

From Artistic Practice to Social Impact: The Transformation of Creative Professionals in the Global Era

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Abstract

This article examines the transformation of creative professionals in the context of global mobility, digital media expansion, and shifting cultural economies. It argues that artistic practice is no longer confined to aesthetic production but increasingly functions as a form of social impact, shaping communication, identity, and public perception across transnational environments.

The study explores how creative professionals adapt to conditions of migration, platform-mediated visibility, and fragmented institutional recognition. It analyzes the shift from traditional artistic roles toward hybrid positions that combine cultural production, communication, and social mediation. Particular attention is given to the role of visual media in enabling this transformation, allowing creative practitioners to operate simultaneously as producers of content, narrators of experience, and agents of social integration.

The article proposes a conceptual framework for understanding creative professionals as actors within a broader system of cultural infrastructure, whose work contributes to the reconfiguration of social relations in contemporary global societies.

Keywords

creative professionals, visual media, migration, social impact, cultural production, transnationalism, digital platforms, identity

1. Introduction

The transformation of creative professions in the early twenty-first century reflects broader changes in the structure of global society. By 2023, the boundaries between artistic production, communication, and social participation had become increasingly fluid. Creative professionals were no longer operating solely within traditional cultural institutions such as galleries, studios,

or production companies. Instead, they were embedded within a dynamic environment shaped by digital platforms, transnational mobility, and evolving forms of public engagement.

This shift has significant implications for how artistic practice is understood. Historically, creative work has often been associated with aesthetic value, cultural expression, or symbolic production. While these dimensions remain important, they no longer fully capture the role of creative professionals in contemporary contexts. Increasingly, their work intersects with processes of communication, identity formation, and social integration. Creative output does not simply reflect society; it participates in shaping how society understands itself.

Migration plays a key role in this transformation. As creative professionals move across borders, they encounter new cultural environments, institutional frameworks, and audiences. This movement disrupts established professional trajectories and requires adaptation to new conditions. At the same time, it creates opportunities for innovation by bringing different perspectives and experiences into contact. Creative professionals operating in transnational contexts often develop hybrid practices that combine elements from multiple cultural and professional traditions.

Digital media further amplifies this transformation. By 2023, visual and audiovisual platforms had become central spaces for cultural production and dissemination. These platforms enable creative professionals to reach audiences directly, bypassing traditional gatekeepers. They also introduce new forms of visibility and competition, requiring practitioners to engage with evolving aesthetic norms and communicative strategies. The result is a shift from stable professional identities toward more flexible and adaptive forms of practice.

Within this environment, the concept of social impact becomes increasingly relevant. Creative work is not only evaluated in terms of aesthetic quality or technical skill but also in terms of its capacity to influence perception, generate engagement, and contribute to social processes. Visual narratives produced by creative professionals can shape public discourse, facilitate recognition, and support integration in diverse social contexts. This expands the role of creative practice beyond the boundaries of traditional cultural production.

The purpose of this article is to analyze this transformation in a systematic and analytical manner. It seeks to understand how creative professionals navigate the intersection of artistic practice, communication, and social impact in transnational environments. By focusing on visual media and migration, the study highlights the ways in which creative work contributes to the restructuring of social relations in conditions of global mobility.

The following sections develop this argument by examining the shifting boundaries of creative practice, the role of digital platforms in shaping professional identity, and the emergence of new forms of cultural and social engagement.

2. The Changing Boundaries of Creative Practice

The transformation of creative practice in the early 2020s reflects a broader reorganization of cultural production under conditions of digitalization, global mobility, and platform-mediated communication. By 2023, it has become increasingly difficult to sustain a clear distinction between artistic activity, communication, and social participation. Creative professionals operate within an environment in which production, distribution, and reception are interconnected in real time, and where the meaning of creative work is shaped as much by its circulation as by its content.

Historically, creative practice was embedded in relatively stable institutional frameworks. Artists, photographers, filmmakers, and designers developed their work within systems that provided both structure and validation. These systems included galleries, publishing houses, film studios, and cultural institutions that functioned as intermediaries between creators and audiences. Professional identity was closely tied to these structures. Recognition depended on access to institutional channels, and creative output was often evaluated within clearly defined disciplinary boundaries.

In the contemporary environment of 2023, these boundaries have significantly weakened. Digital technologies have reconfigured the conditions of production and dissemination, allowing creative professionals to bypass traditional intermediaries. Visual content can now be produced with relatively accessible tools and distributed through global platforms with minimal institutional mediation. This shift has altered not only the scale of visibility but also the logic of creative practice itself. Production is no longer separated from distribution. The act of creation is immediately linked to processes of presentation, circulation, and audience engagement.

This transformation has expanded the functional scope of creative work. Artistic practice now frequently performs communicative, social, and even infrastructural roles. Visual production is used to document experience, construct identity, mediate social relations, and influence perception. A photographic project, for example, may function simultaneously as artistic expression, personal documentation, and public narrative. Similarly, a short video may operate as both creative output and a form of social communication that reaches diverse audiences across different cultural contexts.

The erosion of boundaries is particularly evident in the relationship between professional and personal domains. In earlier models, creative work was often clearly distinguished from everyday communication. In 2023, this distinction is increasingly difficult to maintain. Creative professionals use the same platforms and formats for both professional output and personal expression. Social media profiles, digital portfolios, and audiovisual narratives often combine elements of self-presentation, artistic production, and audience interaction. This convergence creates a hybrid space in which identity and practice are continuously negotiated.

Migration further intensifies this transformation. Creative professionals who relocate across national borders encounter environments in which their previous institutional affiliations may not be recognized. Diplomas, exhibitions, or professional networks that were meaningful in one context may have limited relevance in another. This creates a condition in which individuals must reconstruct their professional identity under new circumstances. Creative practice becomes a primary tool in this reconstruction, allowing professionals to demonstrate continuity of skill and vision despite the disruption of institutional frameworks.

In transnational contexts, creative practice also acquires new thematic and conceptual dimensions. Experiences of displacement, adaptation, and cultural negotiation become integral to artistic production. These experiences are not simply represented; they are embedded within the structure of practice itself. A videographer documenting urban life in a new country, for example, is not only capturing external reality but also processing their own position within that environment. The resulting work reflects both observation and participation, blurring the boundary between subject and author.

Digital platforms play a decisive role in shaping these dynamics. By 2023, platforms centered on visual communication have become primary spaces of cultural production. These platforms enable direct access to audiences, but they also impose specific conditions on how content is created and perceived. Algorithms influence visibility by prioritizing certain types of content, often favoring immediacy, clarity, and emotional engagement. This creates a feedback loop in which creative professionals adapt their work to align with platform dynamics while attempting to maintain artistic coherence.

The influence of platforms extends beyond distribution to the internal structure of creative practice. The need to maintain visibility encourages регулярное производство контента, which can affect both the pace and the form of creative work. Projects that might previously have been developed over extended periods are now often fragmented into smaller, continuous outputs. This fragmentation reflects the temporal logic of digital environments, where attention is distributed across a constant flow of content. Creative professionals must navigate this tension between depth and frequency, balancing long-term projects with the demands of ongoing visibility.

Another important aspect of this transformation is the shift from individual to networked production. While individual authorship remains significant, creative practice increasingly unfolds within collaborative and distributed frameworks. Professionals engage with other creators, communities, and audiences in processes that involve feedback, co-production, and shared visibility. This networked structure reflects the broader organization of digital communication, where content circulates through interconnected nodes rather than linear channels.

The changing boundaries of creative practice also involve a redefinition of professional legitimacy. In the absence of stable institutional validation, legitimacy is increasingly constructed

through visible output and audience engagement. Portfolios, digital presence, and documented projects serve as indicators of competence and relevance. This shift does not eliminate the importance of institutions, but it reduces their exclusivity. Creative professionals can establish recognition through alternative pathways, although these pathways are often unstable and competitive.

At the same time, this new environment introduces forms of inequality. Access to visibility is not evenly distributed. Differences in technological resources, digital literacy, language, and social networks affect the capacity to produce and circulate content effectively. Creative professionals who are better positioned in these dimensions are more likely to achieve recognition, while others may remain marginal despite possessing comparable skills. This uneven distribution of visibility reflects broader patterns of inequality within global cultural economies.

The relationship between creative practice and social impact also becomes more pronounced under these conditions. As creative professionals engage directly with audiences and participate in public discourse, their work contributes to the formation of perception and meaning. Visual narratives can influence how social issues are understood, how communities are represented, and how identities are constructed. This does not imply that all creative work is explicitly political, but it does indicate that creative practice operates within a field of social significance.

Examples from contemporary practice illustrate these dynamics. A photographer working in a transnational context may produce a series documenting everyday life that simultaneously functions as artistic work and as a contribution to public understanding of migration. A videographer may create content that circulates across different audiences, shaping perception while building professional recognition. A designer may engage in projects that combine aesthetic production with communicative and social functions. In each case, creative practice extends beyond traditional boundaries, integrating multiple roles and effects.

In analytical terms, the transformation of creative practice can be understood as a shift toward hybridity and reflexivity. Creative professionals must continuously adapt to changing conditions, integrating artistic, communicative, and strategic dimensions into their work. This hybridity is not merely a stylistic feature but a structural response to the environment in which practice occurs. It reflects the need to operate within systems that are simultaneously open and constrained, enabling and limiting.

In conclusion, the changing boundaries of creative practice in 2023 are characterized by the integration of production, communication, and social engagement. Creative professionals operate within transnational and digital environments that require adaptability, reflexivity, and continuous negotiation of identity. Artistic work becomes part of a broader system of cultural infrastructure, contributing to the formation of meaning, perception, and social relations. Understanding this transformation is essential for analyzing the evolving role of creative professionals in contemporary global society.

The next chapter examines how these transformations are shaped by platform dynamics, focusing on the relationship between visibility, algorithmic structures, and the development of creative professional identity.

3. Platform-Mediated Visibility and the Reconfiguration of Professional Identity

The transformation of creative practice described in the previous chapter is inseparable from the rise of platform-mediated environments. By 2023, digital platforms have become central infrastructures through which creative professionals produce, distribute, and position their work. These platforms do not merely host content. They actively shape the conditions of visibility, the forms of communication, and the criteria by which professional identity is constructed and recognized. Understanding their role is essential for analyzing how creative professionals operate in contemporary transnational contexts.

Visibility within platform environments is not neutral or evenly distributed. It is structured through algorithmic systems that prioritize certain types of content based on patterns of engagement. These systems are designed to maximize attention, which often results in the amplification of content that is immediately legible, visually clear, and emotionally engaging. As a consequence, creative professionals must navigate an environment in which the visibility of their work depends not only on its intrinsic qualities but also on its compatibility with platform logics.

This introduces a shift from institutional validation to algorithmic exposure as a key factor in professional recognition. In traditional systems, recognition was mediated by curators, editors, and institutional gatekeepers who evaluated work according to established criteria. In platform-based environments, recognition is increasingly linked to metrics such as views, shares, and audience interaction. While these metrics provide a form of feedback, they do not necessarily correspond to depth, complexity, or long-term significance. Creative professionals must therefore interpret and engage with these signals while maintaining the coherence of their practice.

The reconfiguration of professional identity occurs within this dynamic. Identity is no longer defined solely by affiliation with institutions or by participation in specific cultural fields. Instead, it is constructed through continuous interaction with audiences and through the visible accumulation of work across platforms. A creative professional's identity becomes distributed across multiple outputs, each contributing to an evolving public profile. This profile is not static. It changes in response to audience engagement, platform conditions, and shifts in the individual's practice.

One of the defining features of platform-mediated identity is its performative dimension. Creative professionals must not only produce work but also present themselves as coherent and recognizable actors within a competitive environment. This involves decisions about visual style, thematic focus, frequency of output, and modes of interaction with audiences. The self becomes

part of the practice. Professional identity is constructed through a combination of content, presentation, and communication.

This performative aspect is particularly significant in transnational contexts. Creative professionals operating across borders often address diverse audiences with different expectations and cultural references. Platform environments allow them to reach these audiences simultaneously, but they also require careful navigation of multiple interpretive frameworks. A visual narrative that resonates with one audience may be interpreted differently by another. Professional identity must therefore remain flexible while maintaining a degree of consistency that allows for recognition.

The temporal structure of platform environments also affects creative practice. Digital platforms operate on a logic of continuous flow, where content is constantly produced, consumed, and replaced. This creates pressure for регулярное присутствие, which can influence both the pace and the form of creative work. Professionals may need to produce content more frequently to maintain visibility, leading to a shift from singular, large-scale projects toward ongoing, iterative production. This does not necessarily diminish the value of creative work, but it changes its temporal organization.

At the same time, platforms enable new forms of audience interaction that reshape the relationship between creators and viewers. Feedback is immediate and often visible, allowing creative professionals to gauge responses in real time. This can create opportunities for dialogue and adaptation, but it also introduces new pressures. Audience expectations may influence creative decisions, leading to a negotiation between artistic intent and communicative effectiveness. The boundary between production and reception becomes less distinct, as audiences participate in shaping the trajectory of creative work.

The role of platforms in reconfiguring professional identity is also linked to issues of inequality. Access to visibility is influenced by factors such as language, location, technical resources, and familiarity with platform dynamics. Creative professionals who are able to navigate these factors effectively are more likely to achieve recognition, while others may remain marginal despite possessing comparable skills. This uneven distribution of visibility reflects broader inequalities within global cultural systems and raises questions about the inclusivity of platform-based recognition.

Migration adds another layer to this dynamic. Creative professionals who relocate may experience a disruption of their existing audience and professional networks. Platforms provide a means of maintaining continuity by allowing individuals to retain and expand their audience across borders. At the same time, they require adaptation to new cultural and communicative contexts. Professionals must consider how their work is perceived within the host society and how it aligns with local expectations. Platform-mediated identity thus becomes a site of negotiation between continuity and change.

Examples from contemporary practice illustrate these processes. A visual artist relocating to a new country may use digital platforms to document their work and adaptation process, gradually building a new audience while maintaining connections to previous networks. A videographer may create content that addresses both local and transnational themes, positioning themselves within multiple cultural contexts. A photographer may use platform-based portfolios to demonstrate continuity of practice despite institutional displacement. In each case, platforms serve as both tools and environments that shape professional identity.

It is also important to consider the role of platform aesthetics. Certain visual styles and formats are more likely to be promoted within digital environments. This can influence the development of creative work, encouraging the adoption of specific compositional techniques, narrative structures, or thematic elements. While such adaptation may increase visibility, it can also lead to a convergence of styles and a reduction of diversity. Creative professionals must balance the need for visibility with the preservation of distinctiveness.

Despite these constraints, platforms also provide opportunities for innovation. The accessibility of production tools and the global reach of digital communication enable creative professionals to experiment with new forms of expression and to engage with diverse audiences. This can lead to the emergence of hybrid practices that combine elements from different cultural and professional traditions. Platform-mediated environments thus function as spaces of both constraint and possibility.

From an analytical perspective, the reconfiguration of professional identity through platforms can be understood as a shift from fixed to processual forms of identity. Identity is no longer a stable attribute but an ongoing construction that evolves through interaction, production, and circulation. Creative professionals must continuously negotiate their position within this process, balancing stability and adaptability.

In conclusion, platform-mediated visibility plays a central role in shaping the contemporary identity of creative professionals. It restructures the conditions of recognition, alters the relationship between creators and audiences, and introduces new forms of inequality and opportunity. Understanding these dynamics is essential for analyzing how creative professionals navigate the intersection of artistic practice, communication, and social impact in transnational environments.

The next chapter examines how these processes contribute to the emergence of social impact as a defining dimension of creative practice, focusing on the ways in which visual media influences perception, engagement, and the organization of social relations.

4. Creative Practice as Social Impact: Responsibility, Risk, and Public Influence

The transformation of creative practice in contemporary transnational environments cannot be fully understood without addressing its growing connection to social impact. As visual media becomes increasingly embedded in processes of communication, perception, and public discourse, the work of creative professionals acquires consequences that extend beyond aesthetic production. Creative practice participates in shaping how social realities are interpreted, how identities are recognized, and how collective responses are formed. This expanded role introduces not only new opportunities but also new responsibilities.

Social impact in this context should not be understood in a simplified or instrumental sense. It does not refer only to measurable outcomes or policy effects. Rather, it involves the capacity of creative work to influence perception, to frame experience, and to contribute to the symbolic organization of society. Visual narratives can shape how audiences understand complex phenomena such as migration, inequality, or conflict. They can make certain aspects of reality visible while leaving others in the background. In doing so, they participate in the construction of meaning.

This influence is particularly significant in environments where visual media functions as a primary source of information. By 2023, audiences increasingly encounter social realities through images and audiovisual narratives rather than through direct experience. Creative professionals working in visual media therefore operate within a field where representation has immediate and wide-reaching effects. The way an event, a community, or a social condition is visually framed can influence how it is perceived and responded to.

The expansion of social impact introduces a corresponding ethical dimension. Creative professionals must consider not only what they represent, but how their representations affect others. Research on conflict photography emphasizes that visual production is inherently *связана* with questions of responsibility and risk. Khokhotva (2022) demonstrates that photographers working in high-risk environments must navigate complex ethical dilemmas, balancing the need to document reality with the obligation to avoid harm or exploitation. While this analysis focuses on conflict situations, its implications extend to broader contexts of visual production. Even outside zones of conflict, representation involves choices that can affect the dignity, safety, and perception of individuals and communities.

This ethical dimension is closely linked to the concept of visibility. As previously discussed, visibility is unevenly distributed and often shaped by structural conditions. Creative professionals contribute to this distribution by selecting what becomes visible. This selection is not neutral. It reflects priorities, perspectives, and constraints that influence the resulting narrative. Ethical responsibility therefore includes awareness of what is shown and what remains unseen, as well as the potential consequences of both.

The issue of risk further complicates this dynamic. In some contexts, visual representation may expose individuals or communities to social, political, or economic vulnerability. This is particularly relevant in situations involving migration, informal labor, or legal uncertainty. Creative professionals must navigate the tension between making realities visible and protecting those who are represented. This requires careful consideration of context, consent, and potential impact. Risk is not limited to physical danger but includes reputational and structural consequences.

The relevance of these considerations becomes even more pronounced in contexts of crisis and conflict. Journalism and visual media play a critical role in shaping public understanding of such situations. Hryhoriev (2022) argues that in conditions of armed conflict, media narratives influence not only perception but also collective response and decision-making. While the present analysis is not limited to conflict environments, this perspective highlights the broader principle that visual communication operates within fields of heightened consequence. Representation can affect how events are interpreted, how actors are positioned, and how responses are mobilized.

In transnational contexts, these dynamics intersect with the experiences of migration and cultural transformation. Creative professionals working across borders often engage with themes that are socially sensitive and politically significant. Their work may address issues such as displacement, inequality, or adaptation. In doing so, they contribute to the formation of public discourse around these topics. Social impact, in this sense, is not an external addition to creative practice but an intrinsic aspect of it.

At the same time, the relationship between creative practice and social impact is mediated by platforms and audiences. As discussed in the previous chapter, platform environments prioritize certain forms of content, which can influence how social issues are represented. Narratives that are visually striking or emotionally engaging may gain visibility more easily, while more complex or nuanced representations may remain less visible. This creates a tension between communicative effectiveness and analytical depth. Creative professionals must navigate this tension while maintaining the integrity of their work.

Examples from contemporary practice illustrate how social impact operates in concrete terms. A visual project documenting migrant life may influence how audiences perceive integration and participation. A series addressing informal labor conditions may bring attention to otherwise invisible forms of work. A narrative exploring cultural adaptation may contribute to a more nuanced understanding of identity. In each case, creative work participates in shaping perception and, indirectly, social relations.

The concept of social impact also involves feedback mechanisms. Visual narratives do not only influence audiences; they also generate responses that feed back into the production process. Comments, shares, and discussions create a dynamic environment in which meaning is continuously negotiated. Creative professionals must engage with these responses, interpreting

them and, in some cases, adapting their work accordingly. This interaction reinforces the idea that creative practice is embedded within a communicative system rather than existing as an isolated activity.

However, the expansion of social impact also introduces risks of oversimplification. The demand for visibility and engagement may encourage narratives that prioritize clarity and emotional immediacy over complexity. This can lead to the reduction of multifaceted social issues into simplified visual forms. Ethical responsibility therefore includes maintaining a balance between accessibility and depth, ensuring that representation does not distort the realities it seeks to communicate.

In analytical terms, the transformation of creative practice into a form of social impact reflects a broader shift in the role of cultural production. Creative professionals are no longer only interpreters of reality but participants in its construction. Their work contributes to the organization of perception, the formation of narratives, and the negotiation of meaning within society.

In conclusion, creative practice in the contemporary global environment must be understood as a socially embedded activity that involves responsibility, risk, and influence. Visual media operates within fields where representation has tangible consequences, shaping how individuals and communities are perceived and how social issues are understood. Recognizing this dimension is essential for analyzing the evolving role of creative professionals and for understanding how artistic practice contributes to broader processes of social change.

5. Conclusion

This article has examined the transformation of creative professionals in the context of global mobility, digital platforms, and the expanding role of visual media. It has argued that creative practice in contemporary conditions cannot be understood solely as aesthetic production. Instead, it functions as a hybrid form of activity that integrates artistic expression, communication, and social impact within transnational environments.

The analysis began by identifying the erosion of traditional boundaries that previously defined creative professions. It was shown that institutional frameworks, while still relevant, no longer exclusively determine professional identity or legitimacy. Creative professionals now operate across multiple environments, combining production, distribution, and audience interaction within platform-mediated systems. This shift has redefined the structure of creative work, making it more adaptive, process-oriented, and closely connected to communication.

The role of digital platforms was then examined as a key factor in this transformation. Platforms were shown to restructure visibility, introducing algorithmic mechanisms that influence which narratives gain attention and how professional identity is constructed. Creative professionals

must navigate these conditions by balancing artistic intent with the demands of visibility, audience engagement, and continuous production. This environment creates both opportunities for access and challenges related to inequality and competition.

A central argument of the article concerns the emergence of social impact as a defining dimension of creative practice. Visual media was shown to play an active role in shaping perception, framing experience, and influencing public discourse. Creative professionals contribute to the construction of meaning by producing narratives that organize how social realities are interpreted. This expands their role beyond traditional cultural production and situates their work within broader processes of social interaction and transformation.

The ethical and risk-related dimensions of this expanded role were also addressed. Drawing on contemporary research, it was demonstrated that visual representation involves responsibility, particularly in contexts where visibility may have consequences for those represented. The analysis highlighted that creative professionals must navigate tensions between making realities visible and avoiding harm, between communicative clarity and representational complexity. These considerations are not limited to extreme situations but are inherent to visual production in general.

The article further emphasized that social impact is mediated by structural conditions, including platform dynamics and broader inequalities. Visibility remains unevenly distributed, and not all forms of experience are equally represented. While digital environments provide new opportunities for participation, they also introduce constraints that shape how narratives are produced and received. Understanding these conditions is essential for assessing the role of creative professionals within contemporary cultural systems.

Taken together, these arguments support a broader conceptualization of creative professionals as actors within a system of cultural infrastructure. Their work contributes to the organization of perception, the construction of identity, and the negotiation of social relations in transnational contexts. Creative practice becomes a form of mediated participation in society, linking individual expression with collective meaning.

The implications of this analysis extend beyond the specific field of creative professions. They point to a more general transformation in the relationship between culture, communication, and social structure. In environments characterized by mobility and digital mediation, the capacity to produce and circulate visual narratives becomes a key dimension of social participation. Creative professionals occupy a central position within this process, shaping how reality is represented and understood.

Future research may build on these findings by examining specific case studies, comparing different transnational environments, or exploring the interaction between creative practice and institutional frameworks in greater detail. Such work would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural production evolves under conditions of global change.

In conclusion, the transformation of creative professionals in the global era reflects a shift toward integrated, communicative, and socially embedded forms of practice. Visual media plays a central role in this transformation, enabling creative work to function as both expression and intervention. By participating in the production of meaning, creative professionals contribute to the ongoing reconfiguration of social relations in contemporary transnational societies.

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