

The Artist's Own

There has always been a very fine line between art and design. It's often difficult to differentiate between the two, especially when artists become designers. The rise has been unprecedented, and now new collaborations help the artist to become household names and their artwork to become a brand. With the rise of social media, this approach to business, when executed correctly, can be hugely advantageous from a branding and marketing standpoint. The fashion industry is one segment of the market where artistic and luxury brand collaborations have become a trend as well as successful marketing campaigns.



- 01** JEFF KOONS goes mass market creating a limited edition leather handbag for H&M featuring his famous sculpture Balloon Dog (Yellow).
- 02** Jeff Koons covers the exterior of H&M's flagship store on 5th Avenue New York with his iconic Balloon Dog series
- 03** Damien Hirst's collaboration with skateboard company Supreme

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Of course the instance of high fashion and high art merging seamlessly is not new. The Elsa Schiaparelli collaboration with Salvador Dali to create the couture “lobster dress” is probably one of the earliest examples. Louis Vuitton continued the tradition through partnerships with some of the most contemporary artists in the 21st century like Richard Price, Takashi Murakami, and Yayoi Kusama. A product’s value will increase when associated with high art, especially when the artist is active in the collaboration process.

But what happens when the artist goes more “mass market”? Will it help or hurt their image? Jeff Koons is one of the most expensive living artists. His *Balloon Dog (Orange)* (1994-2000) sold for USD 58.4 million at Christie’s in 2013. Koon’s

balloon dogs and giant play doh inspired sculptures are the “holy grail” in the art world. But what happens when the artist moves downtown?

When Koons announced he will be collaborating with H&M the art world started asking “why?” Koons had an easy answer: “I wanted my art to be accessible to more people”. Koons covered the exterior of H&M’s flagship store on 5th Avenue, New York City with his iconic yellow balloon dogs”. Printed on limited edition black leather bags, it retails for USD 49.50. Koons has always dedicated much of his three-decade career to promoting the visual arts and he is the master of self-promotion. But it is this boundless energy that has endured his “kitsch inspired artworks” to appeal not just to art-world insiders but the public at large.



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Deborah Iskandar is principal of ISA Advisory, which advises clients on buying and selling art, and building collections. An expert on Indonesian and international art, she has more than 20 years of experience in Southeast Asia, heading both Christies and Sotheby’s respectively in Indonesia during her career before establishing ISA Art Advisory in 2013. She is also the founder of Indonesian Luxury, the definitive online resource for Indonesian’s looking to acquire, build and style their luxury homes.

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- 04 Retna for Justin Beiber's 2015 album cover Purpose
- 05 Retna's Steady the Wrist (2015) at Promemoria Showroom in Jakarta. Image courtesy of ISA Art Advisory
- 06 Retna covers a Ferrari F430 in his signature style for Art Basel Miami
- 07 Painting by Eko Nugroho, image courtesy of ISA Art Advisory
- 08 Eko Nugroho for Louis Vuitton



While one may think that this new trend of mass produced art would take away the exclusivity, in fact in the 21st century, the opposite is true. These product collaborations are elevating artists work to a brand name, and in effect is making their artwork more desirable.



Artistic collaborations can apply to a wide spectrum of products. Supreme Decks, the New York based skateboard company collaborated with Damien Hirst, to produce his own custom skateboards. Launched in 2009, each custom-printed deck features a print of an iconic Damien Hirst design. The

skateboards are from Hirst's paintings oeuvre, the iconic spot or spin paintings. Sold with a signature stamp as well as an original signed drawing (added by the artist in 2011) these "artworks" boards now trade on eBay for USD 9,990, proving that artistic products could also be a good investment.

More recently, Retna, the LA-based graffiti artist has shown his range of alliances. Known for creating his signature calligraphic style, his artwork was featured on the cover of Justin Biebers' latest hit album *Purpose*. He also painted a Ferrari F430 at Art Basel Miami, which was auctioned for



charity. It is these types of partnerships that have launched Retna to become a highly sought after and collectible artist. Promemoria, the bespoke luxury showroom at the Pacific Place penthouse in Jakarta chose Retna's paintings to show the importance of interior design and fine art merging into perfect harmony.

Closer to home, Indonesian artists are also moving into the sphere of art and design. Eko Nugroho, who was

listed as "One of the 50 Artists Under 50 to Collect" by Art and Auction has also ventured into this area. Eko was the first Indonesian artist to design a scarf for Louis Vuitton, which catapulted his name into the public sphere. This year he joined with Major Minor to launch a women's wear collection to produce intricate clothing designs. One design, a kebaya-inspired dress is adorned with ornate little sea creature shaped embroidery, which could be referred



to as Eko's "emoji". Other pieces in the collection feature Eko's signature cartoon figures and ornate lines. These pieces can transform our own personal style into an "art form".

In 2015, I Nyoman Masriadi launched the Masriadi Art Foundation (MAF) to support younger artist and provide a space for them to exhibit. To fund this endeavor, MAF sells merchandise and souvenirs from t-shirts and key chains, to umbrellas and blankets with Masriadi designed images. In this way, commercial collaborations allow greater artistic freedom and exploration for artists thus enhancing not diminishing their value.

Collaborations such as these provide opportunities for the average consumer to enjoy art, when art becomes affordable. Most people can't afford a Masriadi painting, which averages USD 350,000 but they can own an emblem of his work for IDR 200,000. While one may think that this new trend of mass produced art would take away the exclusivity, in fact in the 21st century, the opposite is true. These product collaborations are elevating artists work to a brand name and in effect is making their artwork more desirable. 