



## Analysis of the Characteristics and Development Trends of the Artist's Role in the New Media Era: A Bibliometric Study Based on CiteSpace

Yicheng CHEN<sup>1</sup>, Le ZHAO<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*With the development and transformation of technology, the ways of art production, dissemination, reception, and consumption have also changed. The norms and values of the traditional “art world” have been dissolved. Facing numerous uncertainties, the artist’s role, as the main body of art production, has been redefined. The question of “what role should artists play and adapt to in the new media era?” has become an important topic in current theoretical discussions. This study aims to summarize how artists can construct their roles in response to the new media era, thereby examining the opportunities and challenges they face within the current art industry ecosystem, offering theoretical insights and practical references for the study of artist role construction. Utilizing the information visualization software CiteSpace, 103 international publications related to the artist’s role in the new media era were analyzed to reveal the evolutionary trajectory, research hotspots, and trends in this field. The findings indicate that: Research on the artist’s role in the new media era focuses on 13 major themes, including digital media, social media, human brands, and creative work; The research stages are divided into the Web 2.0 period, the digital transformation of industries period, and the creative economy development period; The artist’s role in the new media era is primarily reflected in three aspects: the artist as a key role, an entrepreneur, and a creative worker. In the new media era, artists have entered the “producer era,” where the fluidity and adaptability of their identities are crucial for their professional development.*

**Keywords:** The Role of Artist; Information Visualization; CiteSpace; Role Transformation

### 1. Introduction

The arrival of the new media era marks a profound change in the new information and communication technologies centered on the Internet, mobile communications, and social media, as well as in their communication practices and social contexts (Wei & Ding, 2013). The traditional “art world” is undergoing

<sup>1</sup> Yicheng CHEN, master’s degree Candidate, Department of Arts Management, Xinghai Conservatory of Music, Guangdong, China.

<sup>2</sup> Corresponding Author: Le ZHAO, Associate Professor, Department of Arts Management, Xinghai Conservatory of Music, Guangdong China.

a new round of deconstruction and remodeling: the norms and values of the past “art world” are constantly being dissolved, and the way of art production, dissemination, acceptance, and consumption has undergone structural changes. Artists, as the main body of art production, must constantly balance tradition and modernity, technical rationality and artistic sensibility, individual creative freedom, and social and cultural responsibility.

Both Becker’s “art world” and Bourdieu’s “art field” emphasize the close connection between analyzing the artist’s activities and the structure of social relations. Going back to history, the definition of the role of the artist and the process of social development are almost isomorphic: Before the 17th century, religion gave connotations to art, and the artist was regarded as an artisan, serving traditional religious and political beliefs, and the necessary criterion of art was “imitation”; by the late 17th century, the Enlightenment propelled the birth of “Art” (with a capital A), as art acquired a unified definition and artists shed the labels of “artisans” and “artisans”; the late nineteenth century was the era of movements and manifestos, the modernist period emphasized art as a revolution when artists became heroes, a group of thinkers who came with a social mission; after the world wars, the emergence of museums, theatres, concert halls, and a set of administrative institutions such as foundations and commissions to support artistic creation, the arts became progressively more institutionalized, and the artist became a professional artist. William Deresiewicz points out that the traditional role of the artist underwent a paradigm shift from the artisan to the bohemian wanderer and the professional (Deresiewicz, 2015). The definition of “artist” became institutionalized after the liberation of artistic creation, specifically, denoting professionals who demonstrate specialized mastery and achieve scholarly recognition within the disciplinary framework of “art” (Huang Jian, 2007).

Contemporary technological developments have transformed communication methods, reconfiguring the external forces that shape the “art world.” Capital, platforms, and technology influence the discursive space available to artists, leading to continuously expanding and diversified role definitions. On the technical dimension, new media technology has spurred a rebellion against the conventional social division of labor (Huang Mingfen, 2000). Joseph Beuys’s utopian concept of “everyone is an artist” has gradually become a reality, and the professional barriers faced by traditional artists have been challenged. In the cultural dimension, the established triple identities of artists - artisans, thinkers, and professionals - continue to dissolve under the impact of consumerism and capital intervention; artists’ “authority” and “sacredness” are undergoing an unprecedented process of disenchantment. It is in this context and in the face of many uncertainties that “the role positioning and adaptive reconstruction of artists in the era of new media” has become the core issue of contemporary art theory research, and at the same time, it establishes the basic logical starting point for the discussion of this paper.

As a new cognitive framework and interpretive dimension for analyzing social phenomena, the “new media era” has triggered and promoted the systematic investigation of the transformation of artists’ roles in domestic and international studies. Role construction is an important way for artists in the new media era to maintain their existence and development in a transformed society, and it is also a strategy for them to enhance their professional reputation and redefine their image (Huang Jian, 2007). In Chinese academia, scholars such as Zhou Xian (1994) and Li Yukun (2006) have discussed the identity crisis and the construction of new roles for artists amid changes in the art and cultural production system. In contrast, Weng Jianqing (2012) and Liu Hailan (2012) contend that artists should assume a distinct sense of responsibility and engage in tangible actions to shape contemporary art culture and the public sphere. Currently, research on the roles of artists in the new media era is predominantly comprised of case studies and empirical research.

This paper employs CiteSpace to analyze the research characteristics of 103 English-language articles on the subject, exploring the evolution, key nodes, research hotspots, and trends within the field. The aim is

to provide a systematic, structured, and quantitative analysis for re-positioning artists' roles in the new environment. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the core question: "What research hotspots and trends have emerged in academic investigations of the roles of artists in the new media era?" It addresses issues such as: What are the primary research hotspots in this area? How have these hotspots evolved? What research methods and disciplinary fields have been employed? How many categories can the research paradigms be divided into? Moreover, what future research trends can be anticipated? Based on these findings, the paper summarizes how artists can construct their roles in response to the new media era. Further, it considers the opportunities and challenges they face within the current art industry ecosystem, offering theoretical insights and practical references for the study of artist role construction.

## **2. Research Method**

### **2.1 Research Tool: CiteSpace**

CiteSpace is an information visualization tool developed by Prof. Chaomei Chen of Drexel University in the United States, which is specifically used for the analysis of academic literature. It is suitable for the analysis of multivariate, time-sharing, dynamic, and complex networks, and it can detect the hot topics and their evolution in a certain discipline or field, and it has been widely used for detecting and analyzing the trend of the research frontiers of the disciplines, as well as the correlation between the research frontiers and the knowledge base, and between different research fronts (Wang et al., 2016). The software received widespread attention and application in China since its introduction in 2007. In recent years, it has also begun to be used in research progress in the field of cultural and artistic disciplines, such as the integration of culture and tourism (Yang & Ai, 2019), art-based rural revitalization (Cai & Fu, 2024), cultural and artistic dissemination (Guan, 2024), cultural and artistic production (Li, Lian & Chen, 2024), and art therapy (Cui & Wang, 2023).

### **2.2 Literature Sources**

"New media" mainly refers to interactive and integrated media forms and platforms based on digital technology, network technology, and other modern information or communication technologies. At the present stage, new media mainly includes online media, mobile media, and the mobile Internet, which were formed by the fusion of the two, as well as other interactive digital media forms (Peng Lan, 2016). The keywords used in the literature search were set to "new media artists," "new media musicians," "social media artists," "social media artist identity," "social media creative works," "digital media artist," and so on, the search scope is set as "subject." The search documents are mainly from the Web of Science core collection, including SCI-expanded, SSCI, and AHCI databases, and mainly focus on core journal articles. The search deadline is June 18, 2024.

### **2.3 Scope and Results of Literature Screening**

Generally speaking, the definition of the artist's role is divided into a broad and a narrow one. The narrow definition of the artist's role is defined as "persona," which usually refers to the image of the artist, including the values, behaviors, and characteristics associated with the artist, and emphasizes the performative potential of the artist's aesthetic constructs (Hansen, 2019); Broadly speaking, the study of the artist's role is carried out in the complex "artistic field" constituted by many elements, such as the system and the market, and it is a kind of role construction under the influence of the social level (Zhao, Wu, & Luo, 2016). Based on this, the literature selection in this study includes analyses of artists' social identities, professional development, artistic creation, cultural expression, personal branding, and living conditions. A total of 803 articles were retrieved. After screening based on citation frequency, academic rigour, and relevance to the selection criteria, 103 articles were selected for in-depth analysis.

### 3. Research Process: Analysis of Keywords, Institutions, and Disciplines

#### 3.1 Visual Analysis of Knowledge Graphs

In this study, there are 246 key nodes and 459 links in 103 papers, with a density of 0.021. In the order of frequency of keywords, social media (21), labor (10), industry (7), identity (6), and the music industry (5) appear more frequently than 5. In order of node centrality, labor (0.74), music (0.49), industry (0.46), identity (0.33), social media (0.28), entrepreneurial skills (0.26), antecedents (0.23), culture (0.21), and creative economy (0.21) have a centrality greater than 0.2. It can be seen that the hotspots of research on the role of the artist in the new media era are mainly the labor force, music industry, identity, social media, entrepreneurial skills, and creative economy.

As a high degree of condensation of the core ideas and themes of the research results, the keyword clustering changes reflect the changes in the research hotspots in the field. The Q value (Modularity) of the keyword clustering module of this atlas is 0.8434, and the S value (Silhouette) is 0.9571 ( $Q > 0.3$ , the clustering structure is significant;  $S > 0.5$ , the clustering is reasonable;  $S > 0.7$ , highly efficient and persuasive), and the comprehensive indexes show that the clustering effect of this atlas is relatively significant. From both temporal and spatial dimensions, the keyword clustering analysis views in CiteSpace more clearly reflect the aggregation, shift, and dispersion of research foci (Ma & Li, 2022).

##### 3.1.1 Research Hotspots: Keyword Co-occurrence Network Map

The keyword co-occurrence network map (Figure 1) clusters closely related nodes together to form class clusters, reflecting the intrinsic connection of the research field. In Figure 1, the smaller the keyword clustering number, the larger the cluster size cluster, i.e., the greater the number of nodes contained in the cluster (Ping & Chen, 2020). From the figure, it can be seen that the research on the role of artists in the new media era focuses on digital media, social media, human brands, creative work, state, social networks, platformization, fit, archives, art market, videos, e-commerce, and immaterial labor in 13 themes.

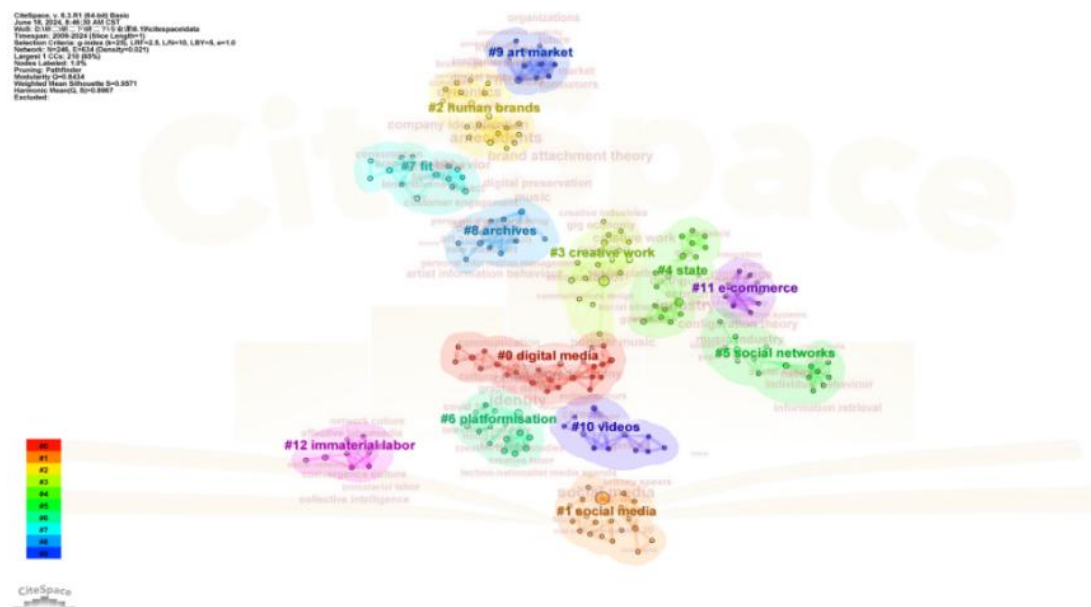


Figure 1. Keyword co-occurrence network map. Source: CiteSpace.

Table 1 presents the keywords and their associated specific derived hotspots. The largest keyword node, “digital media,” extends to nodes such as “culture,” “popular music,” and “creative economy,” emphasizing the close connection between artists’ development in the new media era and media technology. The “human brands” direction branches out to nodes like “antecedents,” “dynamics,” and “brand attachment theory,” highlighting research outcomes that examine artists’ new media career development from a marketing discipline perspective. The “state” direction leads to nodes including “digital platforms,” “work,” “benefits,” “governance,” and “algorithmic folk theories,” indicating that studies on artists’ roles in the new media era not only focus on their artistic creation but also address their positioning within social, technological, and economic contexts, as well as their interactions with audiences, markets, and other societal forces.

Table 1. Topic keywords and Derived Hotspots

Topic keywords	Derived Hotspots
#0 digital media	Culture, digital media, popular music, creative economy, communication, graphic design, labor markets, cultural production
#1 social media	web 2.0, contemporary pop music, new product launch, britney spears, viral marketing, user-generated content, microblogging (weibo), cultural event marketing
#2 human brands	Antecedents, dynamics, brand attachment theory, company identification, music sales, economic relationships, embeddedness, agency
#3 creative work	Labor, gig economy, creative industries, economy, identity work, discourse, mad genius, creative labor
#4 state	Industry, era, digital platforms, work, art, social structure, governance, emergence, ethnography
#5 social networks	Music industry, information retrieval, habits, individual behavior, social networks, needs, business models, communication processes
#6 platformisation	Identity, covid 19, cultural entrepreneurship, techno-nationalist media agenda, hong kong, engagement, tv workers, television industry
#7 fit	Behavior, impact, benefits, brand longevity, innovativeness, extensions, customer engagement, consumption
#8 archives	Music, digital preservation, digital art, artist archives, artist information behavior, art conservation, new media art, information seeking behavior
#9 art market	Models, consumers, innovation, institutional theory, institutions, art market, organizations, digital technology
#10 videos	Careers, gender, entrepreneurs, content analysis, cultural diffusion, field, divide, artists
#11 e-commerce	Economics, issue, markets, configurations, illegal downloading, integration, music artist, entry
#12 immaterial labor	collective intelligence, convergence culture, media, affective labor, internet, network culture, social networking

The analysis based on the visualization mapping shows that the keyword clustering process reveals the compounding effects of technological innovations, market regulation mechanisms, and social interaction patterns on the paradigms of artists’ creative practices and their careers.

### 3.1.2 Evolutionary Process: Keyword Timeline View and Burst Detection Map

In the Keyword Timeline View (Figure 2) and Burst Detection Map (Figure 3) within CiteSpace, studies on artists can be categorized into different stages based on key temporal nodes of technological and cultural transformations in the new media era, including the Web 2.0 period, industrial digital transformation period,

and creative economy development period.

This progression illustrates that research on artists, as integral members of producers, revolves around broader societal developments such as updates in cultural policies, iterations in media technologies, and economic fluctuations.

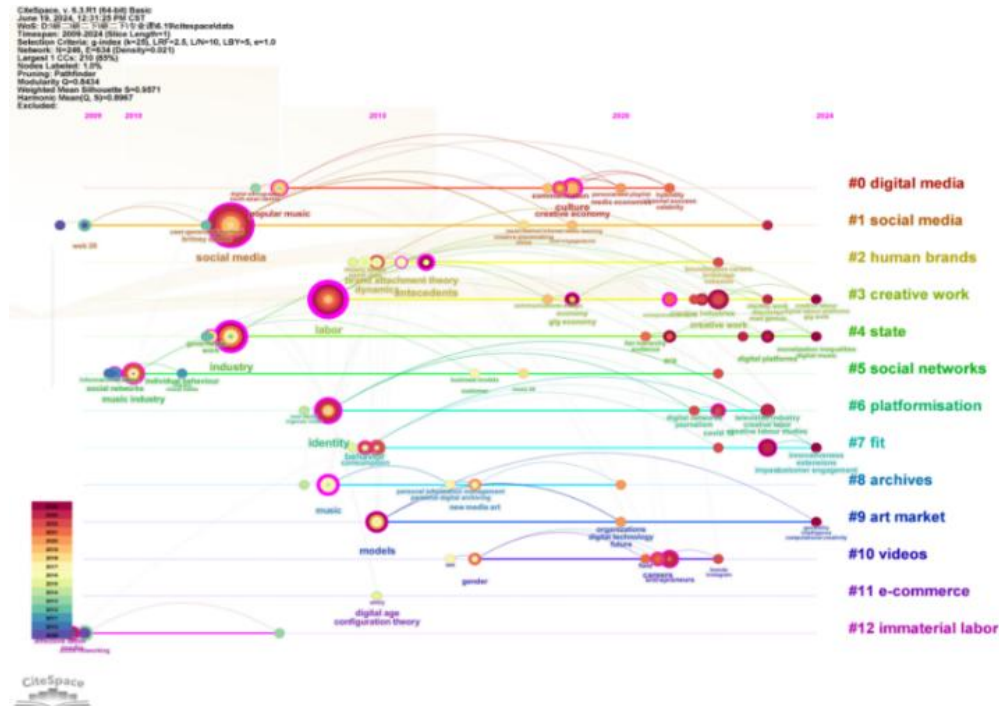


Figure 2. Keyword Timeline View. Source: CiteSpace.

Figure 3 shows that the Web 2.0 period (2009-2013) focuses on artists' instrumental use of social media platforms, with the keywords "social networking" and "web 2.0" appearing more frequently. The period of digital transformation of the industry (2014-2017) focuses on artists exploring new business models and distribution channels, with the keywords "music sales" and "dynamics" appearing more frequently; The period of creative economy development (2019-2024) focuses on the social role of artists as creative laborers, with the keywords "creative economy," "entrepreneurs," "creative work" and "labor" appear more frequently. Among them, "social media" appears several times in different periods, indicating that social media as a technological mediator is an important foothold for the study of the role of artists in the new media era.

### Top 21 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

Keywords	Year	Strength	Begin	End	2009 - 2024
social networking	2009	1.69	2009	2013	
web 2.0	2009	1.15	2009	2012	
social networks	2010	1.32	2010	2011	
music	2014	1.52	2014	2017	
music sales	2015	1.17	2015	2016	
panel data	2015	1.17	2015	2016	
dynamics	2015	1.05	2015	2016	
models	2015	0.94	2015	2016	
social media	2012	2.44	2018	2019	
creative economy	2019	1.31	2019	2021	
digital media	2019	1.04	2019	2020	
framework	2019	1.04	2019	2020	
culture	2019	0.99	2019	2022	
cultural production	2019	0.87	2019	2021	
communication	2019	0.87	2019	2021	
entrepreneurs	2021	1.09	2021	2024	
careers	2021	1.01	2021	2022	
labor	2014	0.9	2021	2022	
creative work	2022	1.52	2022	2024	
covid 19	2022	0.9	2022	2024	
creative industries	2022	0.9	2022	2024	

Figure 3. Keyword Timeline View. Source: CiteSpace.

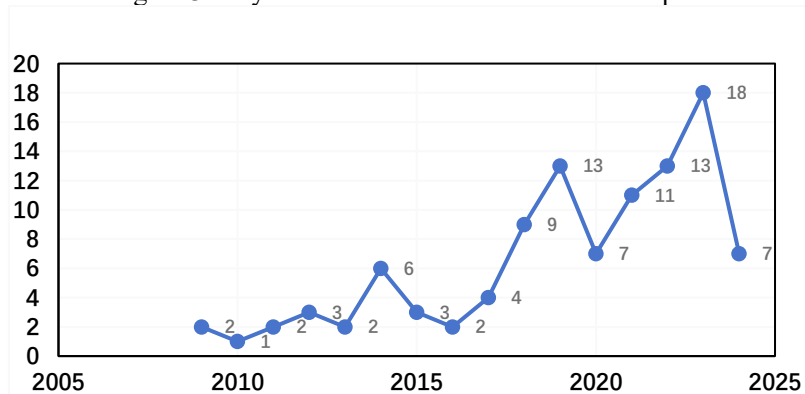


Figure 4. Time-Based Publication Volume Distribution Map. Source: Made by author.

In terms of the change in the number of articles published on the study of the role of the artist in the new media era (Figure 4), the number of publications rises with the emergence of key time nodes in the new media era, and a spiraling upward trend characterizes the overall situation. Among them, 2014, 2019, and 2023 are the peaks of the posting volume of the studies at each stage, reflecting the structural impact of the iterative updating cycle of new media technology on artist studies. Overall, the research trajectory of artists' roles in the new media era has formed a symbiotic evolutionary relationship with media technology and economic formations that are dynamically inter-constructed.

### 3.2 Characterization of Institutional Cooperation

The statistics of the issuing institutions show that the research institutions on this topic are mainly concentrated in universities (see Figure 5). Regarding institutional cooperation co-occurrence, there are 128 nodes and 102 inter-node links, which shows that the cooperation network among research institutions is relatively close; the network density is 0.0036, indicating that there is still more underutilized space for cooperation opportunities in the network. Pennsylvania Commonwealth System of Higher Education, University of Oslo, and Utrecht University have a literature volume of 3 articles, which indicates that the research in these institutions is more prominent in this area of research. The Pennsylvania Commonwealth System of Higher Education has a centrality of 0.01, which indicates that institutions within the system work closely together. In Canada, Hungary, and Finland, there are academic institution cooperation networks within the country; in terms of international cooperation, the City University of Hong Kong cooperates with the University System of Georgia in the United States, and Deakin University in Australia cooperates with McGill University in Canada. In terms of the overall cooperation network, the academic institution cooperation network is characterized by a strong territoriality, and the degree of international cooperation is low and in the initial stage.



Figure 5. Map of the network of research institutes. Source: CiteSpace.

### 3.3 Analysis of the Discipline and Research Methodology of the Paper

The study of the artist's role in the new media era is characterized by interdisciplinary analysis in combination with related fields such as sociology, communication, marketing, political economy, and psychology. Generally speaking, articles combining sociology involve theories such as the art world (Sophie Bishop, 2023) and relational labor (A Alacovska, E Bucher et al., 2024), exploring the impact of social media, a context of social production, on the construction of artists' identities; articles combining communication studies involve theories such as affordance (Jeremy Tintiango et al. 2023) and other theories to analyze the dichotomous interaction between artists and new media platforms; articles linking to psychology involve theories such as work identity (Widhawan Aryo Pradhita, 2022), which elaborates on the crisis and reconstruction of work identity in an artist's working life; and articles cutting across business perspectives, such as marketing and economics, usually combine qualitative and quantitative mixed methods of empirical analysis (Alexis Perron-Brault et al., 2024) to examine specific issues in the artist market, such as the impact of social media user engagement on the longevity of an artist's brand and the sale of new works. The research



methodology is mostly based on qualitative methods such as interviews, cyber-ethnography, and autoethnography.

The study of the artist's role in the new media era starts from the disciplinary base of musicology and art theory, gradually crosses the disciplinary boundaries, and expands to other fields, with the trend of research disciplines and methods moving from a single one toward a diversified one.

#### **4. Research Findings: A Hotspot Analysis of Research on The Role of The Artist In the New Media Era**

Through the systematic reading and combing of the existing literature, combined with the keyword co-occurrence network mapping process of CiteSpace, it is shown that the research on the role of artists in the new media era mainly focuses on the three dimensions of the artist as a key role, the entrepreneur and the creative worker. The keyword clustering results show that the clusters reflecting the artist's role as a key player include "art market," "state," etc., which focus on the artist's central position in the art market and institutional governance; Clusters reflecting the dimension of cultural entrepreneurship, such as "social media," "platformization" and "e-commerce," reveal artists' cultural entrepreneurship and market activities in the context of digital economy and platformization; while clusters of "digital media," "creative work" and "immaterial labor" highlight the multiple identities and practical processes of artists as creative workers in media technology and creative labor.

##### **4.1 The Artist as A Key Role: Using New Media Technologies to Build New "Art Worlds"**

Becker (2008) defines the art world as a pattern of collective activity produced around specific artistic expressions, as opposed to the art world defined by Danto (1964). Becker's theory emphasizes the influence of social and institutional factors on art. Artists act as key actors in legitimizing the new art world through community interaction, use of technology, the presentation of work, and discussion. Based on this conceptual premise, the researcher considers the artist community as a key role in the art world. New media technologies, as innovative mediums, have given rise to novel art forms. Artists, through their creative practices, incorporate these forms into the framework of the art world, attributing to them artistic value that transcends mere technological functionality. For example, Megan Halpern and Lee (2016) take iphoneography, an Apple cell phone photography art community, as an example to show how artists use new media technology to promote the expansion of art boundaries and the social dynamics of the art world and argue that remediation and aura constitute the aesthetic characteristics of iphoneography. Through interviews with Finnish artists who utilize AI-assisted creativity, Roosa Wingström et al. (2024) reveal the diverse roles of AI in artistic creation, including creative assistants and experimentation platforms, presenting new perspectives on the traditional understanding of creativity. However, the analysis of new art forms remains contentious, particularly regarding their inclusion within the discourse of the art world. Scholars such as Eugene Ch'ng (2019) have examined the acceptance of machine-generated artworks by the art community and the positioning of these works within both art history and contemporary discourse.

##### **4.2 Artists As Entrepreneurs: The Role and Effects of Social Media Affordances**

This type of article defines the role of artists on social media as cultural entrepreneurs and situates them within the industrial logic of marketization and commercial operation. Michael Scott (2012) argues that cultural entrepreneurs, i.e., independent emerging artists who engage in entrepreneurship primarily for exposure and networking, and that cultural entrepreneurship is the process of attempting to transform a lack of economic resources into economic success through cultural capital and artistic influence. The technical affordance of social media provides artists with new entrepreneurial platforms and resource integration

opportunities.

Social media's social affordance, cultural affordance, and technical affordance provide a mediating platform for artists to accumulate cultural and social capital. In terms of social affordance, Anatoliy Gruz and Jaigris Hodson (2021) applied Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and introduced social network analysis to study how musicians use the networked nature of social media to construct performance capital.; Jeremy Wade Morris (2014) argued that social media empowers artists to co-create with their fans, emphasizing the new cultural, entrepreneurial model – “Do it ourselves”; Evans J M, Baym N K. (2022) argue that artists in social media cultivate relationships with fans and cultural producers through three key social strategies: corralling, capping and cosigning. In terms of cultural affordance, Sophie Bishop (2023) argues that the norms and practices established by social media influencer culture have gradually permeated the art world and the broader creative sector. Through their social media engagements, artists adopt three influencer-derived cultural practices —self-branding, optimization, and authenticity. Regarding technical affordance, Robert Prey and Marc Esteve Del Valle (2024) examine how music artists perceive and experience the “related artists” networks constructed by Spotify's algorithms. Their study highlights that these algorithms not only shape listeners' musical preferences but also influence artists' self-identities and career trajectories.

Social media offers the possibility of transforming artist capital. However, the effects of this transformation require further empirical examination, and the digital transformation of the music industry has deepened such research. Haynes and Marshall (2018) argue that while social media has been instrumental in helping musicians engage with their existing fan base, there are limitations in translating this engagement into financial revenue, attracting new fans, and addressing the challenges of oversaturation in the online music market; Allan Watson (2023) explores the impact of social media on the income of music artists, finding a strong positive correlation between an increased number of followers on social media and artists' royalty income from music streaming services, and a correlation between the number of artists' followers on streaming platforms and their royalty income from live music. Their live performances also influence artists' transformative effects on social media. Anne Danielsen and Yngvar Kjus (2019) observe that local artists' performances at music festivals enhance their visibility in recorded music, while international mid-level artists face challenges in connecting with local audiences through such festivals.

Social media is a platform where multiple forces of capital and market compete, and artist research is influenced by a combination of these forces. In this context, the role of artists as cultural entrepreneurs in the social media process of acquiring economic capital by accumulating cultural and social capital also attracted the attention of marketing scholars. Alexis Perron-Brault and Renaud Legoux (2024) based the theory of social exchange on the example of artists releasing new musical works on social media to explore the impact of social media engagement on the sales of new products, and the study shows that while a highly engaged customer base reduces the risk of new product releases, it also creates high expectations of new product adaptation. Anna M. Turri et al. (2013) examined the development of emotion-based brand relationships on social media within the context of artists' brand construction. They argue that consumers' strong emotional commitment can enhance purchase loyalty, reduce digital piracy, and aid in reaching artistic visions and promoting artists. Mark A.A.M. Leenders et al. (2015) applied configuration theory to analyze how young musical artists utilize both new and traditional media, as well as sales platforms, exploring the feasibility of different market access configurations.

### **4.3 Artists As Creative Workers: The Precariousness of The Gig Economy**

These articles examine the labor characteristics of artists engaged in artistic production in the new media era, focusing on the uncertainties and instabilities they face as creative industry workers. Artistic activities

are considered forms of “immaterial labor,” where artists establish emotional connections with audiences through their works, aligning with the creative industry’s emphasis on “emotion-focused creation and manipulation” (Hardt & Michael, 1999). On the one hand, artists’ emotional labor in their artistic expressions aligns with the traits of creative workers; on the other hand, the flexibility and autonomy inherent in the creative industry provide opportunities and environments conducive to artists’ development. Therefore, scholars often situate artists in the context of creative industry research in the new media era.

Past research on workers in the creative industries has emphasized several relatively fixed characteristics of workers: a preponderance of temporary, intermittent, and precarious work (Banks, 2007); long hours and irritable work patterns (Banks & Milestone, 2022); a breakdown or disappearance of the boundary between work and play (Batt et al., 1999); low wages (Caves, 2000); high levels of mobility (Christopherson, 2002); a passion for work and for being a creative worker (e.g., web designers, artists, fashion designers) (Gill, 2002); a mindset that combines bohemian and entrepreneurial mindset (Kennedy, 2002); informal work environments and unique forms of socialization (McRobbie, 2002); and deep experiences of insecurity and anxiety about finding work, making enough money, and “keeping up” in a rapidly changing field (Milestone et al., 2005). The aforementioned characteristics align with the concept of the gig economy. Martin Cloonan and John Williamson (2023) explore the identities of musicians as workers and their relationship with the gig economy, suggesting that technological changes, job instability, and emotional labor link musicians’ work to gig economy dynamics.

Technological advancements have facilitated the emergence of the modern gig economy. Within this context, artists’ labor on digital platforms exhibits characteristics of “relational work” and “affective labor.” Alacovska and Bucher (2024) argue that artists’ work on these platforms is not solely governed by depersonalized, anonymized, and algorithm-driven market forces; instead, it is embedded within relational infrastructures. The maintenance, stability, and durability of these infrastructures depend on artists’ emotional efforts in aligning economic transactions and their mediums of exchange with meaningful client relationships. Nancy K. Baym (2018) explores how artists navigate new challenges in fan relationships in the social media era. She notes that while social media offers opportunities for closer connections with fans, it also tests artists’ boundaries. Artists must balance sharing personal aspects to meet fan expectations with protecting their privacy, necessitating careful “relational labor” on social media platforms.

In summary, current research on artists’ roles in the new media era primarily focuses on three categories: artists as key figures in constructing the new “art world,” cultural entrepreneurs on social media, and creative workers engaged in platform-based digital labor. These roles are not mutually exclusive; they intertwine, with artists fluidly transitioning among them to adapt to changing times and navigate uncertainties. This interplay is encapsulated in the concept of the “artist-entrepreneur.” Michał Szostak and Łukasz Sułkowski (2013) highlight that artists possessing entrepreneurial spirit are better equipped to confront change and crisis, a trait that has become increasingly significant in the professional development of artists in the new media age.

## 5. Discussion: The Vulnerability and Adaptability of Artists as “Producer”

Based on the previous research on the role of the artist in the new media era, it is revealed that the artist has evolved from the traditional roles of artisan, thinker, and professional to new roles that are more flexible and heterogeneous. This transformation from a single subjectivity to a composite role not only breaks through the traditional definition of “creator” but also indicates that the mechanism of art production has entered into the era of “producer” that Sharon Loudon (2017) has materialized. As the founder of this paradigm, she argues that artists are not only creators but also play a key role in cultural production and

dissemination, contributing to the creative economy and the well-being of others. The “producer” paradigm is coupled with the three roles of the artist in the new media context on multiple levels: creativity, market orientation, and multiple identities integrate the artist’s composite role practices of constructing art worlds, cultural entrepreneurship, and digital labor subjects. This multidimensional integration mechanism gains a new interpretation under the critical perspective of William Deresiewicz’s (2020) logic of capital - the “free agent”: “The artist becomes free particles in the marketplace, finding what work we can for what money we can; emphasizing that the value of art does not reside solely within the art itself but in the fulfillment of other purposes, such as the fact that art can exist as a representation of the culture of a community, an identity group, a catalyst for economic development, a promoter of social justice, and other pluralistic values.”

Whether the paradigm shifts toward the “producer” or “free agent” essentially constitutes a transformation of the art ecosystem in the new media era: Amid the wave of the digital economy, artistic subjects reconstruct the operational rules of the art world through role innovation, thereby highlighting their creative adaptability; yet this simultaneously exposes their structural predicament—in the process of confronting market risks, platform algorithmic governance, and the disciplining forces of technological power, they continually face a dual crisis marked by the erosion of subjectivity and the decline of cultural criticality.

The vulnerability of the artist’s role emerges with the period of social transformation, and the crisis of his or her role identity stems from the opposition between the artist’s self-expectations and the social expectations of the external cultural context (Zhou Xian, 1994). It is worth noting that this vulnerability was noticed by art sociologists as early as the twentieth century, when Benjamin (1936) and Becker (1974) placed art in the context of social production, emphasizing that artistic creation is not only the individual creation of the artist but is also affected by technological, social and other factors. They believe that the creation of an artist is the result of the joint action of the “inner” standard of art as an artist and the “outer” social requirements and that the value of art is not only limited to the art itself but also becomes a “field of meaning” that expresses a broad social purpose. In the new media era, artists are facing a new social and cultural environment, and elements such as technology, capital, and the industrial environment are also involved in a new round of social contestation processes. Thus, the identity of artists has changed dramatically, and it is becoming more and more difficult for them to adhere to their artistic ideals and express their independent ideas. In addition, the unstable economic background of the overall labor market and the existence of legal blind spots for intellectual copyrights have also exacerbated the plight of artists.

Through constructing new roles, contemporary artists have gradually broken the role identity crisis and realized active adaptation to social transformation. Among them, the flexibility and adaptability of the “producer” role is constantly emphasized. A producer can be an “artist,” a “worker,” an “entrepreneur,” none of the three, or all of the three (Deresiewicz, 2020). On the one hand, the empowerment of new technologies provides a path for artists in the role of “bohemian” to explore the intrinsic motivation of “art for art’s sake,” such as the artist Cai Guoqiang, who has developed new possibilities for contemporary art through the use of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, AR, VR, blockchain and NFT; On the other hand, artists emerging in the new media era are no longer those nurtured according to traditional role paradigms; rather, they are individuals endowed with greater adaptability who actively seek opportunities to confront challenges. Moreover, the coexistence and transformation of roles imply that artists must balance their “intrinsic” artistic standards and “extrinsic” societal pursuits, thereby expressing their subjectivity through adaptive practices. This process of role construction reflects the dynamic adjustments and choices artists make regarding their identities and practices.

Based on the paradigm of the role of “producer” in artist research in the new media era, the author believes that future research perspectives will be extended to the following aspects:

First, the discussion of the artist's role should be related to the development of the broader socio-economic labor system, and there will be more discussions on the role of "workers" and "entrepreneurs." The traditional role of the "bohemian" reinforces the stereotype of the artist, who is seen as an "outsider," living and working in a way that is very different from the rest of society's workers (Lingo, 2013). However, a growing body of research has uncovered practices that explore the boundaries between artistic pursuits and market demands as artists develop their careers, focusing on the fusion of the traditional role of the artist with that of the "worker" and "entrepreneur" (Schediwy, 2018).

Secondly, the study of the artist's role value in the new media era not only emphasizes the artist's social responsibility but also highlights the plurality of his role value. The open and inclusive setting of new media not only enables artists to construct and disseminate the identity meanings of social, aesthetic culture, and moral ideals but also maximizes the value possibilities of artists' roles, and artists' values are negotiated among the forces of technology, the state, the platform, and the audience. The recognition of the value of multiple roles means that the current situation of the artist's existence needs to be seen and confronted, and the artist's creativity and value need to be understood and protected.

Thirdly, the group boundaries of artist research in the new media era have been reshaped. The scope of research objects not only includes artists in the traditional context but also radiates to a wider range - folk artists, AI artists, DIY musicians, etc., who were formerly in the periphery and are now re-emphasized by the social and technological environment. Social media platforms have facilitated the democratization of creating and distributing art (Tintiangko, 2023). While artists follow the traditional norms of the art world, they also create new rules and define new artistic functions and values. Future research needs to focus on how these artists interact with the existing art world and influence its boundaries and the definition of art.

Fourthly, for future research, it is necessary to focus on how artists can strike a balance between technological discipline and social responsibility and redefine the social value of art. On the one hand, social transformation has given artists more social responsibilities and public requirements (Weng, 2012). According to Weng Jianqing (2012), artists should transcend personal fame and material interests and actively participate in the construction of social culture. On the other hand, while embracing new technologies, artists face the risk of being domesticated by them in reverse. The technology uses information circulation and data analysis as a means to integrate individual behavior into an invisible but omnipresent control network through algorithms and platform rules, affecting artists' creative independence and social intervention. Therefore, the core of constructing the subjectivity of the artist's role in the new media era lies in how to cope with the contradictory tension between technological discipline, independent expression, and social value.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper firstly analyzes 103 international literature on artist research in the new media era through CiteSpace software and concludes that the research on the role of the artist in the new media era focuses on 13 major themes, namely digital media, social media, human brands, creative work, state, social networks, platformization, fit, archives, art market, videos, e-commerce, and immaterial labor, and divided the research phases into Web 2.0 period (2009-2013), industrial digital transformation period (2014-2017) and creative economy development period (2019-2024). Research on the roles of artists in the new media era can be categorized into three primary pathways: artists play a key role in creating new "art worlds," artists engage in "artistic entrepreneurship" on social media, and artists face instability as creative workers in the gig economy.

Technological transformations in the new media era have altered methods of artistic production,

profoundly impacting the entire process of artistic creation. Traditional artist roles are challenged, with their discursive space compressed by various forces, leading to a characteristic vulnerability. However, artists' resilience and adaptability emerge during this transitional phase as they adopt producers' roles, navigate multiple identities, overcome financial crises, and adapt to unstable work environments to achieve sustainable personal artistic development. Future research on artists' roles in the new media era will focus on the fourth paradigm of producers, examining new role characteristics, role values, and art worlds. Through analyzing artists, discussions on social mechanisms will be initiated. Methodologically, combining interdisciplinary analytical perspectives with both qualitative and quantitative approaches will expand the possibilities for researching their complex role constructions.

## Reference

- Baym, N. K. (2018). *Playing to the crowd: Musicians, audiences, and the intimate work of connection* (pp. 1–20). New York, NY: New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19376529.2019.1623339>
- Bishop, S. (2023). Influencer creep: How artists strategically navigate the platformisation of art worlds. *New Media & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231206090>
- Cloonan, M., & Williamson, J. (2023). Musicians as workers and the gig economy. *Popular Music and Society*, 46(4), 354–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2023.2231266>
- Deresiewicz, W. (2020). *The death of the artist: How creators are struggling to survive in the age of billionaires and big tech*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Huang, J. (2007). *The construction of the "artist" role in the field of fine arts* [Doctoral dissertation, Shanghai University].
- Morris, J. W. (2014). Artists as entrepreneurs, fans as workers. *Popular Music and Society*, 37(3), 273–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2013.778534>
- Scott, M. (2012). Cultural entrepreneurs, cultural entrepreneurship: Music producers mobilising and converting Bourdieu's alternative capitals. *Poetics*, 40(3), 237–255. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2012.03.002>
- Tintiangko, J., Fung, A. Y. H., & Leo-Liu, J. (2023). Compelled TikTok creators? The ambivalent affordances of the short video app for Filipino musicians. *Media, Culture & Society*, 45(8), 1600–1615. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437231174356>
- Watson, A., Watson, J. B., & Tompkins, L. (2023). Does social media pay for music artists? Quantitative evidence on the co-evolution of social media, streaming and live music. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 16(1), 32–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1753-0350.2022.2087720>
- Weng, J. Q. (2012). Identity and responsibility: The cultural role and social consciousness of contemporary artists. *Observation of Fine Arts*, 2012(5), 8–9.
- Zhou, X. (1994). The current cultural dilemma and the crisis of role identity among artists. *Journal of Literary and Art Theory Research*, 1994(6), 17–26.