in Belgium and abroad

This section focuses on the perspective of the artist. More specifically, it is about 633 Flemish artists listed in the 2015 Flanders Arts Institute artist database. The collection of data about these artists was based on two questions: were they attached to a gallery in 2015 and if so, was this gallery in Belgium[05] or abroad?

4.1 Number of surveyed Flemish artists with one, none or several galleries in 2015

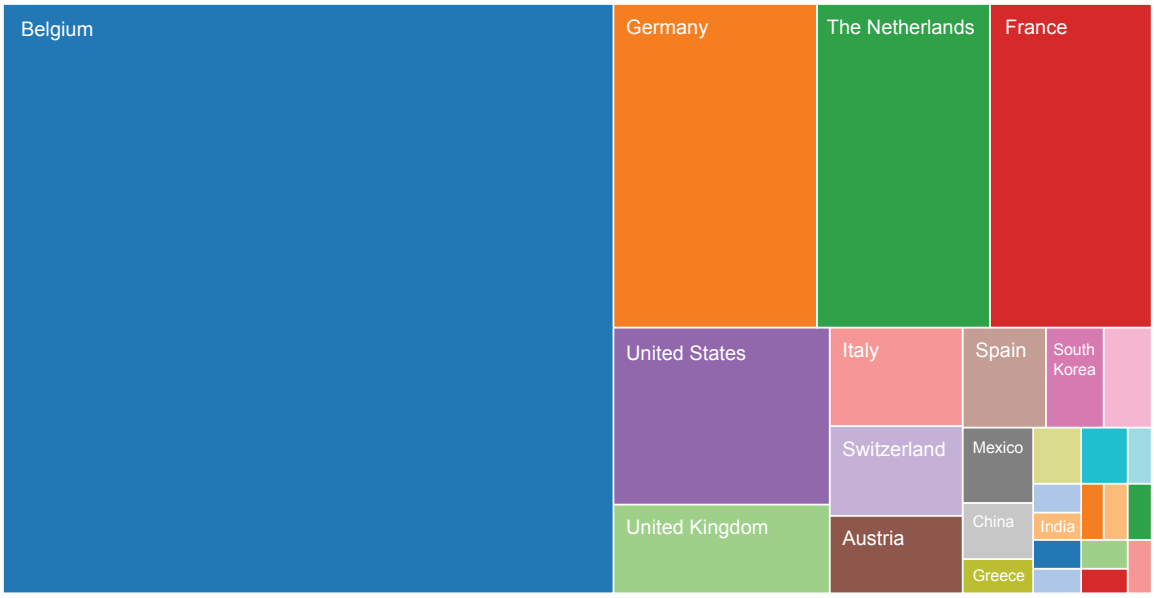
Graph 4.1 offers an answer to the first question: 324 surveyed artists have at least one gallery and 309 have none (or no longer have any).



We can also answer the second question: of the 324 artists with at least one gallery, there are 173 only attached to Belgian galleries. A total of 151 have one or more gallery (galleries) abroad – where foreign galleries with a branch in Belgium are exclusively seen as foreign galleries.

05 In this section, galleries from Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia are not treated separately.

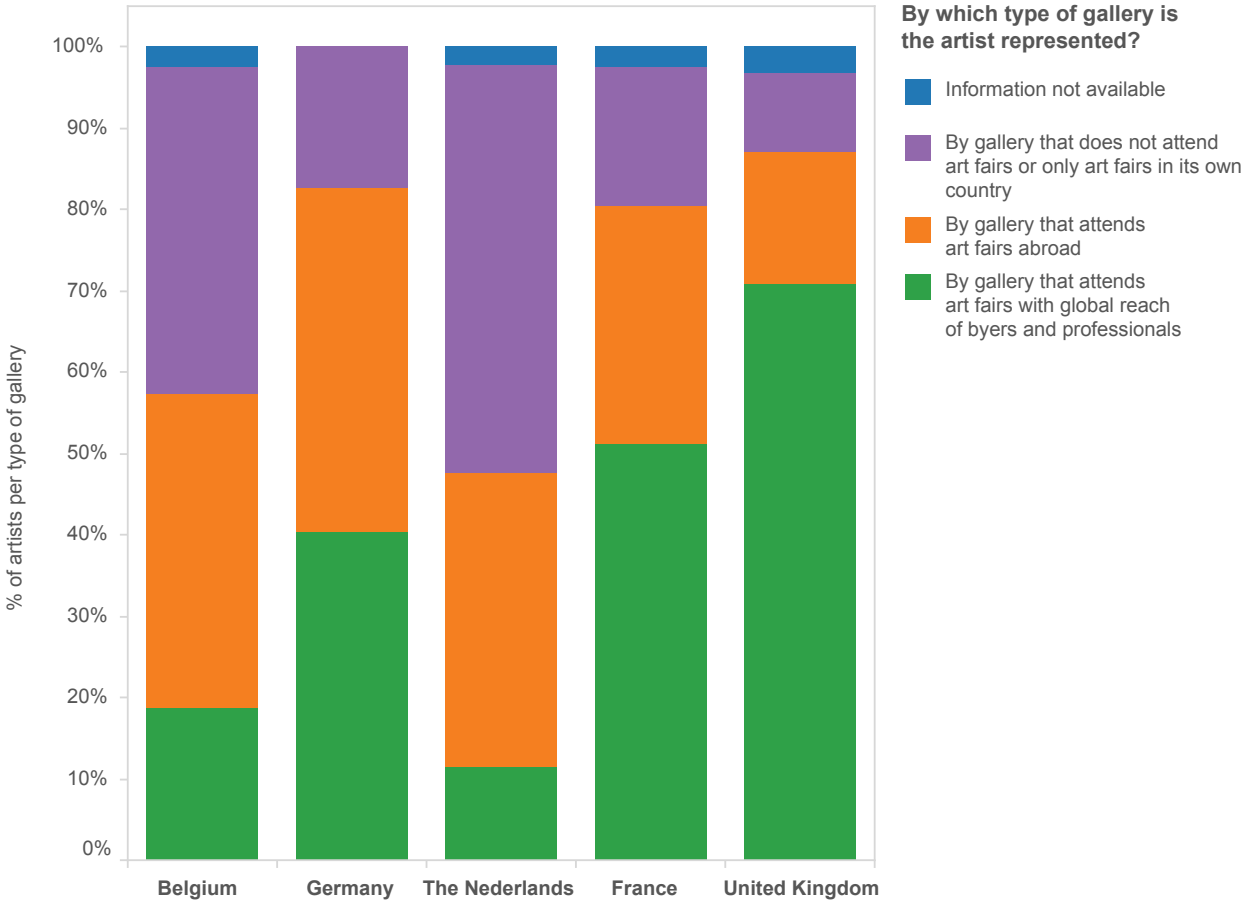
4.2 Number of surveyed Flemish artists per country of the gallery representing them in 2015



Graph 4.2 presents the countries in which the galleries of the Flemish artists are established. Since some artists are attached to several galleries in various countries, certain names were given several times in the data of this graph. The Belgian galleries represented in 2015 the most Flemish artists (284), followed by the galleries from respectively Germany (52), the Netherlands (44), France (41) and the United States (31). The graph represents in total 27 different countries on different continents (Europe, North and Latin America, Asia, Oceania and Africa).
The European countries are the most emphatically present.

Once we had determined which Flemish artists were attached to a gallery and where these galleries were located, a final question could be raised: what kind of art fairs did these galleries attend over the past five years? The answer to this question gives an indication of the scope of the promotion that these galleries can carry out for their Flemish artists.

4.3 Top 5 of the countries in which the most Flemish artists surveyed had a gallery in 2015, with indication of the internal relations of the type of gallery



Graph 4.3 focuses on the top five countries in which the most Flemish artists surveyed have a gallery. Each column represents a country. The columns show the relations within each country between galleries that attend no art fairs or only fairs within their own country (purple), galleries that attend fairs abroad (orange), and galleries that attend fairs with a global reach of buyers and professionals (green).

In the columns for Belgium and the Netherlands, the purple section is largest (resp. 40.14% and 50%), which indicates that in these countries more Flemish artists are proportionately represented by a gallery that does not attend art fairs or only attends local art fairs than represented by the other types.

The second largest section is that of the galleries that attend fairs abroad (Belgium: 38.73%, the Netherlands: 36.36%). Germany, France and the United States show a different picture. In Germany the galleries that attend art fairs abroad are the most represented. In France and the United States, galleries that attend art fairs with a global reach make up the largest section.

5. Contextualization of some striking survey results

5.1 The role of international market trends

Most openings of private galleries between 2005 and 2015 took place in the year 2008 (graph 1.2). Closures are only known from 2009 (graph 1.3). This data suggests a link with the global financial crisis (of which the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008 is generally considered the starting point). As a result, the year 2008 is the point at which an economically favourable period with many opportunities for beginning galleries slipped into a recession with a low point around 2011, the year with the most closures. Yet some caution is necessary if one assumes a direct influence of the international economic crisis on the activity of the Flemish private galleries. For private galleries are not just launched for purely financial reasons. Unfavourable economic circumstances do not prevent people from nevertheless taking independent steps in the gallery world – or otherwise after they have worked as a staff member in an existing gallery. This could in part explain the relatively high number of starters in 2011.

The years 2014 and 2013 are the years with respectively the second and third highest number of closures. Here too one must be cautious in reading this as a direct result of a recession in the art market. The galleries indicated that they noticed a recovery from 2013 and saw their turnover rise. The growing level of art fair attendance (graph 3.1) – which demands a considerable investment – can be an indicator of this trend. The year 2013 saw five new private galleries open their doors in Belgium. In addition, the closure of a private gallery does not necessarily mean that the founders have completely withdrawn from the art sector or the art market. When one observes the professional activities of these former gallerists, it appears that many are still active as art consultant, curator, art agent or manager of a project venue.

The trend whereby the role of art consultant, art agent or manager of a project venue is for many a more interesting path than a private gallery can also explain the relatively high number of closures of private galleries in 2013 and 2014. Project venues make it possible to develop artistic and curatorial ideas without the pressure of commercial considerations. Project venues are not profitable, however, unless they are combined with a more 'traditional' gallery model. Objections have been voiced in the Flemish gallery world regarding the rise of art agents and art consultants. It is claimed that these forms of mediation have little breeding ground in Belgium, where buyers themselves want to decide on purchases and where the need for several intermediaries is perhaps felt less strongly.

5.2 The (inter)national hubs in Flanders and Brussels

Brussels plays a striking role in various results of this survey. A bit more than half of the surveyed galleries is or was established in Brussels, including all (branches of) foreign galleries and five galleries that came from another Belgian city. The art fair with the highest attendance is Art Brussels (graph 3.2), which for Belgian galleries is an important moment to reach buyers and professionals from Belgium or the neighbouring countries.

Between 2013 and 2014, nine different fairs were organized in Belgium, of which seven took place in Brussels. Graph 2.2 shows that 80.95% of artists with a private gallery in Brussels are from outside Flanders or Brussels. Brussels private galleries more often have a larger pool of permanent artists (graph 2.3) and are better represented on foreign art fairs (graph 3.4).

An obvious explanation for the popularity of Brussels is the development that the city has undergone as a European capital that is easy to reach internationally – crucial for contact with buyers – and still has relatively low rents. The capital also draws other private exhibition venues besides private galleries, such as CAB, Fondation A Stichting, Boghossian Foundation, La Verrière, La Loge, Vanhaerents Art Collection, Maison Particulière and since 2015 Independent, the organization behind the eponymous art fair in New York, which organized an edition in Brussels in April 2016.

Antwerp is traditionally an important art city in Belgium, but in recent years it has been outstripped as an international art hub by Brussels. This does not alter the fact that Antwerp still occupies a prominent place on the Flemish art market – it is the second most popular location among the private galleries – not so much due to the inflow of international players, but due to the interesting concentration of, and the interaction among, galleries and other art initiatives. Telling for the position of (and competition between) both cities is that both Brussels (since 2008) and Antwerp (since 2015) have been organizing an art weekend annually.

5.3 The role of art fairs

Graph 3.1 shows a rise in the number of air fairs attended in 2014 compared to 2013. The majority of the galleries surveyed that were active in early 2015 attended art fairs between 2013 and 2014 (graphs 3.5 and 3.6). The surveyed galleries mainly attended fairs in Europe (graph 3.3). Brussels is the most visited city, something which is linked to the proximity and popularity of Art Brussels (graph 3.2). After Brussels come 'traditional' art hubs in Europe and North America such as Paris, New York and Basel. Relatively new markets such as Latin America and Asia see a limited level of attendance. For art fairs outside Europe involve higher (logistical) costs and there is a greater risk that the investments made will not be recouped because one is less familiar with the networks that exist around these fairs. It follows that the presence of galleries at art fairs outside Europe is also linked to the financial power and the networks they have at their disposal. This is confirmed in graph 3.6, in which a link can be seen between the level of art fair attendance and the geographical distribution of the attendance. Another factor that also influences the attendance of fairs outside Europe are the discounts offered on attendance fees or allowances for transport costs with which new fairs try to attract galleries. Such offers are often one-offs, however, so that any following attendance is more expensive and therefore a risky investment.

In graph 3.1 the art fairs with a global reach of buyers and professionals are given separately (The Armory Show, FIAC, Art Basel/Miami Beach/Hong Kong, Frieze London/New York/Masters). Not all galleries attend these fairs (graph 3.5), given that this demands the necessary

(financial) power and connections, not only to be able to participate, but also to be able to build up and maintain the reputation that comes with it. Graph 3.5 also shows a link between a high level of art fair attendance in general and attendance of art fairs with a global reach. The high level of attendance of this kind of art fair (graph 3.2) suggests moreover that the galleries that can attend them also focus on them. For the sales made during these fairs are an important part of their turnover. The 36.36% rise in attendance in 2014 compared to 2013 (as opposed to 21.48% in the total level of attendance, see graph 3.1) suggests that the importance of the art fairs with a global reach is mainly proportionate to the ability to reach a specific segment of buyers.

Furthermore, there is a diverse offer of other art fairs, which mostly have a lower level of attendance. That the private galleries that do not attend the art fairs with a global reach attend fewer fairs can only be a partial explanation, since these are still clearly represented in the upper half of graph 3.5. These galleries make a more diverse selection of art fairs than those that focus on the fairs with a global reach.

5.4 Flemish private galleries between the national, international and global market

The evolution whereby some art fairs have grown into fairs with a global reach that target in the first place a select group of buyers, artists, gallerists and other professionals goes hand in hand with a growing gap between players on the art market. However, this picture needs to be nuanced. To get a more accurate picture of the situation in the private galleries, it is better to evoke a continuum. At one extreme there are the galleries with a vast capacity. These are mainly galleries that attend art fairs with a global reach and that have many permanent artists – often overwhelmingly foreign artists. They move about in strong, internationally ramified networks and their artists are more often represented at exhibitions in other institutions such as exhibition spaces and museums nationally and internationally. To reach such a level and to be able to compete with others, these galleries must continuously invest in their capacity. This involves among others attracting new artists, retaining successful artists, extending exhibition spaces and hiring sufficient staff to be able to accompany this growth properly. At the other extreme there are the galleries with a small capacity that are especially active in networks within Belgium. These represent a lower number of mainly Belgian artists. They do not attend art fairs or only fairs in Belgium. The majority of the galleries surveyed move between these two extremes. This yields a diverse picture, in which one gallery sometimes combines characteristics of both. Jan Mot, for instance, can attend art fairs with a global reach, but keeps its pool of artists deliberately low. Instead of considerably expanding the exhibition space in Brussels, Jan Mot opened a branch in Mexico. By contrast, Galerie S&H De Buck deliberately limited its art fair attendance in recent years, but represents a lot of artists.

In Flanders and Brussels there is a relatively large number of private galleries that attend art fairs with a global reach (19 of the 64 surveyed active). A considerable part is not represented here, however, but does attend such fairs in other European countries besides Belgium or even

on other continents (graph 3.6). This is a clear sign that they too are building up international networks or already have them at their disposal. Conversely, Belgian fairs such as Art Brussels, the fair most attended by the surveyed galleries (graph 3.2), draw a foreign public of buyers and professionals. The international networks do not stop exclusively in Brussels or Antwerp moreover. In other cities and communes there are also actors that attend art fairs in Belgium and abroad (graph 3.4) and whose contacts extend beyond Belgium. Besides the attendance of art fairs, the number of represented artists gives an indication of how the gaze of many private galleries extends beyond the national borders (graph 2.2). In Brussels the overwhelming majority of permanently represented artists comes from outside Flanders or Brussels, but in Antwerp too and the other places of business they are also prominently present in the artist pools.

5.5 Flemish artists between the national, international and global market

The results of the survey of the national and international representation of Flemish artists (section 4) give an indication of the importance of the Belgian galleries that attend other fairs abroad than those with a global reach and those that only attend fairs in Belgium or do not attend any. Graph 4.3 shows that they represent the largest number of Flemish artists and thus play a crucial role in the promotion of Flemish artists on national and international art markets.

The survey of the national and international galleries of Flemish artists further shows that a bit less than half (309) of the surveyed artists do not have a gallery or no longer have one (graph 4.1). Although galleries in many cases form a crucial link between artist and buyer, this does not mean that these artists are completely cut off from the art market in Belgium and abroad. The extent to which artists themselves sell work or artist collectives take care of the production and promotion of the work of their members is an interesting line of approach for further research.

A total of 173 out of 633 surveyed artists only have a gallery in Belgium. Since a large number of galleries in Belgium attend art fairs abroad (graphs 3.6 and 4.3), they guarantee the international promotion of their work. Graph 3.7 shows that the promotion of Flemish artists by Flemish and Brussels galleries at art fairs takes places especially within Europe. The top ten art fairs where the highest number of Flemish artists is represented also include the art fairs with a global reach. This can be explained through the earlier observation that galleries attending such fairs also focus on them.

A bit less than a quarter of the surveyed artists (151) are attached to a gallery that is established abroad. Graph 4.2 shows how varied the geographic distribution of the galleries is. And yet it is mainly Europe and North America that here determine the picture, with respectively Germany, the Netherlands, France and the United States as countries where the largest number of Flemish artists have a gallery outside Belgium. As with the locations of the art fairs which Flemish private galleries attend, Europe and North America still appear to be the most important regions for actors from the Flemish art market. If we look in graph 4.3 at the galleries that represent the Flemish artists in Germany, France and the United States, it is striking that most artists are attached to galleries that attend art fairs with a global reach or other art fairs outside

their own country. In other words: if a Flemish artist has a gallery in these countries, there is also a good chance that they have access via these galleries to a strong, internationally ramified network in the arts sector and art market.

5.6 Conclusion and recommendations regarding Flemish private galleries

1. There is a diversity of quality galleries in Flanders and Brussels and this is an asset that must be maintained. In Flanders and Brussels there is a proportionately high number of galleries that have access to networks that extend across the global art market and besides that a large number of galleries that have an international field of action. Private galleries with a field of action in Belgium and the neighbouring countries are of crucial importance for the promotion and sale of works that are of high quality, but do not immediately find themselves in the international stream.

2. Brussels can play a pioneering role, not only for the art market, but also for the promotion of Flemish artists and the entire Belgian art scene. At present this is insufficiently exploited by the sector and the authorities (Flanders, Brussels Capital Region and the city of Brussels). In addition, the question arises as to the sustainability of Brussels as an international art hub, because this strength is based on foreign initiative.

3. Limited support from the authorities is important to accompany galleries in their international market development and to offer them more security when they take risks to present Flemish artists at foreign fairs. These risks can occur when one presents emerging talent or internationally unknown, quality works or when one is exhibiting in countries where the work of Flemish artists has not yet been fully introduced. Current support measures that galleries use to cover art fair attendance are the financial intermediaries of Flanders Investment & Trade and Brussels Export & Trade, and the subsidies of the Arts Decree for presentations of Flemish artists abroad. Such measures stimulate the development of international networks of artists.

4. Galleries could collaborate more in exploring new markets within and outside Europe if this is a difficult undertaking for a gallery alone. Some already do this in the form of structural collaboration with other galleries around the promotion and sale of the work of specific artists. In addition, they could work together around market exploration in the form of 'scouts' that they appoint or in the form of a national focus at an art fair where Flemish galleries want to build up more contacts.

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