

Amateur by Vocation: painting as serious leisure

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Abstract

Amateur painting is commonly associated with a practice that is carried out for simple pleasure and in an uncompromising way. Such a lack of commitment to the art system gives to the expression “amateur painter” often a pejorative meaning. The idea that different types of amateur painters should not be included in a unique definition is supported in this article. It emerges that there is a specific type of amateur painter that differs from the others, which we will call “amateur by vocation”. Based on the concept of “serious leisure”, the text aims to characterize this specific type of amateur painter. Starting from the hypothesis that, even not aiming at professionalization, the amateur painter by vocation differs from the others by seeking an identity sign in his work. In this type of amateurism there is a propensity and disposition to seek systematically historical, technical and conceptual knowledge in order to improve his work.

Keywords: amateur; art; painting; serious leisure; vocation.

1. Introduction

This article is part of a research whose main objective is to categorize the different types of amateur paintings, in Brazil and Italy, and establish bonds between them. It also focuses on contemporary professional art. In this text we will deal with a particular type of painter, which we call “amateur by vocation”.

Historically, amateur painting has been associated with an activity of a non-binding practice, which is carried out for pure pleasure and with no commercial interest. Thereafter, since the 17th century, the term “amateur” has been applied pejoratively to refer to someone who has little knowledge of the activity they practice or low skills about it, as well as weak involvement with such practice.

Generally, it is understood the painter's use of painting not to be his own: as therapy or a way of expressing his feelings; as a form of social recognition; with a merely instrumental function in which the main challenge is to overcome the technical difficulties of reproducing an object; or with the simple objective of occupying free time. This image of the amateur painter, which translates into the concept of "Sunday painter", largely results from the prejudice that is formed around an amateur activity.

One aspect that is commonly pointed out to differentiate the amateur painter from the professional one is the fact that the latter spends most of his time investigating the artistic language. However in this work, despite considering that generally the amateur does not have all the theoretical and technical skills required by professional standards, It emerges that there is a specific type of painter who undertakes regular cycles of study, research and training, even dedicating most of his time to other activities. We deal here with the hypothesis that, even not aiming at professionalization, the amateur painter by vocation differs from other types of amateurs by striving to acquire historical, technical and conceptual knowledge in order to improve his work.

Therefore, it is understood that, as for professional painters, the training of amateurs by vocation is based on three pillars: learning, practicing and producing (Tolve, 2014). On the other hand, unlike other types of amateurs, the amateur by vocation seeks an identity sign in his work, and therefore refuses guides, magazines, manuals or courses that propose the use of pre-established models as a way to facilitate the learning process, making it more pleasant and enjoyable.

The concept of "serious leisure" developed by Stebbins (2015) is used here in order to outline the profile of the amateur by vocation. According to the author, certain amateur practices require a systematic search for knowledge, centered on acquiring and expressing especial skills about a particular practice. These amateurs make a commitment to their activity and turn their hobby into a career and even into devotion. Such a commitment would be based on an autotelic experience, in which the feeling of pleasure comes with the performance of the activity itself, which is intrinsically gratifying.

In order to achieve the objective proposed here and outline the profile of the amateur painter by vocation, the text is divided into five parts: first, the meanings and origin of the concept of amateur in the arts are discussed; then, the concept of the art system and the location of the amateur artist in this system are argued; the third part deals, through a historiographical approach, with the different ways of training the amateur painter, from manuals to open courses; in the following part, the concept of serious leisure is compared to the practice of amateur painting, with the aim to identify a specific behavior that shall serve to outline the profile of the amateur by vocation, in the last part.

2. The Amateur in Painting

When discussing amateur practice, an oppositional relationship between the terms “amateur” and “professional” is often pointed out, and a synonymous relationship is regularly established between the terms “amateur”, “dilettante” and “hobby”.

In English, as defined by the Cambridge dictionary, the term “hobbyist” applies to someone who does something as a hobby or to keep busy, not as a profession. The Houaiss dictionary, in Portuguese, also defines “hobby” as an “activity performed exclusively as a form of leisure, of distraction; hobby”. Stebbins understands that the hobby can be classified into more specific categories – such as collector or repairman – which tend to seek “systematic acquisition of knowledge for its own sake” (2015, p. 8). In this sense, the hobbyist tends to be seen as someone who is involved in a determined way with the activity to which he is dedicated and seeks to obtain more knowledge about this practice.

In spite of defining “hobby” as an occupation “different from the one to which one works professionally, to which one dedicates itself in free time for leisure”, the Italian-language Treccani dictionary adds: “with commitment and passion”. When considering the commitment and passion, the term “hobby” takes on a sense close to “amateur”.

In its origin, the term “amateur” is associated with the word “love”. Thus, it refers to one who directs his efforts towards a specific object out of passion. Despite understanding that the term “amateur” indicates “someone who is not very skilled at what he does”, the Cambridge dictionary also considers the amateur as someone who participates in an activity “for pleasure”. In other words, it's not just a hobby or an activity to keep you busy; it's something you want to do.

The Portuguese-language Michaelis dictionary, in turn, relates the “amateur” to the dilettante: “one who dedicates himself to something not by profession, but out of dilettantism”; This definition reaches the pejorative meaning when considering that the individual “does not master the activity he performs well”, that he is unskilled or lacks qualifications.

In the Treccani dictionary, the word “dilletanti” also refers to people who cultivate an activity “not for a profession, not for profit, but for their own pleasure”. On the other hand, in English, according to the Oxford dictionary, the term “dilettante” refers to a person who does something “without taking it seriously and without having much knowledge”. In other words, there is the possibility that this person is not even interested or involved in a determined way with the activity they practice. In this case, even passion would be lacking. This sense is often used in a derogatory way to refer to someone who neither demonstrates knowledge, aptitude or ability to perform a certain activity nor interest or involvement. The *Houaiss* dictionary, in Portuguese, despite reaffirming the concepts of “hobby”, relates the “dilettante” to the “amateur” because both maintain a certain immaturity: “it maintains an immature, un amateur attitude, in relation to norms of an intellectual or spiritual order”.

In these definitions, it is clear that, in general, these terms refer to people who engage in an activity, usually at indeterminate hours, not out of obligation, but for pleasure or another reason that does not have art as its ultimate purpose. Which would explain, to some extent, definitions that point to little knowledge or skill about the activity being practiced. On the other hand, the terms can refer to someone who would not be deeply involved with the activity they perform, as they would lack maturity in relation to “norms of intellectual or spiritual order”. This makes the term associated with something negative, undesirable, and results in large part from the prejudice that forms around the amateur activity, since there is a derogatory sense, indicative of negligence. As a result, many amateurs are reluctant to admit this definition.

According to Mattioda (2018), the term “amateur” is used anachronistically, disregarding its historical meanings. According to him, “the word was invented only in the second half of the 17th century, after art academies acquired the power to determine who is the ‘teacher’ of art” (2018, p. 1). Arslan, in turn, states that the term only began to have meaning from the Renaissance, “when the artist acquires a higher status in society, as stated in the Oxford Dictionary of Art” (2010, p. 65).

One way or another, the amateur artistic practice gained visibility with the beginning of activities developed by the European nobility.

In the 15th century, René d'Anjou (1434-80) gave up his duchy to devote himself to painting and landscaping, and England saw the emergence of several aristocratic amateur artists, among whom Sir Nathanael Bacon [...]. The development of watercolor in the 18th and 19th centuries—the amateur's material par excellence—caused the proliferation of amateur painters throughout Europe. Among them were Goethe, and various statesmen began to advocate painting as a relaxing activity [...]. At the same time, the practice of drawing and watercolor became the prototype of young elegant ladies [...]. (Arslan, 2010, p. 65)

The amateur practice, at that first moment, was associated with an aristocratic status and related to a dedication that was opposed to commodification. This way of thinking favored the deformation of the concept in the 20th century, in the sense of associating amateur practice with a disinterested passion, reducing the contemporary amateur to the Renaissance aristocracy (Mattioda, 2018). Arslan recalls that, in Brazil, amateur artistic practice is recognized as a sign of elegance in some spheres: “[...], it is easy to find representatives of the economic elite in magazines or social columns (such as *Caras* magazine or in newspapers), successful doctors or businessmen, painting pictures and exhibiting” (2010, p. 65-66).

The cultural and scientific renewal of the 17th century resulted in the recognition of the visual arts as intellectual activities. The foundation of state academies led to the definitions of the professions of art teacher and artist. The “‘man of delight’ is defined in opposition to a more complex and mature figure: in this case, that of the ‘expert’, who is differentiated by the

knowledge of basic techniques” (Mattioda, 2018, p. 3). From then on, the amateur is seen as the one who only makes passive use of knowledge, unlike the specialist who generates knowledge for the area.

For Mattioda (2018, p. 4), “in common sense, the amateur artist will continue to be the one who enjoys the works superficially and, even if he recognizes the artists' methods, he is not able to give a reasoned judgment”, how can the “Teacher and Specialist” give.

With the French Revolution, the term came to connote a pejorative sense. According to Goethe and Schiller (1800, *apud* Mattioda, 2018), amateurism would harm art, as it does not have “correct” regulatory standards. A sense that remains, to a certain extent, to this day.

Arslan (2010) points out aspects that make it difficult to approach amateur practice in the field of arts, especially in painting. The main point is the fact that these practices are not recognized even as marginal, which would be engaged, or subordinate, who would place themselves in an inferior position or in a condition of obedience to the professional. However, nowadays, regardless of the field of action – music, theater, plastic arts, sport, science etc. –, the concept of “amateur” is always placed in opposition to the concept of “professional”.

In a first understanding, it is common for the delineation of these two practices to be considered from a financial point of view, with the professional being paid and the amateur not. In the case of painting, it is noted that this cannot be the only differentiation criterion, since there are amateurs who manage to earn income from their activity related to the field of artistic production and many professionals whose main source of income is another profession, such as, for example, in the field of art education. Arslan inserts a fundamental element in this discussion, the experiment with languages: “in common sense, a professional is someone who makes art as a pure investigation of language and an amateur is someone who makes art for pleasure. Even those who live by selling paintings are called amateurs if they do not make art as a language investigation” (2010, p. 65). In addition to this characteristic, the space occupied by the artwork in a gallery, museum, public or private collection also presents itself as a differentiating element, making its author recognized as a professional artist. Another aspect that presents itself as a distinctive feature, but which cannot be taken in an absolute way, is the fact that, in general, professional production serves as a model for amateur practice – as will be discussed later on – but the reciprocal is not true.

In any case, the intention here is not to determine the characteristics that make it possible to differentiate an amateur painter from a professional one, but, on the contrary, to identify characteristics of a specific type of amateur painter that, in some way, are similar to the commercial painter. The distinction made in this article is that, in general, the amateur certainly does not have all the technical skills required by professional standards, however, some of them, like professionals, undergo regular work and study routines – even if they dedicate most of their time to another professional activity. And it is precisely this type of amateur that

interests this study. The hypothesis with which we work is that, although not aiming at professionalization, this type of amateur painter approaches professional behavior by dedicating himself to the search for historical, technical and conceptual knowledge with the intention of improving his work, through the development of a language of its own. Thus, it would be necessary to understand in what ways this type of artist seeks to improve the quality of their work.

Even understanding that the professional practice is more inserted in the field of investigation of languages and techniques than the amateur one, there is no denying that the amateur painter by vocation carries out, according to his conditions, some kind of investigation. So, the central question that drives this work is: What criteria guide the painter Amateur in his study and investigation process?

In order to answer this question, and contribute to reducing prejudice against amateur practice, it is necessary to understand the development of this type of artist in art.

3. The Amateur in the Art System

The importance of the amateur painter to the art system can be illustrated with an account by Becker for the preface to the first edition of *Art World*:

It was perhaps the years I spent playing the piano in bars in Chicago and the surrounding area that led to the view that those who dedicated themselves to this unsung work were as important to the understanding of the art as the better-known musicians who created the famous jazz classics. (2007, p. 21)

According to Poli (2011), an idea of the “art world” (Danto, 1964) as a system has its first record in the text magazine *Network: the art world* describe as a system, written by Lawrence Alloway and published by Artforum in 1972. In 1975 the concept arrived in Europe in the book *Arte e sistema dell'arte*, by Achille Bonito Oliva. At that time, the concept of “system” had already been consolidated in Sociology with the book *Social System* (1951), by Talcott Parsons. In *Introduction to Systems Theory*, Luhmann (2010) recalls that since the 1940s, Sociology has already sought to understand how structures are organized for the preservation of social systems. The logic of the art system is guided by the same principles, substituting a notion for the commercial structure of the art market, which ignores the organic interconnection between the economic and cultural dimensions (Poli, 2011).

Understanding art as a system involves considering: the relationships between the production, circulation, sale and cultural appreciation of works of art – in a system of cultural production, galleries, auctions, museums, publishing houses, etc.; the relationships between the actors involved in these circuits – artists, traders, critics, museum directors, collectors, etc.; and as relationships between circuits and actors as well as information and communication systems – newspapers, magazines, television, specialized websites, etc. However, one must

bear in mind that the art market is very stratified, so it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of “art systems”. Merchants galleries, for example, have a variety of different functions and their differences are defined in different proportions of product categories that operate at different market levels and product categories (Poli, 2011).

Thus, according to Poli, “the production of a work of art is the result of a synergistic process” (2011, p. 29). That is, the artistic object is both determined by different social systems of the action of the main actor of the artistic system itself. Thus, if on the one hand it is necessary to understand art as an integral part of the system, on the other hand it is necessary to recognize its autonomy as a social system.

For Bourdieu (2007, p. 100), the process of autonomization of art is the result of a series of changes that began in the Middle Ages, as: the constitution of socially diversified public “capable of providing producer of symbolic goods not only with the minimum conditions of economic independence, but also granting them a principle of legitimacy parallel”; “the contract of an increasingly numerous body and of producers and more of symbolic goods”; “the multiplication and diversification of instances competing for legality and cultural consecration, such as academies”; and as “broadcasting bodies”, such as publishers. According to this author, “[...] this structure of fixed power relations is expressed, in a moment, through a determined hierarchy of areas, works and natural competences” (2007, p. 118).

Poli explains that the art system began to be consolidated with the joint effort of the Impressionists, in the mid-1890s, from the eight exhibitions produced in Paris between 1874 and 1886, which had the presence of “critical friends” – such as Castagnary, Duranty, Chesneau and Zola –, Paul Durand Ruel, as the main dealer, and the first collectors. These trends determine the great success and movement in the cultural years are also promoted, a new artistic market that shows the recent years, or an innovative model of the current salons of the time. Characters that inhabit the undergrowth' of the market” (2011, p. 35), who work mainly with the amateur public – such as framers, who exhibit customer paintings at our point of sale, or gallerists, who organize competitions and group exhibitions, with the production of catalogs and advertising – or on the fringes of the art market – as speculators, dealers and counterfeiters.

In the process of building the relationships among these different dimensions, there was a greater investment in the system (or “field”, in Bourdieu's terms) of erudite production, which is accessible only to those who hold refined, practical or theoretical coding systems. This cultural aspect has a function of social distinction (Bourdieu, 2007). Bulhões agrees with this belief by stating that:

[...] the visual arts system also emerged as a system of domination, insofar as its members imposed on society as a whole standard that were of a minority. [...] imposed a hierarchy that legitimizes its power and the superiority of its members.

The order resulting from the interaction of those who have access to the arts system began to impose a symbolic domination over the others, excluded from this participation. (1991, p. 30)

In the art system, the amateur artist assumes an important role in the process of commodification of art: by attending free courses; consume paint products; acquire specialized magazines and books; watch audiovisual programs on the topic; visit exhibitions and shows; follow artists and experts on social media; or contribute to the dissemination of ideas from the art system to other lay people.

The relationship of the amateur artist with the art system is directly related to the consumer society: “Commodification affects the entire space of the plastic arts, from the production of the works themselves to their circulation in magazines and books, also merchandise” (Bulhões, 1991, p. 27).

In this process of consumption, responsible for the functioning and reproduction of the art system, it is necessary to highlight the role of the education system, as an instance responsible for the formation of producers and receivers.

[...], the education system inevitably fulfills a function of cultural legitimation by converting it into a legitimate culture, exclusively through the effect of dissimulation, [...] by reproducing, by delimiting what deserves to be transmitted and acquired and what does not deserve to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate works and, at the same time, between the legitimate and illegitimate way of approaching legitimate works. (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 120)

As an exclusive part of the social environment, the teaching of art is part of a “system of relationships that is responsible for the activities of production, circulation and artistic consumption” (Bulhões, 1991, p. 28). For Bulhões, this system has a characteristic and totalizing character: “dynamic, because it conceives its object as a set in movement; totalizing, as it sees it as the result of a set of internal and external aspects of the work of art” (1991, p. 28). The determination in the values established by the education system, for this author, is one of those that make the values of art work.

The importance of great importance is the aspect that the teaching of art is one of the main sources of support, and sometimes a sign of prestige, for professionals.

It is a much-desired job, because it offers a secure salary and allows him [the artist] to have a lot of time to work in his studio [...] teaching the artistic discipline, at the level of academies or in artistic lyceums, is in itself a sufficient qualification to be legitimated as artists in common opinion. (Poli, 2011, p. 95)

Open courses, largely responsible for the training of amateur artists, insert students into the circuits of production, consumption and dissemination of material and symbolic goods in the art market, by legitimizing hierarchical positions in the system, through the recommendation of the work of some artists to the detriment of others, or by indicating

theoretical references that support these positions. Likewise, they guide students in the choice of painting materials, in the selection of periodicals and websites in the area or in visits to galleries and museums. They legitimize the recognition of a professional artist and an amateur artist.

4. The training of the amateur painter

When dealing with Yves Michaud's didactics, in a text published in *Artribune Magazine*, Antonello Tolve (2014) recalls that the philosopher understands that the core of art learning lies in the gathering of a manual knowledge that, together with a theoretical foundation, allows for the creation of new ideas, the discovery of new areas of action and the elaboration of new discourses. Under this point of view, the formation of the artist would be based on three pillars: learning, practicing and producing.

Based on Tolve's ideas about the formation of the professional artist, the following questions arise: What are the forms of formation of the amateur painter? How do these different modes delineate the different profiles of amateur painters?

The amateur artist begins his studies in two ways, with the accompaniment of a teacher, whether he is a professional artist or not, or without the accompaniment of a teacher, such as a self-taught artist. Under the orientation of a master, the apprentice has follow-up and feedback, sometimes individualized and personalized. Thus, the student tends to delegate to the course, or to the teacher, the responsibility for their technical progress. It does not happen with the self-taught person, who assumes full responsibility for the learning process, even in relation to the choice of materials.

Naturally, learning is not compartmentalized, paraphrasing McLuhan (1994), it is a plural and diffuse process: there is in the person who studies at school or learns in the studio something self-taught, when looking for information in other sources not recommended by the course or by the master; in the same way, the self-taught can count on some professional guidance, either through online courses or guidance from relatives and friends with knowledge of artistic techniques and languages. In addition, it is very common for some people to move between the two modes, for example, starting in short courses to learn about basic and technical materials and continuing by their own effort, without the accompaniment of a master. Either way, these two modes can be carried out in person or mediated through support materials, such as summarized and simplified technical manuals that follow the logic of the old treatises.

In their origin, the treatises resulted from the practical experiences and studies of professional artists and sought to translate the complexity of painting techniques in order to determine fundamental rules that should be followed by those who wished to become professional in the field of arts. From Pliny's *Naturalis Historiae* – which came to us through Vitruvius (77-78 AD) – passing by *Il libro dell'arte* by Cennino Cennini (15th century) and the

Trattato della painting by Leonardo da Vinci (16th century), to *La Tecnica della Pittura ad Olio and del Disegno Artistico* by Gino Piva (1985), among many others, the treatises guide about the practices of preparing the support, using the tools, mixing colors and even developing the techniques of observation and representation of the themes.

In the 1430s, Leon Batista Alberti wrote *De Pictura*, the first treatise for painters that was not limited only to manual technique, but also to intellectual and cultural research for artistic production. In the following century, Giorgio Vasari published the *Trattato delle vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori italiani* (1550), initiating the ideas that would predominate in Firenze's *Accademia delle Arti del Disegno*, founded in 1563. At that time, the *Accademia delle Arti del Disegno* was a place for society's elite, while the artist's pub was open to talented young people, regardless of the family's economic conditions. In this way, on the one hand, the academy also ended up collaborating with the training of amateur artists, coming from the aristocracy, and on the other hand, the bottega contributed to the training of professionals. Both having as a basic principle the follow-up of the specialist teacher or artist teacher. Thus, at first, the academy and the bottega served to delimit the space of the artist, the art teacher and the amateur in this system.

Along with Cennini's treatise, Vasari's work became one of the main bibliographical references aimed at the formation of the artist, as it clearly described the technical methods used by artists at the time.

Treaties like these, published until today, use extremely technical language and even involve questions related to the areas of Chemistry, Physics and Materials Technology, such as: ways of using natural and synthetic resins; or process of light fastness and pigment solidification. By approaching the subject in a complex way, some of them are inaccessible to many amateur or novice artists. Ralph Mayer's *Artist's Manual* (1996), for example, dealt with pigment testing, analysis, and certification and materials, the use of varnishes, gums and resins, in addition to issues related to cleaning, restoration and conservation of the paint.

Many of these publications present drawing as a basic principle of painting, such as Da Vinci's treatise, which details the techniques for representing anatomy according to age and gender, as well as the facial musculature related to facial expressions. For Piva, the base of a good representation is the drawing, and the drawing of the painting begins with the sketches and studies. This type of content makes some people seek these publications for interests that are not only associated with the practice of painting, for example, for the development of advertising illustration or comic books.

Manuals developed specifically for amateurs, which detail in a simplified way the techniques for drawing and painting, began to be produced on a large scale in the first half of the 20th century. In the 1930s, the American publicist Walter Foster founded Walter Foster Publishing that produced and marketed the *How to Draw* manual, the first manual easily

accessible to the amateur public, which sold over a million copies and is still marketed today in art stores. Another important reference for teaching amateur drawing, and consequently painting, is *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (1979), by Betty Edwards, a book translated into thirteen languages, with more than two and a half million copies sold.

As a rule, drawing and painting manuals for amateurs maintain a common structure: first, there is a section devoted, in a superficial way, to the materials that can be used in drawing and painting; then the presentation of basic technical concepts; then, the “step by step” for carrying out the work, through photographic demonstrations, descriptions of standardized resources and techniques, as well as tips to avoid common mistakes in the execution of the work; finally, the exhibition of some works that illustrate the theme of the book and aim to give credibility to the knowledge of the author of the work. These publications are often divided into thematic categories, such as seascape painting or flower painting, among others. As Arslan reminds us, these manuals “serve as recipes for the production of painting” (2010, p. 77). Thus, they tend not to encourage beginners to think about the language of art, but rather to reproduce pre-established models.

With specific regard to the study of drawing, not only manuals, but also the most important fine art academies in Italy consider this to be a fundamental stage in artistic literacy. The *Accademia delle Arti e del Disegno* of Florence, the first in the world, expresses in its own name the importance of artistic design.

The study of artistic drawing techniques gained importance in Italian fine arts academies with the inclusion of classes with live models. One of the first and most important courses in drawing with a live model, aimed at training both the professional artist and the amateur artist, is the *Scuola Libera del Nudo*. The *Scuola Libera del Nudo* was established in 1820 at the *Accademia di Belle Arti di Carrara*. It was founded in 1769 by Princess Maria Teresa Cybo, and is still in operation today. Considered an essential course for carrying out a complete and professional artistic training, living models also attract professionals from other areas who want to acquire skills in the representation of the human figure and drawing, such as illustrators, architects and graphic designers. Most of the academies in Italy promote the traditional *Scuola del Nudo* course for amateurs, without imposing any prior training conditions.

In Italy, many people who want to start painting prefer to participate of a course with a live model rather than a free course in painting, which is almost never promoted in the fine art academies. Thus, the tendency is for students to seek first to improve drawing and anatomy in the live model course and then seek for free courses to improve oil painting techniques. In Brazil, open courses are offered in workshops and teachers' residences as well as in art supply stores or museums. Free courses are also offered in public spaces, such as squares, which is not allowed in large cities in Italy.

The teaching methodologies in these courses are the most varied, especially if we consider that some are taught by professional artists, others by professors of higher art courses and, as there is no regulation of the profession of painting teacher, even painters trained in open courses teach painting lessons.

In research carried out in the city of São Paulo (Brazil), Arslan (2010, p. 77) reports that in some schools “reference figures [...] are used as models for copies”, which are “grouped by levels of difficulty technique” and are distinguished “by the themes, and sometimes by the tonal variation of the colors”. Often, the categorization of reference figures by “technical difficulty” aims to give a more didactic appearance to the learning process. However, this simplification of the teaching process is based on the idea that learning to paint is related to pleasant moments. Under the same logic, there is “search for collective spaces to paint, where many forms of sociability occur [...], since at the same time, pleasure is strongly associated with group practices (such as concerts, cinema, etc.) to the detriment of activities individual and solitary” (Arslan, 2010, p. 73).

In the process of training the amateur artist, interests are diverse, ranging from fascination for the arts to the use of art as a form of therapy. To Arslan:

Cultural tastes and interest in making art allow us to identify the predominant art conceptions in the practices of the courses and explain views on the relationship between art and representation, art and feeling, art and life, pointing out the role art has for its practitioners. (2010, p. 64)

In interviews carried out with amateur artists, Arslan collected statements that indicate that some painters use art as a form of expression: “they claim to paint to express and know their own emotions, to, through painting (or art), give vent, 'liberate ' and rescue the hidden feelings” (Arslan, 2010, p. 68). The “expression”, in this case, it is understood as “the manifestation of feelings”. This is due, in large part, to the imagination in relation to the artist's life, fostered by the reproduction of the life story of artists in literature and cinema, which generally show the artist as someone “sensitive, emotional and not very rational. [...] as 'devious' character geniuses or as eccentrics who take their emotions to the extreme” (Arslan, 2010, p. 69). According to the author, in this case, art assumes a utilitarian function, aimed at provoking emotion in the artist himself, thus “just a means, not the end” (2010, p. 71).

This type of artistic practice, aimed more at understanding one's feelings than at reflecting on the artistic making itself, is encouraged not only in open courses, but also in many institutionalized places, such as cultural institutes and museums, which understand that this is a way of attracting the audience to the art space.

With regard to technical improvement, Arslan points out that “part of the students in open courses consider painting to be a manufacturing activity, others want to build paintings that are a reflection of the natural or of an ideal of nature” (2010, p. 75). In the first case, painting would

fulfill a merely instrumental function; in the second, it would be associated with a distant understanding of the contemporary notion of art.

The interest in improving the manual technique, for the author, may be related to the practice of crafting, in the context of Mason's Family Theory, related to the activities of decorating the house.

[...] the decoration of the house, [...], is interpreted as a kind of installation, a museographic work representing life itself, a way to communicate socially through the arrangement and careful choice of objects that represent and mean values. (Arslan, 2010, p. 77)

In the second group, more focused on the naturalist style, the challenge of overcoming technical difficulties in the exact reproduction of any object would predominate, even if this reference is not found in front of the painter, but through mediation, such as a photograph. In this case, the work itself would not matter, but what it represents.

In both cases, “the action of painting can be observed motivated by a technical challenge, evidenced by the expressions ‘doing well done’ [...]. Often the content expressed in the theme is not as important as the challenge it offers [...]” (Arslan, 2010, p. 75).

In the open art courses, it is noticed that many students are conditioned to the artistic *avant-gardes* of the beginning of the 20th century. This influence is clearly identified in the modalities chosen to execute a painting, such as the production of mixed figures, which refers to an unfounded “cubism”. Generally speaking, even when the school encourages the development of works in line with abstract painting, as done in the courses at *La Porta Blu school* (Rome), there is a tendency to maintain a figurative structure, in which technical issues are prioritized over the intellectual complexity that comprises abstraction.

According to Feniello, a study on the interests of amateur practitioners, reported by Nathalie Heinch (1996), shows that figurativity predominates in amateur painting:

[...], out of 374 artistic amateurs, 76% favored the figurative style of their creations throughout the scholastic years. Six out of 10 amateurs claim to be part of realism, one in 10 of the so-called ‘naïf’ style, only 5% of surrealism and the fantastic. Only 12% recognize that they make abstract art. [...] preference is given to rural landscapes 48% and still life 28%. Portraits of strangers attract 14% of amateurs, monuments and works of art hold the attention of a smaller number, 9%, the same for street scenes 7%. At 18%, we find inspiration for more themes in other specialized places, such as animals or seascapes.

Language learning is also another category that allows us to understand the different types of interests and training processes of professional artists. According to Arslan, some students prioritize the cognitive process, making art through the knowledge that the language of art itself can generate. In this case, it is necessary to consider that the student acquires

knowledge through interaction with language, which is developed throughout the production process.

Pareyson, in order to explain the nature of the knowledge acquired through artistic practice, ended up developing the theory of formativity, according to which knowledge of art is built in relation to doing (but, here, not doing understood as execution, but as a process of thinking, including form). In training, thinking, inventing, producing are inherent to the production of knowledge. (Arslan, 2010, p. 78)

Thus, language is not limited to certain formal rules, but to the practices of use and transformation of these languages. For Arslan, open courses have the potential for experimenting with languages, “since there is no previously established curriculum in them, actually allowing the development of a curriculum as well” (2010, p. 80). However, it is necessary that the teacher has enough competence to not only apply, but mainly to subvert the norms of languages. It is also necessary to consider whether the learner is interested in this type of training. Generally, amateur artists who attend museums and exhibitions are less conditioned to the process reproduction of images and are open to experiments with languages, unlike others who are concerned with simply knowing and replicating the techniques of painting.

Communication technologies have also allowed for the emergence of a series of painting courses for amateurs, first on television and then on the internet.

One of the biggest audience successes of media courses for amateurs was Bob Ross's *The Joy of Painting*, which in 1983 started a program on PBS channel, in the United States, aimed at teaching painting through television. In each episode of the program, the presenter exhibited, in less than half an hour, a gradual process of painting natural landscapes in oil, using simplified techniques and tricks of the craft. The technique used in the program, wet on wet, promoted the development of a copy primary, almost caricature, of 19th century American landscape paintings. Even after his death in 1995, Bob Ross became a reference in internet tutorials for painting and drawing courses. Currently, a YouTube channel with his name brings together hundreds of videos and has more than 3 million subscribers.

On the internet, there are several websites that offer online courses and support material. These courses tend to be in tutorial format, classified by genres and types of techniques, mixing themes and artistic languages in a limited and superficial way. Aiming to reach as many views as possible, from people who mostly do not have enough artistic knowledge, many of these courses offer “secret formulas”, “fun methods”, with fragmented information that would be completed by means of manuals, sold by the platform itself. If, on the one hand, this new reality makes the learning of painting more democratic and allows the amateur artist a more plural and expanded training, as Arslan believes, it is necessary to pay attention to the degeneration of the practice of painting, as a form of uncommitted leisure, little Really.

5. Amateur painting from the perspective of serious leisure

In *Serious leisure* (2015), Stebbins defends the thesis that there is in amateur activity, when it becomes gratifying and pleasurable, a systematic search for knowledge centered on acquisition and special skill over practice. To this dedication, the author gives the name of “serious leisure”. According to him, “serious leisure has been typically contrasted with ‘casual’ or ‘unserious’ leisure” (2015, p. 5). And he adds: “[...], casual leisure, though hardly humiliating or despicable, is nonetheless too fleeting, mundane, and commonplace for most people to find a distinctive identity there” (STEBBINS, 2015, p. 12-13). Serious leisure participants, by contrast, tend to identify closely with the activities they undertake. In this sense, serious leisure is similar to work carried out with “devotee work”, a satisfied activity and an obligatory pleasure, or not. In Tomlinson's terms, it is a “committed leisure” (1993, *apud* Stebbins, 2015, p. 2).

If there is a commitment, the amateur should not be understood, in general, as someone who performs any activity simply because he has free time, like a “Sunday painter”. This term refers to the artists who produce only on days when they are free from the responsibilities of the week. This type of amateur painter, in most cases, employs spontaneous techniques, applying colors directly without studying, preparing or even sketching. The quick painting, as *alla prima* technique, and the small dimensions of the canvas make the production fruitful.

Although serious leisure is also considered as an activity carried out during free time, as argued by Stebbins, “free time” must be understood as “time away from unpleasant obligation” (2015, p. 4). In reality, for him, this time is not free complementary, but surrounded by a series of conditions. In this case, it would be held on Sundays because it is simply the only day of the week that the amateur painter is free from professional commitments. Thus, amateur painting, as a type of serious leisure, should be seen as a positive activity, “composed of, among other sentiments, pleasant expectations” (Stebbins, 2015, p. 5).

For Stebbins, one of the main characteristics of serious leisure is the activity considered as a “leisure career”; or rather, “career leisure”. The term “career”, for the author, should be considered more broadly, limiting itself to common sense related to professional occupation, but to what Goffman calls a “moral career” (1961, *apud* Stebbins, 2015, p. 11). In this sense, career is related to activity not only to regular paid professional activity, but also to other commitments that involve engagement, such as political, religious or even leisure activity. A career would then be associated with a significant personal effort that comprises knowledge, skill and experience acquired in the exercise of a function or task.

His research, carried out with amateurs, from different areas, Stebbins identified eight benefits in developing a leisure career, namely: “self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, regeneration or self-renewal, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products of the activity”

(2015, p. 11). Generally speaking, these benefits are associated with a pleasant outcome, personal fulfillment and self-gratification. This is what makes it a “committed leisure”. He adds: “Durable benefits number among the consequences of pursuing serious leisure, and are therefore not to be confused with its motivational antecedents: the rewards of such activity [...]” (2015, p. 11).

Each type of activity offers a type of reward, which is not only gratifying, but also works as a counterbalance to the cost and efforts to activity, which are also specific. That is, each type of activity has its own combination of challenges and tensions.

Put more precisely, then, the drive to find fulfillment in serious leisure is the drive to experience the rewards of a given leisure activity, such that its costs are seen by the participant as more or less insignificant by comparison. This is at once the meaning of the activity for the participant and his or her motivation for engaging in it. It is this motivational sense of the concept of reward that distinguishes it from the idea of durable benefit set out earlier, a concept that, [...], emphasizes outcomes rather than antecedent conditions. (Stebbins, 2015, p. 13)

Rewards do not attract people towards undertaking activities as the continual search for these rewards does not tend to hold them to them. As Stebbins lists how rewards can be both personal and social:

[Personal Rewards] 1. Personal enrichment (cherished experiences) 2. Self-actualization (developing skills, abilities, knowledge) 3. Self-expression (expressing skills, abilities, knowledge already developed) 4. Self-image (known to others as a particular kind of serious leisure participant) 5. Self-gratification (combination of superficial enjoyment and deep fulfillment) 6. Re-creation (regeneration) of oneself through serious leisure after a day's work 7. Financial return (from a serious leisure activity). [Social Rewards] 8. Social attraction (associating with other serious leisure participants, with clients as a volunteer, participating in the social world of the activity) 9. Group accomplishment (group effort in accomplishing a serious leisure project; senses of helping, being needed, being altruistic) 10. Contribution to the maintenance and development of the group (including senses of helping, being needed, being altruistic in making the contribution). (2015, p. 14)

According to Stebbins, studies show that most people who do some type of leisure point to self-enrichment, self-gratification and self-actualization as the main benefits in developing the serious activity they dedicate themselves to. Such benefits are associated with positive emotional flows, intensified by psychological flows: “Flow, a form of optimal experience, is possibly the most widely discussed and studied generic intrinsic reward in the psychology of work and leisure” (Stebbins, 2015, p. 15).

Based on Csikszentmilyi (1990), Stebbins explains that flow is an “autotelic” experience, in which the sensation of pleasure comes with the performance of the activity itself, which is intrinsically pleasant. It would explain the desire to perform an amateur activity that can become controllable: “This is because it engenders in its practitioners the desire to engage in the activity beyond the time or the money (if not both) available for it” (Stebbins, 2015, p. 17).

Therefore, it is perceived in the practitioners of serious leisure a degree of commitment to a search for personal fulfillment. "This commitment is measured, among other ways, by the sizeable investments of time and energy in the leisure made by its devotees and participants" (Stebbins, 2015, p. 18). It is precisely this commitment with which the amateur seeks improvement, progress, in the activity of realization. Making your leisure a "leisure career".

6. The amateur painter by vocation

At this stage of the research, it is not intended to categorize the different types of amateur painters. It is only intended to outline the profile of a specific type, which we call "amateur painter by vocation".

Vocation, in this study, should not have the meaning given in the letter by Pope John Paul II to artists (1999), in which he addressed to those who are "inspired by the divine", or to those who are sought after who receive the "special task or vocation to be the herald of truth, beauty and redemption". Under this understanding, the term "vocation" refers, in its abundant meaning, to a natural, pre-cognitive inclination, which approaches the idea of "divine gift".

In the context of this study, the idea of a divine gift strengthens when one considers that the word "amor"¹ is found in the root of the word "amateur", which leads to the understanding that this type of artist is guided solely by a feeling, emotion, or a divine inspiration. In painting, in particular, the term "amateur" remains, to a certain extent, tied to its original meaning, related to a disinterested passion that, for example, does not aim at commodification.

In the idea that the amateur painters dedicate themselves to an activity just for pleasure or delight, the understanding that feelings and emotions are imposed on reason, intellectual work, creation and systematized processes is implicit. Therefore, he would differ from the professionals, who dedicate themselves to art in a critical way; who produce art through the investigation of languages, techniques and the social, cultural and historical context that surround them. In other words, from this point of view, amateur practice would not make use of intellectual work and research. And this is precisely one of the aspects that puts the term in opposition to "professional".

Naturally, it is not expected that, in general, the amateur painter had the same skills, technical skills and theoretical knowledge as a professional, since the latter must dedicate more time to study and practice than the other. Because of this, the professional would have more responsibility for the generation of knowledge for the art system THAN the amateur, who would tend to make a passive of knowledge and techniques already established in the system. On the other hand, generalizing the idea that every amateur painter has little aesthetic,

¹ "Amor" is a word from Latin "amor", meaning "love".

historical knowledge or technical skill, when compared to a professional one, can lead one to believe that they are someone who would not be deeply involved with the art system.

Studies that focus on other practices that are on the line between amateurism and professionalism refer to this type of artist as “amateur professional” or “professional amateur”. Leadbeater and Miller (2004) call “Pro-Ams” the amateurs who work within professional standards and, according to them, in recent decades, Pro-Ams have impacted the economic sector and organizational models in different areas. In this text, in spite of also dealing with amateurs who approach certain professional standards, the term chosen was “amateur by vocation”. Although the economic impact has its importance in the consolidation of the art market, this study is particularly interested in the contribution of this type of artist to the development of the art system.

In this way, the term “vocation” is used in the sense of acquired willingness to develop an activity, one of the meanings given to the word in English, according to the Cambridge Dictionary: “a type of work that you feel you are able to do and to which you dedicate much of your time and energy”. It is understood that the amateur painter by vocation is the one who dedicates himself to the practice of *serious leisure*, who assumes a commitment to the art system as he seeks knowledge, in a systematic way, centered on acquiring and expressing skills about the practice of painting.

Amateur by vocation, in this sense, is one who has the aptitude, propensity and disposition to practice of painting. Not only in the sense of natural and spontaneous vocation, as a “divine gift”, but mainly as an acquired aptitude, which involves effort in the sense of acquiring the necessary conditions to develop such activity – such as aesthetic, theoretical, historical and practical knowledge.

The amateur painter by vocation, from this point of view, should not be confused with the amateur who performs an activity just because he has free time, like a “Sunday painter”. On the contrary, the amateur by vocation assumes this activity as a career, the time and effort to acquire and demand knowledge and skills. There is an understanding of the amateur or personal type in developing a language of their own that justifies the effort and cost of the investment.

In this way, even without aiming at professionalization, the amateur by vocation is the one who undergoes regular work and research routines; the one who determines specific schedules for the practice of painting and study of art. Unlike other types of amateurs, who want to immediately reach a level of ability to reproduce an image, often ignoring the complexity of the language of painting, the amateur by vocation is interested and willing to debate with different instances of the art system. Thus, according to this condition, he carries out investigations of languages and techniques close to the professional artist, with the aim of developing an identity trait in his work.

In opposition to other types of amateurs, the amateur by vocation sees art as an ultimate end and not as a means to achieve another objective and, like the professional, bases his training on the pillars of learning, practice and production. Other types of amateurs demonstrate that they are more concerned with the final result and not with the process. For the amateur by vocation, the process is as important as the result and, in most cases, even more decisive. In view of this, the amateur painter by vocation refuses ready-made recipes, pre-established models, simplified techniques or tutorials. He is aware that his growth requires effort, dedication and necessarily goes through many frustrations.

Locating the amateur painter by vocation in the art system is placing him closer to the professional artist and further away from the Sunday painter.

In other words, he is an amateur painter who has a broader understanding of the art system, as he seeks to know the system's formative agents - in the circuits of production, transmission, transmission and teaching - and to have access to institutional spaces - such as ateliers, galleries, museums or schools. By identifying himself as part of the system, he tends to have a critical position in relation to the market and artistic productions.

Artists in this category tend to attend shows and exhibitions to discover new languages and techniques and not just to admire known artists and works. Visits to museums and galleries are not limited to tourist events. The theoretical references they consult tend to be the same ones used by students and professionals in the field, and not the basic manuals that offer "painting tips". Demanding in relation to their work, they prefer to use better quality materials, produced for professionals.

This type of artist understands the canvas as the result of formal and conceptual research and not as a decorative object. It seeks to understand the logic of contemporary art, not limiting itself to consolidated styles from past eras. Thus, in the project development process, he considers the concept of artistic work as the central point of the research. Therefore, the amateur by vocation is aware that experimenting with new techniques and languages requires more endeavor, more effort and resources, than the simple application of standardized techniques and languages.

As he values the study of languages and techniques and intellectual growth, the amateur by vocation invests his training with the monitoring of teachers with experience in contemporary artistic production and/or solid academic training. Both in Brazil and in Italy, open courses with professors at this level tend to be more expensive and require more time from the student. In this sense, commonly, the amateur by vocation is in a stage of life or professional condition that allows directing financial resources and time from their routine to the improvement of their artistic skills.

Even though they are not part of the art system from a professionalization perspective, this type of amateur plays a fundamental role in this system, as they contribute to consumption

in the art market and, above all, to the legitimacy of verification relationships by propagating among the ideas of the art system.

7. Final Considerations

As it can be seen, the concept of “amateur” is still closely linked to its origin, an aristocratic behavior of interest, carrying out an artistic activity for pleasure, in an uncompromising way, without commercialism. Such understanding results in meanings associated with the lack of theoretical knowledge, technical history and lack of commitment to the art system. The amateur prejudice against the practice of painting owes, in large part, to the manuals and courses that will make an execution of painting a moment of pleasure and delight, ignoring all the effort necessary to understand how the languages of the arts.

This understanding is revealed at the very root of the word, which refers to pleasure or delight, distancing itself from logic, reason. Thus, usually, the painter would be someone who would tend to use passive, and often intuitive, languages and many techniques by professionals. From this point of view, the amateur would not contribute to the development of the art system.

However, the idea that is defended here is that the term “amateur” cannot be applied to any practice that is not recognized as professional. It is necessary to consider that there are different types of amateurs and that some of them undergo regular work and research routines in order to acquire historical, technical and conceptual knowledge that can be applied in their production. To this type of artist, who fits certain practical characteristics of serious leisure, we name “amateur by vocation”.

The amateur painter by vocation is the one who is committed to a systematic search for knowledge about the language of art and, in particular, painting. He is someone who has a penchant for painting.

Although the terms “amateur” and “vocation” do not have their meanings related to logical reasoning, which involves the contemporary artist’s creative process, it is necessary to understand that in any creative process, emotion and reason are not mutually exclusive. In fact, it tends to be complementary. In art in general, the analytical and independent analysis alternate in different processes of creation and production. So, then, vocation is also “disposition” for the development of something, as dedication should be sought.

Even if one considers the possibility of natural vocation, this work points to an acquired aptitude, a type of orientation that involves study and research in the search for conditions for mastering language and painting techniques. It is believed that the amateur by vocation assumes this activity as a career – not a professionalization –, which requires dedication and effort. Assuming this commitment, the amateur by vocation shows willingness to discuss with the art system, not only in their own works, but also by visiting exhibitions, and carrying out

readings on the subject. For this type of amateur, this learning and research process is as important as the result on the canvas. Thus, it is believed that, for the art system, this type of amateur is also important.

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