

Undergraduate Sociology Dissertation: Proposal Sample

The elevation of art through commerce: An analysis of Charles Saatchi's approach to the machinery of art production using Pierre Bourdieu's theories of distinction.

Proposal

This dissertation will endeavour to illustrate how Charles Saatchi has understood the inner workings of the art world of production, distribution and criticism and how he has launched an elevated form of mainstream art harnessing sensationalism and the media together with savvy marketing to become a founder, promoter and gate-keeper of art movements within the contemporary British and American art scenes. The Saatchi phenomena will be viewed through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's theories on art, using predominately the ideas found in *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (1996). Here, Bourdieu observes that art is created to enforce a code of distinction between the classes; that is, certain classes are trained to access more difficult (or less popular) forms of art that is more expensive, which becomes less accessible to people from lower socio-economic classes because they have not had the academic education or the financial resources to access this type of aesthetic expression. As such, art is created by the upper echelons of society in an effort to distinguish themselves noticeably from other classes.

This dissertation will comprise five main sections. The first section, the literature review, will be divided into two parts. Part one will provide an extensive literature review on Pierre Bourdieu's ideas concerning art, with an exploration of scholarly articles that critique or support Bourdieu's ideas. There is much controversy surrounding the ideas of Bourdieu regarding art, especially among art critics and the guardians of scholarly debate regarding aesthetics. However, this is to be expected as Bourdieu attacks the fundamental belief that art is not pure, that it is created to fulfil a creative expression. As such, this part will endeavour to provide a balance of critiques in the hope of reaching an adequate medium for this dissertation. Part two of the literature review will concentrate on the scholarly debate regarding Saatchi's role in art. Interestingly, there have not been many sources

dealing solely with Charles Saatchi as an art collector, however, there is sufficient material from journals and chapters of books to understand how Saatchi is viewed as an art collector and existing gate-keeper of the art world.

Section two will concentrate on the methodology that will be used in this dissertation. Primary sources such as newspaper articles detailing the sensationalism and response to Saatchi's gallery exhibitions will be collated and analysed to reveal how this art collector has courted and engaged with the media to position himself in the art world. The articles will also be reviewed for popular and high brow responses to Saatchi's exhibitions. Saatchi has also published various numbers of books detailing and showcasing each exhibition. These will be catalogued and reviewed in an effort to offer an overview of the different collections and to correlate these with the responses and criticisms found in the newspaper articles. This view of primary sources will be backed by a crystallisation of Bourdieu's theory of distinction in order to provide a succinct hypothesis that can explain the Saatchi phenomenon in the art world.

Section three will then review the catalogue of collections and the overview of media response and endeavour to see how the trends correlate to Bourdieuan hypothesis.