

SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

From Corporate Artification to Artification in the Third Sector

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ABSTRACT

Artification refers to the process by which objects, practices, or entities not traditionally considered art are transformed into socially accepted art forms. A common example is graffiti, which was once regarded as vandalism but has since evolved into a recognized and celebrated form of art, but organizations and brands can also engage in artification strategies. This special issue of the *Journal of Philanthropy and Marketing* explores the concept of artification, with a particular focus on its application within the third sector. The six papers in this issue examine how artification fosters creativity, innovation, and social impact in non-profits. Through case studies and empirical research, the issue demonstrates how third-sector organizations, such as arts and culture institutions, charities, and foundations, can leverage artification not only to support the arts but also to enhance their legitimacy, build stronger community relationships, and increase credibility with stakeholders. The special issue examines studies on artification in both non-profit organizations and corporate initiatives, emphasizing how art fosters social sustainability through creative partnerships. Collectively, these papers underscore the transformative potential of artification in the third sector, offering valuable insights for non-profits seeking to integrate art into their strategic initiatives and enhance their social impact.

1 | Introduction

Originally defined as “the transformation of non-art into art [that is] a transfiguration of people, objects and action,” artification refers to the process by which objects, practices, or organizations not traditionally associated with art become recognized as artistic or culturally valuable (Shapiro 2004a, 1). Through artification, an object undergoes a transformation that elevates its status, leading to its social acceptance as “art” and, consequently, its legitimization (Massi and Turrini 2020; Shapiro 2004a). According to Shapiro (2004a, 2–3), artification rests on two key assumptions: (1) the superior value of art, understood as a process rather than merely as the finished artwork; and (2) the proliferation of legitimizing entities that serve as “gatekeepers,” allowing organizations to more readily achieve legitimacy through artification.

Well-known examples of artification include the transformation of graffiti from vandalism into an art form celebrated in galleries and public spaces (Campos and Leal 2021; Shapiro and Heinich 2012); breakdancing, which has evolved from a street performance into a recognized dance form now performed on stages and incorporated into choreographed productions (Shapiro 2004b); and fashion design, now considered a form of artistic expression rather than merely functional garments (Shapiro and Heinich 2012). More recently, we have seen the artification of haute cuisine, where science and creativity blend to craft avant-garde culinary experiences, as well as video games, which are gaining recognition for their artistic qualities, with increasing academic and cultural discourse positioning them as an emerging art form (Shapiro and Heinich 2012). Even tattoos, once viewed primarily as a subcultural or rebellious practice, have undergone

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Summary

- Third-sector organizations can leverage artification to gain cultural credibility, bolstering their image and fostering stronger connections with the community.
- Artification allows non-profits to engage stakeholders through creative partnerships and art-based initiatives, deepening community relationships and enhancing social impact.
- Integrating art into campaigns can attract new donors and raise funds effectively by linking mission-driven projects with unique cultural experiences.

artification and are now often regarded as personalized, permanent works of art, showcased in galleries and exhibitions (Kosut 2014).

How does an object become “artified”? According to Shapiro and Heinich (2012) and Shapiro (2019) an object that initially lacks artistic qualities undergoes a process of artification, transforming it into a recognized piece of art. This transformation unfolds in several stages (Shapiro 2019). First, the object is often recontextualized—it is removed from its original setting and placed into an artistic or culturally significant space, such as a gallery, museum, or performance, altering how people perceive it. Next, the object might be reinterpreted or imbued with new meaning through the lens of art. Artists, curators, or other cultural actors may highlight overlooked aspects of the object—such as its form, function, or symbolism—encouraging viewers to see it in a different light. Institutional support plays a crucial role as well. Museums, art critics, and cultural institutions help legitimize the object by including it in exhibitions or cultural discourse, solidifying its status as art. Finally, the object can undergo creative intervention, where artists modify, repurpose, or reinterpret it, thus bestowing it with artistic value. This process ultimately leads to the object’s acceptance within the art world, both socially and culturally. Article 1 deepens this process by integrating a theoretical framework.

Similarly, non-artistic entities such as businesses or non-profits can undergo artification when they incorporate artistic practices, values, or aesthetics into their operations. This transformation often involves integrating creative elements, such as collaborating with artists, supporting art-related initiatives, or embedding art into their branding and organizational culture (Gupta and Joshi 2023). Through this process, these entities can enhance their legitimacy, engage stakeholders in new ways, and elevate their public perception by aligning with the cultural and social capital associated with the arts. Artification allows businesses and non-profits to connect with audiences on a deeper, more emotional level, thus enriching their identity and societal impact (Massi and Turrini 2020).

As this special issue explores, the impact of artification is both profound and multifaceted, offering new opportunities for organizations to connect with their audiences in meaningful ways while enhancing their social and cultural capital.

2 | Artification: A Categorization

Artification is an umbrella term that incorporates both art infusion and art-based management practices (Gupta and Joshi 2023). Both businesses and non-profit organizations engage in artification processes when they support or hire artists (Joy et al. 2014), establish corporate arts museums, for example, Ferragamo or Gucci (Carù, Ostillio, and Leone 2017), display brand products as artworks (Baumgarth 2018; Jelinek 2018; Masè and Cedrola 2017; Masè, Cedrola, and Cohen-Cheminet 2018), start corporate art collections, for example, Deutsche Bank (Kottasz et al. 2007, 2008), or promote arts-related interventions in their work environment (Antal 2012; Antal, Debucquet, and Frémeaux 2018). Indeed, organizations might develop “creative partnerships” (Lewandowska 2015, 33) to embed arts into organizational life (Schiuma 2011) and “use arts as a management innovation for the creation of an organisational context which nurtures human potential and creative thinking” (Schiuma 2017, 1).

Some organizations even introduce “arts-based learning” and “artistic interventions” (Antal 2012, 45) in the personal and professional training of employees through which artists train the staff using performing and visual arts to promote creative problem-solving (Lewandowska 2015, 37). These organizations invite artists to create artworks that “engage the company’s employees intellectually, emotionally, and physically” (Schiuma 2017, 10). From this perspective, artification is used to stimulate employee creativity and risk taking, but also to reflect organizational values and philanthropic support (Hoeken and Ruikes 2005; Kottasz et al. 2007; Williams and Biggemann 2023).

Moreover, artification plays a significant role in the third sector, where it serves as a tool for non-profits to reinforce their mission, build stronger community relations, and enhance stakeholder engagement (Antal, Debucquet, and Frémeaux 2018). Many third-sector organizations, such as arts and culture institutions, foundations, charities, educational institutions, and healthcare providers, have undertaken artification initiatives to enhance their legitimacy and engage with stakeholders on a deeper level. By collaborating with artists and embedding art into their organizational processes, third-sector organizations—such as educational, healthcare, and social care organizations—can not only contribute to the arts but also strengthen their own brand legitimacy and credibility. For example, many non-profit organizations adopt artification to engage communities through cultural programs, art therapy, and collaborative art projects, thereby strengthening their bond with stakeholders and enhancing their credibility (Parsons et al. 2024). This process also offers an innovative way to increase fundraising efforts and attract new donors by linking the organization’s mission with cultural and artistic initiatives.

Massi and Turrini (2020) recently categorized artification initiatives into three levels along a continuum: synergies, contaminations, and hybridizations. *Synergies* are collaborative efforts that serve as an initial point of connection between the arts and business worlds. These partnerships are structured to achieve various objectives without fundamentally altering or compromising the essence of either the brand or the artist involved. Examples of synergies include sponsorship, corporate art collections, and patronage. Tod’s sponsorship for the restoration of the Colosseum and Fendi’s involvement with the restoration

of the Trevi Fountain exemplify corporate sponsorship focused on preserving cultural heritage. A notable instance of corporate art collections is Deutsche Bank's extensive corporate art collection, which not only supports contemporary artists but also enhances the company's image as a patron of the arts (Kottasz et al. 2007, 2008). In the third sector, similar synergies are evident, where non-profit organizations such as arts institutions and foundations collaborate with artists or arts institutions to enhance community engagement and reinforce their mission. For instance, foundations like the Fondation de France, with initiatives such as the New Patrons program, emphasize the importance of citizen-commissioned contemporary art to address social interests. Dynamo Camp's Art Factory (Article 3) blending art therapy with the Camp's charitable mission and influencing public perception of the organization, represents another instance of synergies in the third sector. Article 2 also provides instances of synergies between nonprofit organizations operating in the cultural sector and luxury brands that are part of Fondazione Altgamma and Comité Colbert.

Contaminations occur when key qualities of art transfer to company brands, shaping consumer perceptions (Estes, Brotto, and Busacca 2018; Hagtvedt and Patrick 2008; Hagtvedt, Patrick, and Hagtvedt 2008). These effects are reciprocal: organizations can also influence art, such as when artworks are created based on products (Dion and Arnould 2011), such as an exhibit, or when companies show a strong commitment to the arts, as seen in corporate art museums or foundations. For instance, the Armani exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum is a notable instance where a fashion brand transcends its traditional market, presenting itself within the context of fine art, further solidifying its status as an "artified" luxury icon. The Ferragamo Museum in Florence showcases the history of the brand alongside exhibitions of contemporary art, creating a fusion of fashion and art that enhances the brand's cultural value. Foundations such as Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, and Cartier house contemporary art collections and supports artistic innovation, reinforcing the brand's association with cultural prestige. The Guggenheim Foundation's partnership with Ornellaia to collaborate with artists to create collectible bottles is another instance of contamination (Article 4). Article 6 also illustrates contamination processes in the Italian ceramic industrial sector.

Hybridizations are collaborations marked by a high degree of interaction, where different forms and genres intersect, blending high culture with commercial culture. These hybridizations take various forms: the creation of *art products*, as seen when brands collaborate with artists to produce capsule collections or limited editions (e.g., Takashi Murakami for Louis Vuitton) or collaboration between brands to create unique products, for example, Stabilo and Dolce and Gabbana, where highlighters were transformed into luxury fashion items featuring the vibrant, Baroque-inspired designs characteristic of Dolce and Gabbana (Moysen 2024); *retail artification*, for example, Gucci Garden, where a "new form of spatial aesthetics" is created by incorporating permanent or temporary artworks within retail spaces (Vukadin, Wongkitrungrueng, and Assarut 2018, 279; Vukadin, Lemoine, and Badot 2019); *art-based brand management*, exemplified by the Prada Marfa installation, where the brand is managed through the fusion of art, brand identity, and commerce; and *art-based advertising*, where referencing artworks

in advertisements (e.g., Ed Ruscha x Stella McCarthy) enhances the perceived luxury of the advertised products (Huettl and Gierl 2012; Peluso et al. 2017). Blending social sustainability goals with artistic practices, the Time-Lapse project by Edison, Eos Foundation, and Kayròs creates a unique fusion of art, social rehabilitation, and community engagement, thus exemplifying hybridization (Article 5). Table 1 illustrates some examples of the three levels of artification.

3 | Artification in the Third Sector

Artification may permeate the processes of business companies' (e.g., molding their corporate social responsibility strategy) but also those of third-sector organizations operating in fields such as education, healthcare, humanitarian relief, and social care. Non-profits such as foundations and associations might develop artification processes, as in the case of the Fondation de France, which introduced the New Patrons program in 1993 "to stimulate citizens to commission contemporary art to meet social interests" (Antal 2012, 48).

In the third sector, artification not only enhances organizational visibility but also aids in the development of innovative strategies for community engagement and social impact. Non-profits, such as museums, educational institutions, and charitable foundations, can utilize artification to align with their social mission while simultaneously fostering creativity and cultural development (Antal, Debuquet, and Frémeaux 2018). By artifying their brand, space, and work environment or by collaborating with arts institutions and artists, these organizations can provide their support to the arts while reinforcing their brand legitimacy (Masè, Cedrola, and Cohen-Cheminet 2018), strengthening their commitment to stakeholders other than beneficiaries (Dell'Era 2010), and enhancing their reputation and credibility with donors, volunteers, and the communities they serve (Herranz-de-la-Casa, Manfredi-Sánchez, and Cabezuelo-Lorenzo 2015).

Artification processes have emerged in diverse sectors, including fashion, leisure and tourism, entertainment, sports, and technology (Shapiro and Heinich 2012). Though artification has been explored in contexts such as luxury wines (Joy et al. 2021; Passebois-Ducros, Trinquocoste, and Pichon 2015), luxury fashion (Chailan 2018; Kapferer 2014; Massi and Turrini 2020), and hospitality (Addis et al. 2024; Zelenskaya, Druzhinina, and Berezina 2022), research on the phenomenon remains in its early stages. Surprisingly, there is a lack of research on artification as a process that third-sector organizations undertake to improve their brand, strengthen their relations with the community, and enhance organizational wellbeing. This gap in the literature raises an important question: What does artification mean for third-sector organizations in terms of cultural, social, and economic impact? This is the question that this special issue of the *Journal of Philanthropy and Marketing* seeks to answer. The six papers highlight the multifaceted benefits of artification, including cultural and economic value creation, enhanced brand identity, and increased stakeholder engagement. Through case studies and empirical research, the issue demonstrates how businesses, non-profits, and luxury brands use artification

TABLE 1 | Artification levels and types.

Artification level	Definition	Types	Examples
Synergies	Collaborative efforts connecting arts and business without altering their essence.	Sponsorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tod's for the Colosseum • FENDI for Fountains • BVLGARI and the Spanish Steps • UNIQLO' for MoMA • Hennessy for Street Art Projects
		Patronage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative • Montblanc de la Culture Arts Patronage Award <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The BMW Art Journey • Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative • Fondation de France New Patrons Program
		Corporate art collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deutsche Bank's corporate art program • JPMorgan Chase Art Collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Art Collection • Samsung Art Collection • AT&T Corporate Art Collection
Contaminations	Transfer of artistic qualities to brands, shaping consumer perceptions.	Corporate museums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferragamo Museum • Pirelli HangarBicocca <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armani/Silos • Fondazione Prada • Mercedes-Benz Museum
		Art foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fondation Louis Vuitton • Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Fondation Christian Dior • Hermès Foundation • Montblanc Cultural Foundation
		Exhibitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armani at the Guggenheim Museum • Chanel at the National Art Museum of China • Christian Dior at the Victoria & Albert Museum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balenciaga at the McCord Museum • Barbie at the Museum of Art and Design
Hybridizations	High-degree collaborations blending art and commerce, creating new products or experiences.	Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yves Saint Laurent's Mondrian Collection • John Galliano's Klimt collection • Dolce and Gabbana x STABLO • Adidas x Pharrell Williams • Tom Sachs x Nike
		Retail artification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louis Vuitton's The Eye See You installation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gucci's "Gucci Garden" • Rem Koolhaas for Prada • Swarovski's Crystal World • Kengo Kuma x Starbucks:
		Art-based brand management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prada Marfa installation • BMW Art Car Project • Louis Vuitton's art-based strategy • Chanel's products at Art Basel
		Art-based advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ed Ruscha x Stella McCarthy' #Stellacares <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KAWS x Dior • Trevor Andrew for Gucci • Andy Warhol for Absolut Vodka • Toulouse-Lautrec for Moulin Rouge

to foster creativity, innovation, and social sustainability. Included are studies on artification in luxury fashion brands, art therapy, and corporate initiatives.

4 | Articles in the Special Issue

The first article (Massi, Rojas-Méndez and Pappacena) develops a comprehensive conceptual and theoretical framework for understanding artification, where non-artistic objects, practices, or domains are transformed into entities perceived and valued as art. The framework consists of five key components: art infusion, contextual recontextualization, cultural capital accumulation, market and institutional legitimation, and public perception. Drawing from psychology, sociology, economics, and cultural studies, the paper presents artification across different domains, including sociology, marketing, and the third sector, where it can particularly enhance the emotional appeal and visibility of social causes by transforming charitable initiatives and community projects into artistic expressions. Artification can aid third-sector organizations in gaining cultural capital, legitimacy, and broader public engagement. This preparatory framework offers strategic guidance for leveraging artification in third-sector organizations, serving as a foundational tool for the studies in the special issue.

The second article (Mion Dalle Carbonare, Luchetti, Rurale and Fanin) analyzes the artification process in luxury fashion brands belonging to Altagamma and Comité Colbert, major European organizations in the luxury sector. The study examines how these brands incorporate art into their business strategies, focusing on initiatives from 2019 to 2024 and classifying these initiatives into three categories: synergies, contaminations, and hybridizations. The paper highlights how artification, in the context of luxury fashion brands, can have significant implications for non-profits, particularly through artistic foundations and collaborations. Luxury brands often establish artistic foundations or engage in patronage, which not only supports the arts but also creates opportunities for collaboration with non-profit organizations. These partnerships allow non-profits to leverage the cultural capital and visibility of luxury brands to enhance their own missions. For instance, non-profits can collaborate with luxury brands on art-based initiatives, exhibitions, or charitable events that align with their social goals, while benefiting from the brand's prestige and resources. Through these collaborations, non-profits can amplify their impact by engaging broader audiences and securing greater support for their causes, all while fostering stronger community relations and enhancing their credibility. Thus, artification becomes a strategic tool for non-profits to forge meaningful partnerships with luxury brands, using art as a medium to advance both cultural and social objectives.

The third article (Ostillo and Carù) explores the artification process at Dynamo Camp's Art Factory, where art therapy is used to aid children with severe illnesses. Artists work with children to create artworks, which are then sold to support the Camp's activities. This collaboration provides therapeutic benefits and generates significant cultural and economic value. Results indicate that artists experience personal and professional growth through their involvement, influencing

their creative processes and market value. The Art Factory has become a recognized entity within the art community, attracting well-known artists and integrating new forms of art like crypto art. Moreover, the artworks produced contribute to Dynamo Camp's fundraising efforts, enhancing its sustainability and social impact. This case exemplifies how artification can lead to extensive value co-creation, benefiting multiple stakeholders.

In the fourth article (Ostillo and Carù), the authors argue that brands can change market perceptions and associations through strategic collaborations with art. Ornellaia's "Vendemmia d'artista" initiative exemplifies this by involving artists in creating collectible bottles and labels, transforming the estate into a contemporary art gallery, and supporting the Guggenheim Foundation's "Mind's Eye" program for the blind and visually impaired. The integration of art into philanthropic initiatives demonstrates how art can be leveraged to enhance the social impact of philanthropic efforts. Non-profits can draw inspiration from luxury brands' use of artification-based philanthropy to foster deeper connections with their stakeholders and to reinforce their mission through artistic collaborations.

The fifth article (Addis) investigates the concept of "artification" as a synergy between smart energy companies and contemporary art to promote social sustainability. The paper examines creative partnerships organized by the Italian company Edison, the Eos Foundation, and the non-profit organization Kayròs, which aims to support minors, communities, and families. The study highlights how these collaborations foster social sustainability by engaging young people in art workshops during their probation periods. The study emphasizes the role of contemporary art in creating inclusive communities and improving social outcomes through creative expression and engagement. The paper presents case studies of specific projects, such as the Time-Lapse project, to illustrate the impact of artification in achieving social sustainability goals.

The sixth and final article (Ricci, Massara and De Matteo) is an exploratory analysis of the artification process in the Italian ceramic industrial sector, specifically focusing on Florim Ceramiche. The paper illustrates how Florim demonstrates its engagement with non-profit organizations in the arts and social sectors through partnerships such as the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, where they support the "Doppio Senso, Percorsi Tattili" project—an initiative providing tactile art experiences specifically designed for visually impaired individuals, promoting art accessibility. Another key partnership is with the Fondazione Ingegnere Giovanni Lucchese, Florim's own foundation, which focuses on various charitable activities aimed at benefiting the local community. These partnerships highlight Florim's commitment to philanthropy in both the cultural and social sectors, aligning with its corporate values of beauty, sustainability, and social responsibility.

The special issue explores diverse examples of artification, including corporate art collections, collaborations, and initiatives within non-profit organizations, luxury fashion, and other sectors. It highlights how artification benefits multiple stakeholders by creating cultural and economic value. The special issue emphasizes the transformative potential of artification,

demonstrating how non-art entities can gain social acceptance and legitimacy as art through various processes. In addition, it shows how artification supports organizational goals, enhances brand identity, and fosters creativity and innovation.

5 | Future Research Directions

Future research on artification should explore several areas based on the findings and implications of the papers in this special issue. One promising direction is to investigate how artification can enhance social impact, community engagement, and stakeholder relationships in non-profits, contrasting its effects with those in for-profit sectors such as luxury fashion. Comparative studies across industries can identify the unique benefits and challenges of artification in fostering social sustainability, cultural development, and organizational performance in non-profits. In addition, research could focus on the role of artification in enhancing social sustainability and community engagement. Examining how artification initiatives influence stakeholder relationships and contribute to social and cultural development will offer a broader understanding of its societal impact. Research could explore the long-term effects of artification on non-profits' engagement with their communities and the potential for art-based initiatives to attract new donors, volunteers, and supporters.

Another promising avenue involves examining the intersection of artification and technology in the third sector. The integration of digital and crypto art into non-profit campaigns could offer innovative ways to raise awareness and funding, though further exploration is needed to assess its potential and limitations. Investigating how artification initiatives in non-profits resonate across different cultural settings and emerging markets will also provide valuable insights for organizations looking to expand their global reach.

Finally, ethical considerations, such as cultural appropriation or the commercialization of art within non-profits, must be addressed to ensure that artification practices remain aligned with the social missions of these organizations and are executed in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

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