8 Social Media and the Documentation of Creative Work

New Sites and Insights

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Introduction

In the era of the so-called creativity imperative (Reckwitz 2017) in which individual creativity translates into economic, social, and cultural capital (Townley et al. 2009), the motivation to be creative is surging and so are the normative expectations and social pressure. Valued for its ability to challenge, inspire, and transform existing routines and boundaries, creativity and creative work retain an "aura of mystery" (Bain 2005, 30) that tends to be romanticised. In recent years, documentaries and behind-the-scenes views such as artist studio talks have proliferated, offering insights into the process of creative production and inspiration for personal creativity to a broader audience (Ullrich 2016). At the same time, existing documentaries tend to feature world-renowned artists, feeding into the narrative of the "creative genius" (Bain 2005; Becker 2008) that reproduces the narrative of the extraordinary. The rise and imbrication of social media in daily life, on the other hand, provides creative workers new opportunities to present themselves and their work, allowing for new insights into the creative work process that so far have remained hidden in dominant discourses around creative work, thereby making the process of creative work(ing) more accessible to a broader audience.

In this chapter, we explore the opportunities that social media offers for researching and understanding creative work by turning to publicly available Instagram posts and analysing them as a new data source, providing insights into everyday moments of creative work. While documentaries and social media have already been mobilised to analyse creative workers' self-presentations (e.g., Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019), we argue that social media is not just a platform for self-presentation but also a new site where creative work takes place. It thus offers the opportunity to learn about the mundane practices constituting an important part of creative work—including those that are intangible or usually invisible. Doing so, our chapter introduces social media as a new *site* for creative work that offers new *(in)sights* into the process of creative work. We then ask: *What aspects of creative work do social media posts render visible?* And in

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the process of rendering them visible, *how does this enrich our understanding of creative work*?

Theoretically, we provide a historical overview of the myths surrounding artistic and creative work (e.g., Bain 2005; Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019; Menger 2014), paying particular attention to how social media has impacted (the image of) creative work (e.g., Duffy and Wissinger 2017; Groys 2013). We then turn to social media as a new workspace (Bonneau et al. 2021) and highlight the possibilities that social media offers for learning about hidden aspects of work (Sergi and Bonneau 2016). Empirically, we draw from a qualitative data set that we collected on publicly available Instagram accounts belonging to artists and creative workers. Examining these posts, we find that creative workers are using social media to document moments of their work that otherwise tend to remain invisible. More specifically, these posts render *imperfections* visible, including doubts concerning their own work or struggles about how to take a piece of work further, present *incomplete* pieces of work, providing access to the creative process through its documentation, and expose instances of *impermanence* including fading moods of frustration and reflection as well as joy and excitement.

Our contribution to research is threefold. First, we contribute to existing debates around what defines creative work (Duffy and Wissinger 2017; Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019; Menger 2014) and how mundane practices and imperfections, incompleteness, and impermanence might be constitutive of it. Second, we contribute to the demystification of creative work by discussing how the documentation of incomplete or imperfect work reflects a do-it-yourself ethos that serves as encouragement, sparking interest and confidence among social media followers to engage in creative work themselves (Ullrich 2016). Third, we add to our understanding of social media as a new workspace (Bonneau et al. 2021) and critically reflect on how social media is not just an opportunity to document and share moments of creative work but also a technology that demands content generation as a new facet of creative work.

Literature review

Historical overview of the conditions and myths surrounding creative work

In Western societies, one of the first images of creativity and creative work appeared in the medieval Christian period when God was seen as the primary creator and (male) artists as receivers or mere “channels” of divine inspiration (Bain 2005; Ullrich 2016).[1] In the humanist tradition of the late Renaissance, the social status of artists was reconceptualised and given greater recognition. By the early 17th century, a shift had taken place that positioned humans as the measure of all things and acknowledged artists as the originators of their work. Individual creativity was increasingly valued and worshipped, giving way to the powerful mythos of the “heroic male genius” who possessed creativity as a rare and special gift allowing “him” to

express "himself" in extraordinary masterpieces (Bain 2005; Becker 2008; Csikszentmihalyi and Getzels 1973; Ullrich 2016). During that time, originality came to the forefront and for the artist to be true to "his" vision he had to isolate himself and withdraw from society. By the end of the 18th century, separateness was seen "as an essential quality of any true artist" (Bain 2005, 28). Such isolation was deepened during Romanticism when feelings, imagination, and genius were privileged over reason and rules (Bain 2005). Around the same time the powerful image of the starving artist as a "Bohemian rebel" was constructed, one who was willing to sacrifice status, money, and material comfort for the benefit of individual freedom and self-expression. Creativity, during the Romantic era, became the antidote to stability and conventional ways of living, glorifying instead the idea of precariousness and flexibility that continues to shape the image of the creative worker today (e.g., Eikhof and Haunschild 2007). Likewise, creativity remains associated with effortless insight, colloquially called the "A-ha!" moment, as illustrated by this quote from Steve Jobs: "Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something" (Lucas and Nordgren 2021, 1). Similarly, the myth of the heroic lone male genius continues to be powerful even though it has been challenged from several sides. For example, Becker (1982/2008), in his landmark publication *Art Worlds*, argues that artistic work, rather than being the product of a sole genius, is the product of a collaboration between actors including artists, critics, patrons, gallery owners, jazz club owners, and audiences. This suggests that artistic work is as normative as it is creative, questioning the radicality and originality of creativity while also pointing to the general social, economic, and political conditions that influence its production, distribution, and presentation.

Changes in creative work brought about by the internet

In the modern era, museums and galleries played a decisive role by selecting which art was displayed and made visible to an audience, defining the power regime under which artistic work and creativity functioned (Groys 2013). The rise of the internet, and of social media in particular, fundamentally challenges these established ways by providing—in principle—unrestricted access to a platform. This allows artists to exhibit and distribute their creative work to a broad audience (Ullrich 2016), challenging the elitist approach of museums and galleries.[2] At the same time, unrestricted access does not automatically imply fame for everyone as attention is a scarce resource (Groys 2013). Thus, the more radical shift brought about by the internet vis-à-vis creative work might be that it has uprooted the former division between the production and the exhibition of creative work (Groys 2013). While creativity used to be practised in solitude, it is now brought to the internet and carried out under the gaze of others (Groys 2013).

This permanent exposure fundamentally challenges traditional subject positions of the lone genius but also of the creative work process per se:

> *creative work is creative because it takes place beyond public control—and even beyond the conscious control of the author. [...] Only at the end of this period of absence is the author expected to present a work [...] that would be then accepted as creative precisely because it seemed to emerge out of nothingness. In other words, creative work is the work that presupposes the desynchronization of the time of work from the time of the exposure of its results. Creative work is practised in a parallel time of seclusion, in secrecy—so that there is an effect of surprise when this parallel time gets re-synchronized with the time of the audience. That is why the subject of art practice traditionally wanted to be concealed, to become invisible, to take time out.* (Groys 2013, online)

With the rise of the internet, creative workers are no longer separate nor invisible but *connected* and *visible* to their audiences. In addition, the synchronisation of production and exhibition shifts attention from the final product to the process of its making, with the effect that *the documentation of the art making* becomes a work of art *in itself* (Groys 2013). In this sense, the internet accentuates a trend that emerged in the 1970s with the rise of avant-garde or performance art in which the making of the art through body-space-time interactions, often also involving the audience, is constitutive of the artwork itself.[3] It also marks the beginning of a rising interest in experiential encounters with artists, exemplified in the highly publicised 2009 MOMA hit exhibition: *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present*. The exhibition parallels the rising interest in creativity and "being creative" in Western societies (Reckwitz 2017) leading them to look for inspiration in behind-the-scenes documentaries that feature individual artists at work in their studios (e.g., *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present; Still Life: Ron Mueck at Work; Gerhard Richter Painting; Ai-Weiwei: Never Sorry*[4]). However, while these documentaries may claim to present the 'realities' of creative work, there may be some level of editorial control and defaulting to more idealised representations focusing on megastar artists whose creativity stands out, thus re-continuing the traditional view of creative work as something "extraordinary".

However, such portrayals may be transcended by social media as it offers a broader representation of creative work that does not rely on the fame of well-known artists. As a result, social media may offer the potential for more *everyday representations of creative work* and for getting nearer to some of the experienced realities associated with it. That this might be a promising research avenue is suggested by a recent publication on how design professionals present themselves and their work in the twelve episodes comprising the documentary *Career Ladder* (Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019). Different from what the literature and popular media tend to purport, the

documentary suggests that designers do not consider their creativity as an "exceptional gift" but as a "skill that everyone has, to a certain extent" (p. 6). Far from seeing themselves as "Bohemian rebels or social critics who oppose economic and bourgeois values" (p. 7), the documentary suggests that creative work needs to be sensitive to economic demands. While design might differ from other creative industries such as painting or acting in that it is more customer- and market-oriented and less a calling to pursue "art for art's sake" (Eikhof and Haunschild 2007), the study is instructive in that it demystifies creative work, encouraging more research into first-person accounts that are produced without interference from a researcher and thus provide an unfiltered or backstage look at creative work. In the next section, we focus on social media as a new workspace for creative work and argue that publicly available posts that derive from voluntary, informal, and everyday use of social media provide a rich data source of everyday representations as well as insights into the processes and experience of creative work that tend to remain hidden.

Social media and the new myths around creative work

Research has started to explore how social media impacts creative work. Groys (2013), for example, notes how every artist has become a blogger. In a similar vein, Duffy (2017) and Duffy et al. (2021) document how creative workers use social media, focusing in particular on the possibility for increasing one's reputation and visibility through practices of self-branding. On the other hand, Duffy and Wissinger (2017) explore the mythologies about creative work in the social media age as they feature in popular media. They find that creative work tends to be portrayed as fun, free, and authentic (offering authentic self-expression and creative freedom). By positioning creative work as a labour of love, popular media circulate a new "mythos of passionate work" (p. 4661) that helps to "perpetuate an image of glamour [...] as part of a "creativity *dispositif*" that both disciplines and incites cultural workers and aspirants" (Duffy and Wissinger 2017, 4652, emphasis in original) to pursue an online career.

Duffy's (2017) investigation takes on a further critical note in that she views sharing on social media as calculated activity that serves an explicit professional and economic end. It is worth noting that the creative workers she focuses on include new forms of creative work such as bloggers, vloggers, and Instagrammers who are monetising their visibility directly through sponsored posts and product placement. Studying workers who explicitly turn their visibility into financial gains could be considered as the "glamorous" side of creative work in the social media age. Yet, as we argue, not every creative worker who is posting on social media is doing it in the same way as, for example, Instagrammers. Artists and creative workers may post content without explicitly wanting to be influencers but rather to share ideas, get feedback, or document their progress on a piece of work. In other words,

these individuals use social media platforms in ways that are connected to what they do, but also in a more mundane manner—just like most users of such platforms do. For this reason, we wish to nuance, deepen, and complement existing analysis focused on marketing and branding by examining a broader array of practices that make different aspects of creative work visible. Far from considering megastar artists, we wish to explore the possibilities that social media affords by using publicly available data that artists and creative workers have posted about their work, focusing in particular on the more ordinary, mundane, and non-heroic as a gateway to a richer understanding of creative work. Building on the argument that social media is not only a stage where to present oneself but also a *workspace* (Bonneau et al. 2021) where ideas are crafted and progressively brought to light, where knowledge can be gained and reflexivity sharpened by sharing work to document, legitimise, or criticise it, we set out to explore *What aspects of creative work do social media posts render visible?* And in the process of rendering them visible, *how does this enrich our understanding of creative work*?

Methods

Data collection: working out loud posts as data source

Following our interest in the informal use of social media (rather than the mandatory use including corporate uses prescribed by an organisation), we have been exploring how artists or creative workers use social media in the course of their mundane work activities to document, share, and exchange about their work. We have named this practice working out loud (WOL), thereby emphasising the focus on work, rather than on self-presentation or branding (Sergi and Bonneau 2016). We define WOL as a "communicative and sociomaterial practice where individuals voluntarily turn to public social media platforms to share what is part of their daily work" (Bonneau et al. 2021, 51). Similar to informal watercooler conversations, WOL often addresses aspects of work that are taking place backstage or are otherwise left in the shadows. Such an approach values the mundane over the spectacular, the detail over the grand narrative, and has been inspiring other research on social media (re)presentations of specific professional identities, such as farmers (Riley and Robertson 2021). Here, we expand on this research by examining how social media and WOL posts offer a lens through which we can better understand the daily process and experience of creative work and therefore extend the discussion of the representation of creative practices beyond the dominant narratives found in popular media (e.g., Duffy and Wissinger 2017; Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019). This post[5] provides an illustration of a WOL post.[6] In it, we see a finished piece of work by a visual artist and a caption that details the process of its making.

As we can read, the post is not so much used to promote or sell the piece of work, but rather to give behind-the-scenes access to the practices and techniques they have employed to make it. In the combination of image and text, the post outlines how creative work is often unplannable, takes its time, and is not fully predictable. The artist admits how the process includes "messing around" and gives some guidance and advice about what smaller and larger pieces require. From a WOL perspective, posts like these are a vivid illustration of documenting and exhibiting creative work (Groys 2013) while also providing advice (in the sense of teaching) to one's followers.

We began collecting WOL posts like this by searching public Instagram posts rather than focusing on specific artists. Our inquiry was thus phenomenon-led (what are artists doing when they work out loud on social media?), rather than user-led (who is doing it and why?) A first step of empirical exploration inspired by digital ethnography (Hine 2015) led us to uncover what artists were sharing on Instagram. Instead of restricting the search by defining a priori keywords or hashtags, we explored what could characterise creative work in various settings and performed queries through Instagram's search engine by asking ourselves who could be narrating their creative work (e.g., a painter) and what kinds of words or hashtags this person might use (e.g., #oiloncanvas). As we progressively refined our definition of WOL, we also incorporated its dimensions into our data collection work (e.g., #workinprogress). Combined, these empirical, conceptual, and experiential aspects nourished our exploration in an abductive way and allowed us to immerse ourselves in the wide variety of experiences workers share when they talk about their work and their work experience on social media (Sergi and Bonneau 2021). Then, we gradually discovered a number of hashtags that would prove relevant to come back to (e.g., #artofinstagram, #artistatwork). However, rather than systematically collecting *all* posts found through these hashtags, we captured the instances that fit, broadly speaking, with our general interest in WOL. We thus conducted several rounds of data collection, from which we selected a corpus of 70 posts for our data analysis. Doing so, our examples reflect a purposive sample, opting for a thick data rather than a big data approach (Latzko-Toth et al. 2017).

Data analysis

We documented all posts through screenshots in an Excel file and compiled information about each instance (URL, date, how it was found, etc.), including a column with initial comments and labels. We then engaged in systematic thematic coding in an open and inductive manner. This included coding for the emergent themes related to our first research question, identifying what is rendered visible through the posts. Our analysis considered both the visual and textual elements of posts, using

the descriptions, hashtags, and comments to contextualise the pictures. This led to a list of different themes including the expression of emotions or political opinions, the context setting, the material used, etc. Next, we noted patterns and commonalities that allowed us to group the themes together. Here, we paid particular attention to the images that the posts revealed about creative work and to what extent they complemented or contradicted images of creative work, similar to Eikhof and Choduzkowski (2019) analysis.

We were particularly interested in images that were surprising or seemed to fundamentally differ from practices of conventional self-branding and self-promotion on social media. In doing so, we identified several posts that did not follow the presentation of the glamorous side of creative work as "fun" and "free" (Duffy and Wissinger 2017). Despite the fact that the majority of posts were formulated in a positive tone, we found instances of posts expressing negative elements, such as boredom, anxiety, or anger that we grouped together as expressing themes of *imperfection, impermanence*, and *incompleteness* in creative work, thus complementing our understanding of creative work and allowing us to address our second research question. It is important to note that these themes do not represent traditional categories such as those that grounded theory would bring to the surface, as they are not mutually exclusive (Charmaz 2006). In addition, our analysis rests on what is made present and visible in these posts and does not explore the artists' motivations or intentions. We do, however, consider the accompanying text and self-chosen hashtag. Below, we detail the three themes that we identified and provide illustrative examples that show how they extend existing images of creative work on social media. Table 8.1 provides a summary of the data interpretation process and our findings.

Findings: the "backstage" of creative work

Social media offers a platform to document, exhibit, reflect on, and promote creative work, thereby (re)producing particular images or myths about creative work. As outlined above, our focus here is on the "backstage" or behind-the-scenes lens of what WOL posts reveal about the work process and experience of it. We found several examples of posts that featured at the same time a piece of artwork and comments expressing gratitude to all the creative workers who willingly share their work on social media to help others get creative, learn, and be inspired, sometimes accompanied with hashtags like #artistappreciation or #creativeprocess (like this post,[7] which makes use of these hashtags). Looking at posts that use these hashtags quickly sets the stage for the insights that the following three themes reveal about creative work: moments of imperfection, incompleteness, and impermanence that undo the myth of the extraordinary creative genius. We now explore these three themes.

Table 8.1 Summary of findings

Elements of creative work rendered visible in WOL posts	*Conceptual theme that informs our understanding of creative work*
Publicly acknowledging specific aspects of the work that include: • Doubts or struggles concerning their own work • Pieces of work that can be considered a "failure" or "unsuccessful", e.g., strategies or choices that did not work out • Behind-the-scenes views that show the imperfection of the working conditions	Imperfection
What is visibilised on social media is often not the finished product (art piece) but the incomplete, unfinished work that is still in progress including • Prototypes or ideas that are presented to show how things develop (or fail to develop) • Reflections about the situation with a link to goals/intentions/milestones (sometimes not achieved) • Temporality	Incompleteness
Showing ephemeral/informal/unacknowledged aspects related to the fleeting experience of work including • Evaluating momentary situations/choices • Expressing moods, doubts, frustration as well as joy, happiness, success • Re-evaluation of past decisions	Impermanence

Imperfection

The theme of imperfection features prominently in the WOL posts we have collected. It refers to all the elements that could be categorised as mistakes, mishaps, or processes that did not turn out in a way that satisfies the artist. Different from the general positivity bias and the glamour myth that is circulated in popular media (Duffy and Wissinger 2017), this theme provides an interesting counter-narrative: creative work, far from being an effortless "A-ha!" moment (Lucas and Nordgren 2021) is defined by many instances of imperfection and strenuous failed attempts. With social media's openness, it becomes interesting to note that these elements—inherent to any creative process—are made publicly visible. Posts exposing imperfection can also be about the final piece emerging from a process of creation, showing a result that can be characterised (and is sometimes characterised by the artists themselves) as "not good", "not

working", or a "failure", for various reasons, like the choice of material, the choice of technique, the execution, the working conditions, among others.

Even more, these elements can be acknowledged in a variety of ways. On occasion, such an acknowledgement is limited to being shown and shared, in a post that mainly presents the imperfection. In other posts, artists go beyond simply exposing the imperfection and use this imperfect result to reflect on the material dimensions of their practice, or on the challenges of artistic endeavour in general. Posts that showcase imperfections also allude to doubts artists may have as they progress in realising a piece, or the struggles they face or have faced (either materially, in execution, or emotionally).

Reflective notes can provide additional insights into the process of making including the struggles and doubts creative workers face. Some posts, like this example,[8] where the artist documents imperfections in a reflective manner, provide insights related to the practice of passing on knowledge/ experience, but others include different relations to imperfections, like humour or anger, for example. As is the case with many posts on Instagram, hashtags also play a key role in characterising what the post makes visible. For example, we can find many instances of the use of the rather direct #makemistakes and #artmistake (like here[9]), as well as the hashtag #artfail (used over 29,500 times in early March 2023).

Posts that discuss mistakes or failures—for example, in drawing, painting or sculpting—offer another illustration of how parts of the creative work, like failed attempts and "starting over" that usually remain hidden from public view, are made visible through social media and provide the reader with a better understanding of what creative work entails: "starting over"—again and again (see this timelapse[10] for an example, where the artist writes "wanted to share this to show that all artists, no matter the level, have days where they mess up"). While a perfect finished product of creative work retains an aura of mystery, seeing the process of its making as well as its imperfections makes creative work more accessible, suggesting that creativity—far from emanating from a "genius"—is a practice that is defined by many failures and days when artists "mess up". The central message here is that creative work requires the courage to try it out, which can be exemplified by the use of other hashtags, like #daretocreate.

Incompleteness

Based on our data collection and analysis, sharing steps along the process of creating a new piece seems to be a habitual part of what artists and creative workers do on social media. Completed art pieces are, of course, featured on artists' feeds, but often alongside photos and captions that narrate the process of their creation. Such incompleteness can be revealed in many ways, by showing the initial ideas or prototypes where the piece started, the preparation needed before beginning the work (e.g., the setup necessary to start working on a new piece), and all intermediary states imaginable.

Intermediary states may also showcase strategies that are working, or approaches that may be failing. In this sense, showing the incompleteness of a piece may represent an occasion to also expose imperfections, pointing again to the vast array of elements that may be conveyed through a single Instagram post. A recurring theme in many posts is the idea that creative work is—by definition—*work in progress*. Indeed, the hashtag #workinprogress (and variations, like #wip and #wipart) appeared recurrently in our data collection. Making the link to the prior theme by pointing out that creative work does not only imply starting over but is constantly evolving and never really finished. In this sense, it contrasts starkly with the portrayal of creative work as easily marketable (Duffy and Wissinger 2017). On Instagram, one can find an abundance of posts that allude to this theme of incompleteness, and that discuss how creative work does not only entail a "final masterpiece" but really develops in small steps of continuous improvements, like this one.[11] Indeed, the hashtag #workinprogress (or #wip in its shortened form), used in connection to artistic endeavours abounds on Instagram, pointing to the widespread use of social media to share ordinary progress on creative projects.[12]

Another illustration of incompleteness can be seen in posts that describe projects that are not finished and may never be finished, like the making of this tenor ukulele.[13] Besides admitting that creative work involves many instances of incomplete versions, this post also highlights an element of temporality (here captured in the comment, "for a really long time … maybe one day I'll finish it"). What is interesting here is what Groys (2013) has noted about the changing nature of creative work through the internet: documenting the process of its making becomes an artwork in itself. In other words, the documentation of incomplete creative work not only provides an insight into how the process evolves but it also shows that documenting (as a form of exhibiting it) becomes part of creative work, suggesting not only a change in the *image* of creative work but also in its *nature*.

One could argue that photos of incompleteness, such as photos or videos of artists at work in their atelier are not new and have been part of exhibitions and books for many decades. However, what is different with social media platforms is that the possibility of making the process visible is now widely available to anyone, as long as they are users of the platform. Furthermore, such platforms do not impose limits on what artists and creative workers might want to share (except for when artwork gets censored—see footnote 2), allowing for the possibility of capturing and making public all steps of a process, either through photos or videos. Indeed, with other technical functionalities available to anyone, any artist can nowadays make a time-lapse video (an accelerated version of a long video) exposing the full process to anyone. While making such videos was possible in the past, it required technical knowledge and material that has now become accessible to a vast number of people through smartphones. The presence of such technology in artists' hands and pockets, combined with the ease of use and

plasticity of social media, has allowed more artists to show and talk about what they are doing as they are doing it. Coming back to Instagram, we can see many posts where artists and creative workers expose the incompleteness of a piece, and comment on where they are in their process, on how things are shaping up, if their plans and intentions are materialising as expected, or on the dead ends in which they might find themselves. Interestingly, in the process of showing and commenting on the work in progress, artists may also share tips and tricks to achieve a piece or an effect, which might include revealing the inner workings of a piece. This can be seen in the example of this sculpture,[14] where the artist shows its incompleteness while describing how the piece is being made. This casts creative work almost like a collaborative achievement, similar to what Becker (2008) had described. Rather than art worlds, social media is an illustration of *creativity communities* where creative workers interact with their audience and colleagues.

In this sense, exposing incompleteness through social media not only contributes to documenting in a mundane fashion the process of making a piece, but may help and inspire other artists. Furthermore, it can even expose aspects that may otherwise appear mysterious to an onlooker when considering a finished piece (like a finished sculpture). Similar to moments of imperfection, creative work in its incompleteness suggests a kind of *do-it-yourself* manual. Unveiling the process of its making can encourage others to engage in creative work themselves (Ullrich 2016), putting forth a democratised understanding of creative work that anyone is capable of engaging in.

Impermanence

The third conceptual theme we noticed in our material refers to all ephemeral and fleeting aspects associated with the process of creative work, aspects that accompany artists and creative workers as they are progressing, but that are not included in their finished pieces, or in what is produced along with the final piece (such as a formal description of a piece for a catalogue). These elements are a part of daily work and experiences, like thoughts and reflections on what artists are doing or dealing with in their overall practice (hence not reflections on imperfections or on a specific step in the completion of a piece), passing moods, expressions of doubts, frustration or joy, momentary feelings of having achieved something, or other reflections on what is lived from the artist's experience (see this post[15] alluding to impermanence in the form of reflection on one's artistic practice).

Posts on social media thus allow for the capture of elements that would otherwise leave no trace and remain unnoticed or that refer to the working conditions/setting that are part of the process but not inscribed in a visible manner into the pieces. Impermanence may also refer to all the elements that are tried out as variations in the process of working on a piece, but that may be discarded and not make it into the final piece, as suggested by this post[16] showing an experiment with unknown (at the time of the post) results.

Impermanence also refers to the ephemeral nature of social media visibility. Even if technically, WOL posts persist beyond their publication, so that it is possible to access them asynchronously by going back or by launching a search, their dissemination and access by other users are characterised by immediacy and instantaneity. Social media publications follow one another at a frantic pace on the user's feed, creating a continuous flow of posts. Indeed, older posts are immediately replaced by new ones and end up being relegated to more rarely consulted spaces. Artists and creative workers document things as they happen, in the action, knowing that they have no control over the pace at which they will disappear from their audience's view. This might challenge traditional ideas around art's permanence (Groys 2013), and it can also induce stress or anxiety among creative workers as they constantly need to update and produce new events to create a form of visibility amid social media's ephemerality. This is vividly illustrated in the following post,[17] which voices anxiety about the pressure to be productive and to post on social media as a new facet of creative work.

Conclusion

In the past, being an artist was often associated with the idea of working secluded and disconnected from society. Pieces of work would only be shared when finished, to have a surprising, unexpected effect (Groys 2013; Ullrich 2016). The new practices of sharing unfinished work and letting followers participate in the art work's becoming alter this view and fundamentally challenge the relationship between artists and their audience as well as their artistic self-concept. According to Ullrich (2016), artists like Mondrian, Beckmann, or Rothko would have never agreed to reveal their works in progress. It was essential to their sense of self as artists to remain independent. However, in today's creativity-driven society, scholars have claimed that artists are motivators, sources of inspiration, and guides for others to explore their creativity and become creative (e.g., Ullrich 2016). As we suggested in our findings, seeing *the beauty of imperfection* or *incompleteness* in behind-the-scenes posts renders creative work more accessible and less mystical. Those images might serve as encouragement to try it out for oneself, sparking interest and confidence among followers to engage in creative work. It reduces the threshold and status difference between artists and followers making it easier to identify with the artist. Given this shift in relationships, some speak of digital democratisation, where the documentation of incomplete or unfinished works in progress is thought to provide access to knowledge to those who did not have access before, promising that "people just like us can succeed if we put in enough effort" (Duffy 2017, 99).

On a more critical note, our findings also reveal that not only the image of creative work has changed but also its nature. In the context of social media, it has become somewhat of an imperative for artists and creative workers to

be connected and to show and share their work as part of their creative work. These practices, along with the changed relationship between author and community, promote new subjectivities, such as the entrepreneurial subject and culturpreneur (e.g., Flisfeder 2015; Loacker 2013). Artists are increasingly seen as independent enterprises and artistic values are fused with entrepreneurial ones (e.g., Duffy 2017; Eikhof and Haunschild 2007). As a consequence, art (creativity) and commerce (economy) are no longer opposing poles but merged in the realm of the debate about creative industries (Duffy and Wissinger 2017; Loacker 2013), while in practice, creative workers continue to experience the tensions that such merging implies (see in particular the post above that critically reflects on how creative work nowadays demands online engagement). Creative work implies creativity but also productivity —and the creation of content—not only for oneself and one's artistic practice but also for the social media platform.

To conclude, our findings make three contributions. First, we contribute to existing debates around what defines creative work (Duffy and Wissinger 2017; Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019; Menger 2014) and how mundane practices and imperfections, incompleteness, and impermanence might be constitutive of it. Second, we contribute to the demystification of creative work by showing that it is not the product of a creative genius but a mundane, often tiresome, and frustrating endeavour that is embedded in a community of followers and other creative workers that share, comment, and motivate each other, thus creating new images of artists as "one of us" (Duffy 2017) and suggesting that "creativity is a skill that everyone has" (Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019, 6). Third, we add to our understanding of social media as a new workspace (Bonneau et al. 2021) by suggesting that *social media work* has become an *integral part of creative work* that entails writing blog entries, sharing pictures on Instagram, and uploading videos on YouTube (Groys 2013). The intent might be to receive feedback and advance one's work or to create a cathartic moment by sharing emotions or inner struggles. But the creation of online content for social media platforms seldom happens spontaneously and often relies on the orchestration of several elements and skills. It thus creates new demands on creative workers (Duffy 2017), for example by having to follow updates on apps, change platforms, and adapt their skills accordingly (Duffy et al. 2021) leaving less time for creative work. Yet, some have argued that blogging, vlogging, and Instagramming are, in fact, the "new models of creative work" (Duffy and Wissinger 2017, 4655) so that social media is not just a new workspace for creative workers to document and share moments of creative work but also a technology that demands content generation as a new facet of creative work not discussed so far.

To sum up, this chapter has illustrated the relevance of social media as a new *site* of creative work whose investigation in the form of WOL posts as data source provides *new insights* into the processes of creative work, altering the "myth" of creative work in the social media age.

Notes

1 In this section, we review research that has focused primarily on artistic work and the image of creativity. With the rise of the creative industries, the notion of creative work has proliferated, encompassing disciplines that extend far beyond the original notion of artistic work (such as painting, literature, or performing arts). While we acknowledge these differences, much of what we know about the myths pertaining to creative work has its origins in what the literature has described as artistic work. We therefore use artistic work and creative work interchangeably in this section (see also Bain 2005; Groys 2013).
2 However, the apparent openness of social media, compared to museums and galleries, may be limited by these platforms' policies, especially regarding content moderation—which might become an issue of censorship. See for example the cases of multimedia artist Stephanie Sarley and Japanese photographer Nobuyoshi Araki, as described in the following articles: https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/mar/10/stephanie-sarley-provocative-art-instagram-blood-oranges-feminism-sexuality
https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/oct/16/vienna-museums-open-adult-only-onlyfans-account-to-display-nudes
3 https://www.theartstory.org/movement/performance-art/
4 https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2073029/; https://www.charbonartspace.com/ron-mueck-screening-yqax8; http://www.gerhardrichterpainting.com/#/the-film/; https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1845773/
5 https://www.instagram.com/p/BT7r7IMlPeS/?hl=fr
6 It would have been optimal to include some of the Instagram posts we collected directly in this chapter. However, due to copyright issues we were unable to do so. Instead, we describe in general terms some of the posts we found and refer with links to illustrative examples. We also include relevant hashtags that can be used by readers to look up posts like the ones we discuss in this chapter.
7 https://www.instagram.com/p/CRjfhOMDfRa/
8 https://www.instagram.com/p/CS-jx5xpNho/
9 https://www.instagram.com/p/CTzbethISPz/
10 https://www.instagram.com/p/B8M30m2gWF6/
11 https://www.instagram.com/p/CQe756bA2wk/
12 Indeed, the hashtag #workinprogress has been, at the time of writing this chapter, used on more than 20 million posts. These posts may not all be about artistic or creative work and may be used in ways that are not limited to describing an actual work in progress. As mentioned previously, uses of hashtags do not follow strict norms and users remain free to use all the hashtags they wish, in the manner they see fit for what they want to communicate with their posts.
13 https://www.instagram.com/p/CPH6N2MsfEU/
14 https://www.instagram.com/p/CUjBUp5rggi/
15 https://www.instagram.com/p/BSnydwDFL4h/
16 https://www.instagram.com/p/B4c_swpHp2K/
17 https://www.instagram.com/p/CTXe9-WI-eF/?img_index=1

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