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Title of Thesis:

The Ability to Pursue Visual Arts as a Legitimate Career Path in Trinidad and Tobago: An Assessment of the range of Opportunities and Limitations.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Visual Art is a diverse field associated with many misconceptions that hinder the growth and development of future artists. Research has shown that Visual art is marginalized based on its perceived value within society. This study aims to determine and link the connection between perceived misconceptions and the actual opportunities or experiences within the field. Based on the review of literature on the contributions of theories relating to the environment and experience that occur in the field of visual arts, an online questionnaire and an interview was distributed to persons who were pursuing Visual Arts and persons who were not. Analysis of the results indicated that Visual arts is an intense career path filled with various opportunities that require a lot of experience, skill and knowledge to ensure success within the field. The results indicate that misconceptions does have an impact on the growth and development of visual arts within society. With this, it is recommended that Visual Art requires modern teaching strategies along with sufficient support and facilities to ensure effective growth and development among potential and upcoming visual artists.

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# INTRODUCTION

## RATIONALE

For far too long, the perception of Visual Art as a career path has been criticized, spat on, condemned, cursed at, stigmatized, stamped on, discriminated and completely audaciously disapproved by many in society. Despite the diverse range of opportunities available to those pursuing Visual Art as a career path, its significance is belittled, scorned and obstructed by misconceptions that exist within society. In Trinidad and Tobago, one can argue that there is a preconceived notion that Visual Arts is futile and impractical as a stand-alone career path. Compared to other fields of study, like Architecture and Engineering, Law and Public Policy, Business Management and Administration or Science and Technology, the amount of people pursuing the Arts full time in reality is significantly lower. However, the number of persons interested in doing the Arts is remarkably much higher than one would think. This exposes the hidden debilitating effects these misconceptions have on potential and interested artists in society. The study aims to confront and revise the dominant misconceptions that exist by assessing the range of opportunities available, the potential risks involved and the precautions available in order to accomplish a more favorable success rate and output in the field of study.

In Trinidad and Tobago, many people in the labour force have said and believe that success in pursuing Visual Art is extremely low due to its highly competitive nature as they boldly assume that Visual Art is not a valid or sustainable career path. Believe it or not, some simply do not even consider it to be a real job. However, they assume that jobs that require little to no creativity to be varied 'real' jobs such as Cleaners or Garbage collectors. This study aims to justify the validity and legitimacy of Visual Arts as a career path by demonstrating the characteristics of a legitimate job and career path.

## **THESIS STATEMENT**

In Trinidad and Tobago, it can be argued that misconceptions and bias hinder the growth and development of Visual Art as a career path and destroys its legitimacy.

## **PARAMETERS**

The research is conducted from September 2020 to April 2021 in Trinidad and Tobago and will examine the social impacts of misconceptions on Visual Arts in society. It will focus on the perceived viewpoints of persons in the field as well as those out of it. Both perspectives will add a sense of variety which will help reduce monotonous one-sided standpoints.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To identify the scope of career opportunities in the field of Visual Arts.
2. To outline precautionary measures to prevent failure in the field.
3. To investigate the connection between misconceptions and ignorance in the field.
4. To demonstrate the characteristics of a valid job and career path.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this research is to gain a more in-depth understanding of Visual Arts as a career path and the misjudgments people unconsciously make about it based on their perceived preconceptions. For this research both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used in order to collect primary data as this allowed for a combination of numerical measurements and in-depth exploration into the topic. They came in the form of a questionnaire

and an interview. Secondary documentation sources were also used to contrast previous ideas with present day notions.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

The questionnaire consists of 12 multiple choice questions along with 3 (5-point) rating scale response questions. The aim was to conduct an online questionnaire with 10 persons who were not pursuing Visual Arts as a subject area in the University of the West Indies, 7 persons outside the university in the labour force and 17 students studying Visual Arts at the University of the West Indies at random. This was done to evenly distribute questionnaires among Visual Art students and non-visual Art students to ensure that the data is equivalently stabilized or balanced to prevent the over-pouring of input of bias for one sided views. Participants were given 5 minutes to fill in the questionnaire anonymously, and all 34 persons responded. All responses were completed, compiled, recorded and were then included in the discussion analysis. In order to gain a better insight on the matter, an interview was done by 2 anonymous teachers, 1 was a Visual Arts teacher and the other 1 was not. The interviews were all carried out online due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions in place. As a result, all answers were recorded in the programme instantaneously. Existing data from journals were sourced online as well.

### **DATA UTILIZATION**

Before analysis, the gathered data was prepared and organized. The dataset was then checked for missing data. After, it was then analyzed using a statistical software program. The interviews were then transcribed and open coded through content analysis to categorize key themes and identify patterns. Eventually, each theme was analysed to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perception.

Questionnaires do not necessarily provide accurate information all the time as it is highly susceptible to dishonesty, unanswered questions and may not be the best method for conveying or capturing deep or well thought out emotional responses. However, it allows input to be gathered from a large audience anywhere in the world with full anonymity, is inexpensive as it is an affordable way of gathering data and can be compared or contrasted easily to measure change overtime. On the other hand, Interviews are usually time consuming and provides less anonymity which can be a big concern for respondents. However, they provide more in-depth information and understanding into the participants' viewpoint.

## **CHAPTER OUTLINE**

This study consists of three chapters. Chapter one presents various information from different sources at diverging as well as converging perspectives on why Visual art is important, the challenges it faces and the opportunities available within all aspects of society. Chapter two puts forward findings relating to the perception of the justification of Visual Arts as a Career path within the context of Trinidad and Tobago through interviews and questionnaires. While chapter three examines the findings by discussing the effects that the responses have through the topic statement.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to the research article, “Why Do We Teach Art Today? Conceptions of Art Education and Their Justification” by Richard Siegesmund (1998), art education and its legitimacy had a peculiar problem in which it was perceived to possess a vague and fleeting sense of valuability that was evasive. The value of art education and the time given to it in school curriculums had created a gap that made art education disappear. This meant that there was no room for art to be taught at a time of narrowly conceived outcomes about art education. As a result, Visual art had been marginalized due to the apparent “inability to build a persuasive educational case for the arts, to be clear about why art education is important, and what art education can be” (Siegesmund 199). This forced art educators to fight to maintain the presence of the discipline’s legitimacy in school curriculums by questioning the reasons for teaching it. While there are diverse conceptions of what art is, there should be empirical evidence of a clearly articulated, durable and persuasive justification for art education. Art educators should be able to justify what is being taught and why as “an awareness of differences allow for choices to be made, whereas unquestioning and unreflective acceptance of a position precludes choices” (Neperud 1). With this, “unless art education is perceived as providing a body of knowledge worth knowing, it will remain marginalized.” (Siegesmund 209).

The book “Opportunities in Visual Arts Careers” by Mark Salmon (2009) highlights the grave importance and effectiveness of Visual Arts both culturally and economically in today’s world. He notes that “art is not simply something that is restricted to art museums and galleries. It is something that is basic to the experience of everyday life.” (Salmon xi) He goes on to describe the surrounding environment and claims that it is full of opportunities for Visual Artists. This becomes evident in places that one would not normally expect like grocery stores,

bookstores, clothing stores, fast food restaurants and also many other businesses that rely on physical products for consumers to make purchases. The evidence shows up in the designs of the packaging of items, business logos, labels, interior space designs and even the literal products which are constantly advertised and intended to be more pleasing to attract customers and potential buyers. On the other hand, culturally, Visual Art is dramatically noticeable in places that sell clothing for fashion, religious ceremonies and organizational purposes. This is proof that the perception of Visual Art being limited to galleries and museums discredits the contribution of applied and commercial art as a useful skill in the economy. Despite the fact that art has many purposes and functions in society, it's main intention is intended to convey a message or give an identity to an item, person or organization using the principles and elements of design. With this, one would be able to see "how dependent our culture is on visual information produced by artists" (Salmon xi) and will realise that without their contribution, life would feel bland and boring.

In the article, "Helping Students Contemplate a Career in Art." *Art Education* by Ulbricht (2001), the author states that education about art careers is not being taught enough by art teachers. It is noted that "Advanced students who have learned a lot about art often have little knowledge of how to use their knowledge in an art career" (Ulbricht 41). Despite this, there is an apparent awareness of the difficulties that art students face to support themselves when leaving school. However, in spite of knowing this, art educators still persist in preparing students to be potential artists without putting enough effort to addressing the problem. Eventhough efforts have been made to broaden the scope of art education from art educators by implementing related disciplines in the field around art education like art history and studio practice, it "often excluded the application of artistic principles for home, industry, community, and student needs" (Ulbricht 41). With this mentioned, as art opportunities

continue to widen, it is crucial that art educators provide students more knowledge about art career experiences and opportunities so that art students finishing school would be able to make more intelligent choices on the job. As a result, it is recommended that the goals of art career education should be considered along with an awareness of the “(1) variety of art careers, (2) multidimensional areas of art careers, (3) education and skills required, (4) possibilities of growth and (5) the interrelationships for various art career options.” (Ulbricht 42).

According to the article, “Career Education in the Visual Arts.” *Art Education* by Geahigan (1981), the author states that many schools in the United States of America have already implemented career education within school curriculums and have considerably benefited from it. It is deemed as a useful and not separate area of study that encourages participation and builds motivation to engage in a simulated practice for the future world of work that requires a substantial amount of skill, knowledge and particular attitude in the field. However, due to the leadership of career education mostly being outside of Visual Art expertise, more efforts by art teachers need to be made to establish a form of career education that focuses on Visual Arts as a subject area. It is suggested that teachers can make a difference by involving students in activities related to career growth and development. They can also inform students about the available art related vocational and avocational opportunities that exists and familiarize students about the various art related occupations that utilizes the community’s resources in the society. The field of Visual Art in reality is immensely diverse in opportunities and incorporates many different occupations including: painters, sculptors, printmakers, ceramists, jewelers, weavers, architects, graphic artists, calligraphers, advertising artists, layout artists, interior designers, illustrators, fashion designers, photographers, costume designers, fabric designers, industrial designers, landscape architects, stage designers, furniture designers, medical illustrators and much more. While it is

crucial to be aware of these opportunities, it is also important for art educators to teach students about the nature of the various working conditions, possible incomes expected and the required abilities for some career opportunities. This would help introduce students to the various workings of the Visual Art world and would also help to break misconceptions about the legitimacy of Visual arts in society. There are many methods of relaying this information to students including: field trips, internships, classroom visitations by established artists, films, simulations and more. With this, one would now be able to see that “A first-hand acquaintance with artists, designers, and other people in the arts, and with the kind of lives that they lead is an effective antidote to the stereotypes students often have” (Geahigan 39).

According to the research paper “Creative futures for new contemporary artists: Opportunities and barriers” by Lee, et al. (2018) the authors note the difficulties fine artists face during their Visual Art journey. It states that most self-employed artists are confronted by “the uncertainty of contractual and contingent work in the creative industries” (Lee et al. 9) as it may be financially and emotionally difficult; especially for young artists as they usually struggle during the first few years after graduating. Some artists may not be financially equipped to provide for production and traveling cost incurred during the process. While others may lack commercial awareness and may not know how to value artworks effectively at a price that meets its value while gaining a substantial amount of profit. Another barrier observed was the fact that some artists didn’t care much about entrepreneurial gains as their mindsets were more focused on why they created work rather than how much it would cost and the benefits of self promotion. With this, one should be aware that “There is a danger in assuming that artists are motivated purely or principally by artistic as opposed to economic imperatives.” (Lee et al. 18). This was viewed as a mental construct that seemed alien to some artists as only a few artists would

actively seek opportunities to allow for further sales by finding more exhibitions that could have increased self promotion. From this, a major concern by both artists and non practicing artists was the issues that came when trying to sustain the creation process. One would argue that exhibitions are “a one-off rather than an enduring platform” (Lee et al. 16) in which sustainability due to insufficient funding and financial support by organizations was limited. It was recommended that more mentoring opportunities and relationships should be promoted within the available space. There was even a perception of the reluctance for institutions to take risks for helping and investing in artists that are not familiar or widely recognized which caused for the exclusion of talented artists who lacked formal art education. This highlighted a discriminatory attitude by organizations who were unwilling to take risks with persons of economically deprived backgrounds which could have potentially promoted diversity among artists and artworks.

On the other hand, it is noted that artists gained a lot of benefits from exhibitions. The empirical evidence states that artists can use exhibitions as a useful ‘steppingstone’ to propel their artistic capabilities and self confidence towards a beneficial direction. From this, exhibitions can authorize and promote exposure along with recognition throughout different mediums. It also encourages networking among aspiring and professional artistes as it creates opportunities to meet and indulge in debates which could bring about constructive criticism and feedback during the process. Alongside this, artists may also have to work with curators and would have to pick or decide where their artwork would be displayed with adequate reasoning and justification for the decision made. Not only are exhibitions useful for working experience but is also helpful for understanding the marketing and financial roles or duties required for artists. It ultimately creates a space that provides opportunities for educational and motivational

growth within the field of Visual Arts. With this, it is clear that these benefits reveal the efforts made and the opportunities given to artists within institutions despite the challenges faced by upcoming artists who seek and take part in exhibitions.

In the research article “Assessment in the Visual Arts: Challenges and possibilities” by Mark Graham (2019), from another standpoint, the author learnt that actual first-hand experience provides reliable insight into the opportunities which exists, and the challenges students face within a classroom. From it, one would realize that learning is actually more than just the information a teacher tries to communicate and teach to students as not many out of the field of study have taken enough time to consider the strategies art teachers tend to implement for different learning styles. When observed closely, one would see that a beneficial and effective learning experience requires an environment that fosters growth through the freedom to experiment, make mistakes and think independently to learn from it. He notes that an art classroom “is not an environment that punishes experimentation, hides possibilities, or is satisfied with the current state of artmaking, school culture, or society.” (Graham 176). It is a genuine form of empowerment given to students unlike other fields of study; and despite this, many teachers out of Visual Arts unconsciously utilize assessments to threaten or reward students to control and manage behaviours portrayed from students. Eventhough it can be proven that assessments potentially limit creativity portrayed by students, it is still insisted that art education be taught, reported and measured in a standardized manner by educational policy makers for it to even have a voice within the school system.

The problem becomes evident as a demand for accountability and adequate justification is expected for the teaching styles, materials and efforts used within the Visual Art school system. When one understands the differences expected for the goal of learning, one would be

able to see that accomplishing objectives through strict compliance and efficiency is not as effective as learning from experience, inquiry and the exploration of different subject matters. This is an opportunity that allows the students of the Visual Art sector to do what other fields of studies are unable to do effectively during the learning process within the educational system. With this, students are given the right and freedom to break conventional norms and outdated beliefs of learning to create in a space that fosters spontaneous ingenuity and innovative ideas. When one does this, one can be critically aware of things that affect the learning experience both internally and externally and would be able to manifest unanticipated outcomes which has the potential of bringing about solutions in a closed off or restricted system. One effective method of assessments that Visual art students have been required to produce have been journal portfolios which have been utilized as a tool to track investigations, interrogations, inquiries, explorations and experimentations over a period of time. This has allowed teachers to see the students' growth and development throughout the given time frame with the hope of impacting, contributing and having lasting effects on a student's applicability to relevant understanding of information and knowledge within the field.

Another problem that teachers should be aware of is the outdated assumptions placed within the learning and training criteria of the Visual Arts curriculum. It is a misconception that suggests that being a true artist involves the same training and understanding of traditionally skilled based foundational activities. It is observed that "The emphasis on foundations may be defeating for secondary art students who are not planning to be any type of professional artist" (Graham 181) and eventhough it could be used as an extremely effective way to explain the fundamental aspects of art and design, the curriculum should not be interpreted as an absolute and inflexible format that fits all students. Despite this, it is unarguably evident that the basics of

conventional practices and rules have a crucial role within all educational fields. However, it still should not be confused as an all-encompassing tool and aspect of learning for all students as many can and have become completely disinterested and unmotivated by a lack of focus into other aspects of the given field of study. With this, one would be able to see that the core judgements and rules placed on students by educators can dissuade potential artists from the field of study and may have a negative impact on the perception of available opportunities within the Arts. From this, changing the perception of how Visual Art is taught, conveyed and assessed within the educational system can create a shift in the understanding of the usefulness of art, the opportunities available and the steps that could be taken to prevent poor judgments and criticisms about the study and pursuit of Visual arts as a suitable career path.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FINDINGS

The data presents many observations with the intention to meet the objectives of this thesis.

#### **QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS**

The findings highlight the agreement of approximately 97.1% of respondents who participated in the questionnaire indicated that Visual Arts should be encouraged and pursued by people within the country. To add, they have been highly aware that its importance is not widely acknowledged by people of the country as 79.4% of respondents do not believe that citizens see its importance and value within society. It is also fairly understood by 61.8% of respondents who agree that Visual Arts possess a wide range of available opportunities; and while this is true, only 55.9% of the respondents were able to list at least five jobs within the field of Visual Arts. However, 61.8% of the respondents don't think it would be a suitable complimentary skill. To add to that, exactly 55.9% of the respondents think that Visual Art has the potential to be a strong stand-alone career path. It should also be noted that 55.9% of respondents strongly believe that Visual Art is not just an integral part of intellectual development but is an important aspect and area of study in our educational system as seen in figures 1 and 2. Generally most respondents had both agreed and strongly agreed about it playing a pivotal role in our educational system.

With this in mind, while figure 3 stated that 73.5% of the respondents had both agreed and strongly agreed that Visual Art was a legitimate career path, there were mixed views about what career is most beneficial and what career had the highest potential for a sustainable income as seen in figures 4 and 5. However, what was most unsettling was the fact that 52.9%, which was the majority of the respondents compared to other fields of study, had chosen and believe that the entire Arts, Culture and Entertainment industry have the lowest potential for a substantial income flow as seen in figure 6.

**13. Visual Arts should be an important aspect of our educational system.**

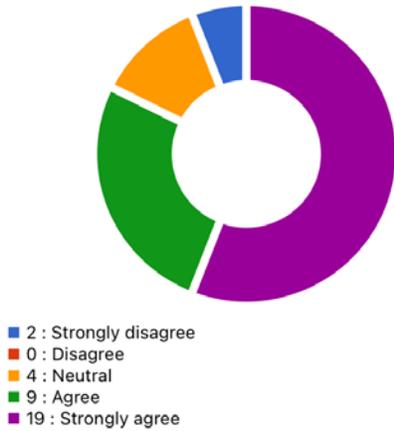


Fig 1.0

**14. Visual Art is an integral part of intellectual development.**

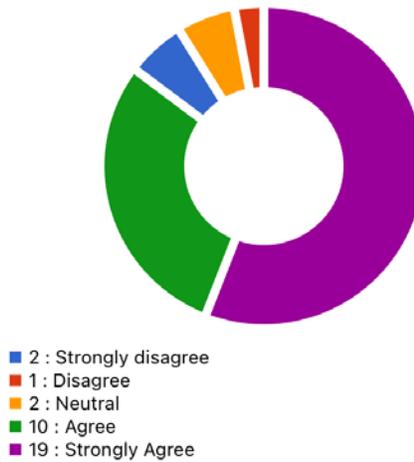


Fig 2.0

**15. Visual art is a legitimate career path.**

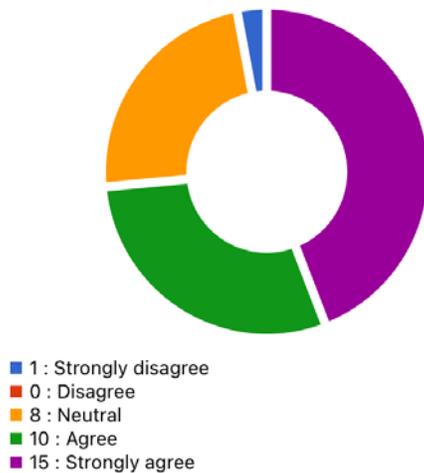


Fig 3.0

7. Which Career field do you consider to be the most beneficial ?

Pie ▾



- 3 : Architecture & Engineering
- 11 : Arts, culture & Entertainment
- 4 : Business management & administration
- 8 : Education
- 3 : Science & Technology
- 4 : Health & Medicine
- 1 : Law & Public Policy

Fig 4.0

9. Which field do you think has the highest potential for a substantial income flow?

Pie ▾

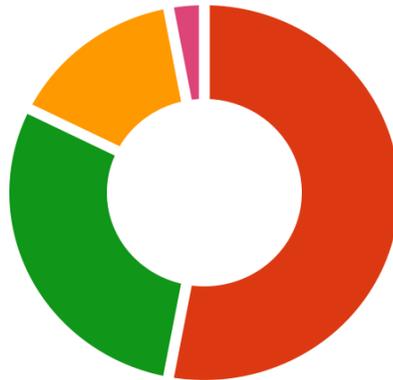


- 4 : Architecture & Engineering
- 8 : Arts, culture & Entertainment
- 8 : Business management & administration
- 0 : Education
- 4 : Science & Technology
- 8 : Health & Medicine
- 2 : Law & Public Policy

Fig 5.0

10. Which field do you think has the lowest potential for a substantial income flow?

Pie ▾



- 0 : Architecture & Engineering
- 18 : Arts, culture & Entertainment
- 5 : Business management & administration
- 10 : Education
- 0 : Science & Technology
- 0 : Health & Medicine
- 1 : Law & Public Policy

Fig 6.0

## **INTWRRVIEW FINDINGS**

In order to preserve anonymity, interviewees would not be referred to by name but as follows; First Interviewee (Visual Arts Teacher)- P1 and the second interviewee (non-Visual Arts Teacher)- P2.

The general agreement among both interviewees was that Visual Art was necessary and had its own purpose within society. P1 stated that it is about a history of ideas and that it helps humanity to understand how mankind got to the current line of thinking. While P2 stated that it allowed for individuals to express themselves other than through strict verbalized means. With this, both interviewees agreed that Visual Art is an undervalued field in society. To this, P1 stated that the value is related to how developed a society is as most people fail to understand its value as it isn't necessarily an immediate necessity and doesn't meet the basic needs of everyday life. On the other hand, P2 stated that many schools mainly focus on academic learning as aesthetic learning is not treated the same. To add, both respondents agreed that Visual Art is definitely a difficult career path to pursue as P1 admits that the infrastructure doesn't exist to support art careers in developing societies while P2 stated that the value of an artist's work has been known to be appreciated after his'/her's death. With this, P1 states that there isn't a substantial demand for art services as many people believe that everyone has the ability to do the job of an artist and is unwilling to pay the fees for the services offered. While, P2 stated that the society doesn't see the value of investing in a picture worth thousands of dollars as many prefer to purchase prints and copies at an affordable price instead. With this, Visual Art is not seen as a profitable career path as P1 stated that being a teacher made it easy to see that it is not the first choice of many parents that are ambitious about their children's future. While, P2 said that while companies may have the finance to purchase works, the average citizen may not and would

prefer to invest in other things. At the end, both interviewees had agreed that it should be encouraged as it helps to develop society.

When asked what educators can do to ensure the success of a well developed student, P1 stated that more attention needs to be placed on how Visual Arts are taught as too many children are put off before they even begin. While P2 stated that academics is not the only important focus in life as expressing oneself through art and music can aid in the brains overall development.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **DISCUSSION**

In Trinidad and Tobago, one can argue that Visual Art is an area of study with many misconceptions and bias that obstruct potential avenues for the growth and development of possible undeveloped artists within society. The results indicate that Visual Art is noticeably very important to society as it has its own dominant function and roles alongside all other fields of studies. It is a field that is transparently filled with indisputable evidence of artistic works and visual contributions done by various artists in all areas of society. However, despite this, many out of the field or those with little experience in it still fail to acknowledge the abundant contributions and evidence that surrounds all aspects of life seen within business activities, cultural festivities, architectural efficiencies, digital and non-technological communities as well as educational and teaching facilities. With this, one would be able to see that an awareness of its significance not only exposes the overflowing range of opportunities that exists within the field of Visual Art but would also allow educators and supportive institutions to understand how systems can aid in bringing about solutions and preventative measures to remove stigmas that lead to demotivation, disinterest or lack of support by parents and organizations that are directly or indirectly associated with the field. Through this, it becomes clear that the interrelationships between these misconceptions and ignorance evidently undermines the characteristics and qualities of what defines and validates a legitimate career path in Trinidad and Tobago's society and needs to be understood by governmental institutions along with the general public in order to bring about adequate solutions to change.

After conducting 34 questionnaires and 2 interviews with half of the respondents studying or pursuing Visual Arts as a career path and the other half focusing on pursuing something else, it was noted that there are adequate opportunities for potential visual artists in Trinidad and

Tobago. However, these opportunities can be very demanding and intense. The article, "Career Education in the Visual Arts." *Art Education* by Geahigan (1981), supports this claim by identifying the wide range of available opportunities that exists on every level throughout the workforce in society. However, first hand experience into these fields allowed for a more accurate perception of the field itself and gave a better insight of the runnings of these fields and while the value of visual art is highly recognized by most respondents, almost half was unable to list atleast five career opportunities in the field. This indicated a lack of cognitive awareness of the various fields within the arts which may correlate to the apparent disregard and ignorance by many persons outside the field. With this, it becomes evident that the lack of knowledge of what happens within these fields exacerbates the stigmas associated with the study and hinders the perceived value of taking part in the field.

It was noted that not only were these opportunities stigmatized, but were apparently puzzling to respondents because of the seemingly limitless opportunities which exists. The results showed that only a few opportunities were known and more common than others while the rest of it appeared to be hidden and indeterminable. This made it clear that persons who were not directly introduced to the different practices of Visual Arts lacked an understanding of the benefits and disadvantages or risks that were involved on a day to day basis. When one is uneducated in the field, one may be vulnerable to make and carry assumptions to others that can lead to an underappreciated career path that seems to be appropriate to only a certain type of person. This makes it harder to see Visual Art as an appropriate carreer opportunity as some parents have a habit of dissuading their children from even thinking about pursuing the arts before they even try to, according to P1, the visual arts teacher. It appears that they know how difficult being a visual artist can be and would encourage their descendants to pursue more

feasible career paths to make a more stable income flow when they get older. This perception of the Visual Arts being an unreliable means of gaining a sustainable income flow is seen by the majority of the respondents in figure 6 and it seems that navigating these opportunities is not worth the hassle as other fields and things in life are regarded to be of higher priority and value to students within society.

While the perceived reality of the situation along with the stigmas obstruct the possibility of potential contributions by other minds outside the field, teachers also play an important role in providing opportunities within the educational system. According to the research article “Assessment in the Visual Arts: Challenges and possibilities” by Mark Graham (2019), the classroom plays a vital role for exploring these available opportunities. However, many teachers are known by respondents to stick with outdated ideals and beliefs on what an artist should do to become a full fledged artist. It becomes even more difficult to interpret the logic when a teacher has little to no experience in the other fields of art and is limited by what they know. This pushes persons outside the field as one would assume that a teacher is familiar with all the fields within Visual Arts when in reality, this may not be the case. One can argue that it is the responsibility of the teacher to provide opportunities and pathways for their students. However, it is also the responsibility of the parent to allow their children to take part in visual art activities. This can be done if parents develop an appreciation and understanding for the arts to allow their children to participate in such activities. This can be difficult as teachers not only have the responsibility of following and conforming to pre-existing rules but also must strive to learn and introduce new unorthodox techniques that may not fit with the perceived conformity of traditional schooling techniques and approaches to learning.

Through visual arts, one is able to see that it requires different cognitive thinking habits and different approaches to problem solving. The interviewee P2 correlated to this as they noted that strictly academic learning is not the only way of learning and that there needs to be a space for persons to express themselves through the arts. This highlights the critical aspect of visual arts' role in society and major evidence of this shows up in the use of visual charts seen within symbols and infographics throughout the general digital systems within the modern day world. This is evident in the article "Picture of a Pandemic: Visual Aids in the COVID-19 Crisis." by Hamaguchi in which the author highlights the immense benefits of synchronizing visual arts with other fields throughout the contemporary world. This proves that visual arts can be used as a complimentary aid to spread reliable, valid and complex information to a society quickly and effectively. It was used as an efficient tool to educate the public who were not authorized in the field to disseminate information about accurate statistics about health measures and precautions that needed to be followed. It had effectively disrupted and alleviated major problems and concerns by society which had broken down many of the misinformation that was being distributed throughout the world. While this is one of the many ways visual arts can compliment another field of study, statistics from the questionnaire showed that the perception of people who think that visual arts is not suited to be a complimentary skill was surprisingly high as the majority being 61.8% of the respondents had disagreed to it being a complimentary skill. This shows the lack of understanding in how beneficial art was and has been throughout educative institutions as well as business organizations in society. Only a few was able to acknowledge the fact that visual arts, though very demanding and intensive was diverse in capabilities and opportunities. It has been a field with the capability to be pursued as a stand-alone career path as a well as a complimentary skill dependening on one's interests or circumstances in life.

Visual art was considered to be a very broad and diverse field with endless opportunities from some respondents who participated in the questionnaire and the results have made it evident that being aware of the measures and precautions artists have used throughout their lives can prove to be very beneficial to inspire upcoming artists. Correlating with this interviewee P1 insisted that more attention needs to be placed on how visual art is taught as many children are turned down before they get the opportunity to try based on preconceived perceptions placed on the arts. Through this, one would be able to see that the roles and duties given to visual art teachers within the education system may need to be reevaluated. From this more direct and appropriate ways of teaching and assessing a student's competence and understanding in the field can be structured more effectively to promote adequate learning and development within the field. This can aid in the development of original ideas to create new solutions to already existing problems. From this, by ensuring proper art facilities with sufficient materials and working space, visual art students would now be able to practice and learn in an area which facilitates growth in the arts and while the possibility of learning and growth exists, more attention needs to be placed on implementing a sufficient art curriculum that facilitates exposure throughout the different fields effectively. According to Geahigan in the article, "Career Education in the Visual Arts." *Art Education*, more exposure from other fields can be obtained through activities and assessments like: interviews, journals, field trips, internships, classroom visitations, interactive educational films and videos, and simulations to name a few.

As visual artists have been known to have a tough time after graduating as well as working professionally throughout their careers in the research paper, "Creative futures for new contemporary artists: Opportunities and barriers" by Lee, et al. (2018), the author Geahigan gives solutions to this in "Career Education in the Visual Arts." *Art Education* by noting the

importance for career education that relates to marketing and career opportunities within the arts. An example of how the United States benefited from it was highlighted as it provided visual art students with an understanding of how to manage themselves and the money that have been earned from sales. Another precaution that upcoming and potential artists can take is to be more involved in Exhibitions as it provides a “steppingstone” for artists to present their works according to Lee et al. It appears to be a place where some artists have benefited immensely from the environment it creates. However, not all artists were able to effectively benefit from it and was viewed to be a one time event. Regardless of this, it was revealed that some artists were not trained or desirous to sell for financial gains as this area was never acknowledged enough within the educational system. For some unknown reason, teachers have focused more on perfecting the skill with out considering the ability to apply oneself within the labor force and this may also need to be reconsidered by many art educators. It seems that success in the visual arts depend on a variety of skills including talent, experience, time management, financial support, emotional understanding and consistency to make a few. However, the visual art system appears to be one sided may need to be restructured within schools in Trinidad and a Tobago to get a more noteworthy success rate and output of artists within the field of a Visual Arts.

With this, future research needs to be conducted in order to gain a more in depth understanding of the field of Visual Arts and its benefits towards society. From this, the Ministry of Education would have a justifiable collection of valid sources on different perspectives of information to come up with more innovative ways to contribute towards the Arts. Some ways organizations can promote and motivate persons to contribute in the Arts are by encouraging collaborative exhibitions, visual workshops, cultural and festival workshops such as carnival costume designs and performances as it relates to Trinidadian history and culture, field

trip visitations to the national museum, school scholarships as well as financial aid and support.

While some proposals may seem more beneficial than others, it is only until one experiments and considers the mistakes occurred and experienced within the field that would make it possible for more calculated, informed and predicted contributions towards society.

## CONCLUSION

This research aimed to identify and examine the opportunities that exist as it relates to the misconceptions and bias that hinder the growth and development of Visual Art as a career path. Based on a collection of gathered quantitative and qualitative analysis contributions intended to respond to the perception of Visual Art towards its justification and legitimacy, it can be concluded that how Visual Art is taught and supported throughout society are important factors to consider when implementing and designing new structures, events and curriculums to aid in the promotion of Visual arts along with the development of visual artists in Trinidad and Tobago. The results indicate that potential artists require proper guidance, adequate teaching facilities and exploratory opportunities to gain an understanding in the workings of visual art careers within society.

The research clearly indicates that visual arts play a vital role in every aspect and area of society. However, its significance has been challenged due to the perceived value of its contributions within society. Those who study Visual Arts have the potential to supplement other career paths or engage in a full time job. However, this may be very intense and challenging for some who lack the support and resources to explore the different opportunities and careers within the field. On the other hand those who lack the knowledge or experience given to visual arts are able to recognize the potential benefits and advantages of working in the arts but fail to truly understand the complexities and risks involved in pursuing such a career. The risk simply doesn't seem feasible and worth it to those outside the field of study and encouraging persons to take path in it may prove to be more difficult unless a more effective system is implemented in society.

Based on these conclusions, it can be noted that Visual Arts require a lot more time, energy, thought and planning than one would think and structuring its current and updating the systems that exists may take some time and effort from all in society. With this one would be able to see how breaking misconceptions in Visual art can aid in the overall growth and development of a society.

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# APPENDIX A

## Questionnaire

Are you a Visual Arts student?

Yes  No

1. Do you think that Visual Arts is a strong stand-alone career path?

Yes  No

2. Why?

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3. Do you think that it would be better suited as a complimentary skill instead?

Yes  No

4. Why?

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5. Do you think that there is a wide range of available opportunities in the field of Visual Arts?

Yes  No

6. Can you list 5 available jobs in the field of Visual Arts?

Yes  No

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List as many as you can.

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7. Which Career field do you consider to be the most beneficial?

- A. Architecture & Engineering
- B. Arts, culture & Entertainment
- C. Business management & administration
- D. Education
- E. Science & Technology
- F. Health & Medicine
- G. Law & Public Policy

8. Why?

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9. Which field do you think has the highest potential for a substantial income flow?

- A. Architecture & Engineering
- B. Arts, culture & Entertainment
- C. Business management & administration
- D. Education
- E. Science & Technology
- F. Health & Medicine
- G. Law & Public Policy

10. Which field do you think has the lowest potential for a substantial income flow?

- A. Architecture & Engineering

- B. Arts, culture & Entertainment
- C. Business management & administration
- D. Education
- E. Science & Technology
- F. Health & Medicine
- G. Law & Public Policy

11. Do you think the importance of Visual Arts is seen by Trinbagonians?

Yes  No

Give a reason for your answer.

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12. Should people be encouraged to even pursue Visual Arts?

Yes  No

Do you agree with the following statements?

13. Visual Art should be an important aspect of our educational system.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

14. Visual Art is an integral part of intellectual development.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

15. Visual art is a legitimate career path.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INTERVIEW**

1. Do you think it is necessary for all students to study Visual Arts?
2. Do you think that it is undervalued in society?
3. Do you think that Visual Arts is a difficult career path to pursue?
4. Do you think that there is a substantial demand for professional art services in Trinidad and Tobago?
5. Do you think that Visual Arts is viewed as a profitable career path?
6. Should more people be encouraged to pursue Visual Arts?
7. In your opinion, what do you think should be enforced by educators to ensure the success of a well developed student.