

# Identity crisis of artists during the Covid-19 pandemic and shift towards entrepreneurship

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The objective of the article is to understand the changes in artists' identity facing the global obstacle caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of the identity crisis into the shift towards entrepreneurial behaviours. Creative individuals seem to be perfect examples of adjustments to the changing environment.

**Research Design & Methods:** The qualitative research was conducted in form of in-depth interviews with key informants (artists with different entrepreneurial experiences from different countries and cultures) and auto-ethnography.

**Findings:** The Covid-19 pandemic caused a crisis of the artist's identity. Individuals with complex identities deal with the crisis better than sole identity individuals. Artists-entrepreneurs are increasingly looking for new forms of activity during crisis. The Artistry-Creativity-Entrepreneurship Matrix which allow to understand the shifts among complex identity individuals towards one fractional identity in case of a crisis.

**Implications & Recommendations:** The results can be used by: individuals (entrepreneurs, managers, artists) having complex/mixed identities for better understanding of a crisis situation and its impact and possibilities flowing from different layers of human personality with underlining of creativity; 2) business looking for new types of customers and/or wanting to understand more complex market participants.

**Contribution & Value Added:** The article describes the unexplored areas of artistry among creative entrepreneurs. Distinction between artistry and creativity is marked here clearly. The application of the theory of aesthetics from the field of artistic creativity as a basis for the analysis of the phenomenon of entrepreneurial creativity, opens up new potential research areas of creativity among entrepreneurs.

**Article type:** research article

**Keywords:** artist's identity; entrepreneur's identity; creative identity; complex identity, identity crisis; paradoxical thinking; creativity; Covid-19 pandemic; entrepreneurship

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## INTRODUCTION

Wuhan, China is where the new viral lung disease broke out in December 2019. Then the pandemic waves have gone by each continent. In March 2020 the WHO announced the global scale of the spread of the virus (Kufel, 2020), disrupting human populations, economy and trade. Governments choose very diverse strategies to reduce the destructive effects of the pandemic (Phelan, Katz, & Gostin, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2020; Sułkowski, 2020). With Covid-19 outbreak times have changed forever. Despite the relatively short time for in-depth research on the impact of the pandemic on society, it is worth highlighting several areas that have become the subject of scientists' interest: economy (Lipkind & Kitarr, 2021), entrepreneurship (Ratten, 2020a; Zahra, 2021), entrepreneurial intentions and opportunity recognition (Loan *et al.*, 2021), banking sector and financial markets (Korzeb & Niedziółka, 2020; Dias *et al.*, 2020; Pardal *et al.*, 2020), sport entrepreneurship (Ratten, 2020b), technology innovation in

small business (Akpan *et al.*, 2020), family firms (Marjański & Sułkowski, 2021), digital deprivation (Kuc-Czarnecka, 2020), pandemic impact upon particular markets and their clients' attitude (Marona & Tomal, 2020), economic policy towards the challenges of the pandemic in particular countries (Kinnunen *et al.*, 2021; Žak & Garncarz, 2020; Migąła-Warchoł & Pichla, 2021). The public support for entrepreneurship, especially in favour of shaping entrepreneurial intentions of the youth is particularly important during the ongoing pandemic (Nowiński *et al.* 2019; Wach & Bilan, 2021). The pandemic is sure to change the face of the present-day entrepreneurial economy (Sieja & Wach, 2019)

The identity is a delicate issue but it determines whole life of an individual. Having more than one identity – while giving more opportunities – in other side it can reveal more problems and challenges proportionally. People with many identities are dealing with identity tensions which are intensified in the contexts of change and uncertainty (White, 1992). Except the internal factors, we observe the external factors of identity crises. Some individuals – dealing with creative industries and arts especially – experience lower tendency to feel negative consequences of identity crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic can be considered as one of the most important changes in the organisation of the whole world since World War II and it has been increasing the uncertainty dramatically (Androniceanu, 2020). We can assume that the pandemic situation should increase the creativity's level among creative personality of individuals positively. The dissonance between desires and reality restricted by the pandemic, can cause also new creative solutions, including partnership (Androniceanu & Tvaronavičienė, 2019). But in the pandemic situation, an identity approaches a new problem: large and fast change of basic elements of reality influencing the individual's identity can cause negative consequences. Lockdown, closed institutions, social distancing, business troubles and their psychological consequences – everything can lead to the crisis of identity as well.

Because our research interest is focused on crossing the borders of arts and business in area of creativity, we deal in this paper with the identity of creative artists-entrepreneurs and their reaction on the Covid-19 pandemic. Our observations of the artist's identity during the crisis, lead to the following initial statements. Artists – working on fixed contracts, while having guaranteed remuneration even when public performances are cancelled – are waiting for the “normality” passively; their regular routine of private practicing art nor material status are not changed in comparison to pre-pandemic time. The freelance artists (entrepreneurs) need to look for new solutions on their own, because their sources of income and perspectives stopped immediately. But how to do it if there are legal restrictions and the audiences are not interested – or not allowed – in the active participation in the “aesthetic situation” in public?

On the base of above considerations, we set the following research questions:

- RQ1:** In what way did the Covid-19 pandemic cause a crisis of artist's identity?
- RQ2:** Do artists-entrepreneurs deal with the identity crisis better than artists without creatively entrepreneurial identity?
- RQ3:** Do creative artists-entrepreneurs look increasingly for new forms of activities during crisis?

The following parts of the article consist the literature review, description of methods and materials used, results with discussion, conclusions, and list of references.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review methodology was based on a qualitative choice of the literature taken from databases: EBSCO, Google Scholar, JSTOR and Scopus. The methodological approach based on interdisciplinary and multi-paradigm approach taking into account the publications from the areas of arts, aesthetics, entrepreneurship, psychology and the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on identity.

### Artistry and entrepreneurship

Following Andy Warhol's claim that “*being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art; making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art*” (Bureau & Zander, 2014), there is no clear agreement of knowledge, skills and abilities deemed important to the success of arts entrepreneurs

(Roberts, 2012). There is at least the entrepreneurship factor but probably also the creativity factor. The majority of creative artists are self-employed but relatively few arts schools develop capabilities for venture creation effectively. It leads to the conclusion that area of crossing borders between arts and entrepreneurship is not well understood. Conceptual and philosophical issues encountered by arts educators, arguing that among the three important factors to career success in the arts (creation of new organisations, management of own career, being venturesome) entrepreneurship is crucial.

The common definition of entrepreneurship is a “skill in starting new businesses, especially seeing new opportunities”, but the management science expands the second element of the issue: seeing new opportunities (Terán-Yépez & Guerrero-Mora, 2020; Nagy, Jámbo, & Freund, 2020; Mensah, Asamoah, & Jafari-Sadeghi, 2021; Chmielecki & Sułkowski, 2016; Goldman, & Tselepis, 2021). Entrepreneurship is more an approach than just the skill (Gancarczyk & Ujwary-Gil, 2021). We distinguish different types of entrepreneurship depending on the context: ethnic (Chaudhary, 2015), institutional (Almeida *et al.*, 2014), cultural (Patriotta & Siegel, 2019), feminist (Lewis *et al.*, 2016), millennial (Wilmouth, 2016), nascent (Kim *et al.*, 2015), organizational (Moghaddam *et al.*, 2015), business (Coppola, Ianuario, Chinnici, Di Vita, Pappalardo, & D'Amico, 2018), project-based (Ferriani *et al.*, 2009), social (Thompson, 2002). The context shapes what becomes entrepreneurial and the context should be the unit for analysis, instead of entrepreneurial individuals nor outcomes. This optic created the scale from individually- to socially-shaped entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship appears simultaneously to be both, existing in multiple states regardless of the observer and the observation (Gaddefors & Anderson, 2017; Meyer 2019). There should be kept a clear distinction between using particular arts or artistic techniques (e.g. drawing) for development of personal or organisational entrepreneurship (Clarke & Holt, 2019), particular art (e.g. architecture) as the distinctive element in sustain development (Pinto *et al.*, 2020), and using theory of arts (e.g. aesthetics) in development of entrepreneurship as a process (Szostak & Sułkowski, 2020a).

A word “entrepreneur” – in the meaning of an organizing, managing, and assuming the risks of a venture person – has been in use since at least the 1850s. During the next century, it was also used for description of a person undertaking any kind of dynamic pursuit. By the early 20th century, this word had been applied to an individual owner of a business organisation, being a close concept to an “entrepreneurial spirit” (Wach & Głodowska, 2021). The basic dichotomous division of entrepreneurship concerns the opportunity- and necessity-driven activities. Research shows that entrepreneurs in arts are necessity-driven because of limited possibilities for being employed in long time horizon (Albinsson, 2018), which is current trend in labour market even for employees with less unique skills (Bilan *et al.*, 2020). Nonetheless the new firm founders belong to particular social identities with their risk-taking actions (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011): Darwinians, dominating in business and competitive situations; Communitarians, who view their companies as social objects; Missionaries, who see their businesses as politically aware items. There are also concepts of the nature of entrepreneurial passion as consciously accessible, intense positive feelings experienced by engagement in entrepreneurial activities associated with roles that are meaningful and salient to the entrepreneur self-identity (Cardon *et al.*, 2009). The practice of art entrepreneurship is meaningfully diverse from the practice of business entrepreneurship (Honig & Samuelsson, 2021). Firstly, because of the artist’s drivers and aims; secondly, because of the character of occasions, circumstances and practises (Bridgstock, 2012), particularly due to the changes in cultural and creative industries (Černevičiūtė *et al.*, 2019; Kačerauskas, 2018).

Arts, being not a well-defined and homogeneous field, can be understood through the analysis of certain practices in specific configurations and regimes of identification allowing for certain social functions or political possibilities (Dronsfield *et al.*, 2008). Artist is someone who creates things with great skill and imagination. The medieval practical perception of art says: artist is “someone who works through tools on matter”. Synonyms are: master, expert, geek, guru, virtuoso, wizard. Antonyms are: amateur, inexpert, nonexpert. The artist concept has changed over time and is even off-defined lately (Sztabiński, 2002). There are key issues defining an artist: imagination, thought, knowledge, wisdom, the idea in artist’s mind, abilities in using the art rules; in art, only the artist is the legislator (Tatarkiewicz,

2015). The artist's features are: creativity, sensitivity, intuition, "getting lost" in the creative process, putting everything in the creative process, self-analysis and self-correction (Szyszka & Białowąs, 2019). Effective implementation of artistic goals require: persistence/consistency, hard work, self-discipline, mental resilience, responsibility, ability to observe the world, perceptiveness, openness. The artist's goals have changed over time, although the most persistent ones include: materialization, giving the form of universal ideas, passing on values, giving satisfaction and pleasure to the client and/or the recipient, bringing the recipient to the *catharsis* state, transforming ugliness into beauty (Szostak & Sułkowski, 2020a).

Artist's identity has been developing from the beginnings of humanity: a doer, a God's will doer (Tatarkiewicz, 2015), an artisan, a master, a genius, a holy man touching the unseen, a cultural aristocrat, a professional, a knowledge worker, an entrepreneur, an influencer, a freedom maker (Hermes *et al.*, 2017), an artist by vocation, a value/idea guardian, a superman. Using creativity and efficiency dimensions, the following artist's identities can be set: a conceptualist, a copyist, an artistic craftsman (artisan) and a creator (Szostak & Sułkowski, 2020a). The differences between artist's identity and perception of an artist's role should be underlined here (Szostak, 2020b; Szostak & Sułkowski, 2021a, 2021b).

### Identity of artist-entrepreneur

Trying to analyse the phenomenon of an artist-entrepreneur, we should ask the question: why artists became the artists-entrepreneurs? Do they look for more freedom (being not dependent on one person nor one organization), possibilities, income (even when it is connected with more risk and uncertainty)? Or maybe being an entrepreneur is an immanent part of artist's identity, which is turning on when problems arise? An artist-entrepreneur – because he is strongly embedded in the "aesthetic situation" (Gołaszewska, 1984) – subordinates the entrepreneur's identity to the world of universal values (Szostak & Sułkowski, 2020a). That is why a significant part of artists-entrepreneurs stop at satisfying their basic existential needs and the possibilities of carrying out their artistic activities (Albinsson, 2018). Entrepreneurial artists hardly sacrifice art for building a financial empire underlying the importance of the universal value world. It can be said that artist-entrepreneur is a kind of sustainable form of entrepreneur with a highly developed sphere of ethics and CSR.

Looking into aesthetics theory of creativity, the sources of artistic creativity may result from (Gołaszewska, 1984): inspiration; act of creation in the image of nature; discovering and incorporating timeless ideas in a work; imitation of divine creativity; meeting the needs of social group (sociological theory of creativity); excess energy remaining after basic needs fulfilment (human life physiology); the state of culture having various artistic ideals at a certain level of human development (cultural approach); sums of socio-economic (ideological) conditions in which the artist lives (historical approach); expression of the creator's personality (psychological approach). The following psychological theories of artistic creativity may be key in the analysis of entrepreneurial creativity phenomena: "creativity as an inspiration", "creativity as a labour" and "creativity as a personality expression" (Szostak, 2020a). In the theory of creativity as inspiration, the creator achieves significant artistic results thanks to inspiration; the results of inspiration are unpredictable; in this theory, creativity is understood as a mysterious gift that man does not control; it can be said that the uniqueness of the product is the uniqueness of the mental process that led to the work; we are dealing here with a combination of the theory of inspiration and the theory of genius and individualism (Szostak, 2018). The theory of creativity as a labour points to factors such as work, toil, overcoming obstacles and effort; a man has natural abilities, but he must work on them to create true art works; the necessary conditions for creativity are knowledge and the ability to use the creation rules; labour remains an inalienable element of the creative process. The theory of creativity as a personality expression suggests that the creator can also express what others feel through expression; the expression that underlies creativity is controlled by the creator's consciousness; art is a way of communicating and its role is to communicate internal states; artists externalize their states of mind to enable recipients to achieve similar states (Szostak & Sułkowski, 2020; Szostak, 2020).

There are following elements of identity that artists and entrepreneurs have in common: intuition, creativity, imagination, obsession according to their activities, getting the artwork/product into the mar-

ket, perfectionism, getting attention of others, producing in quantity to discover quality, purpose of activity, need to delegate the obligations to be able to create. Artists and artistic organizations may apply entrepreneurial attitudes to the improvement of their artistic works (Nytch, 2012; Szostak & Sułkowski, 2020a). Poorsoltan (2012) analysed among the artists the three chosen traits attributed to entrepreneurs: tolerance for ambiguity, risk-taking, and internal locus of control. Being creative individuals, artists are tolerant to ambiguity and prepared for unstructured situations. There are positive relationship between creativity and ambiguity tolerance. Artists, by act of creating, are risk-takers; their environment is highly competitive and not much rewarding. Risk-taking experimenting artists blur the boundaries of the traditional disciplines. Artists have internal locus of control being comfortable with ambiguities; they believe in themselves and state they are in control of their decisions and activities.

Wyszomirski and Chang (2015) – defining five analytical levels of arts entrepreneurship: individual character traits, goals, strategies, tactics, and context –propose a broad definition of “arts entrepreneurship” being a management process through which cultural workers seek to support their creativity and autonomy, advance their ability for adaptableness, and create artistic, economic and social values. To identify arts entrepreneurs, we must focus on the inventive blends of strategy, personal abilities and mind-set operating in arts entrepreneurship and its context. Albinsson (2018) described the “cultural entrepreneurship” on the base of the “quadruple bottom line of cultural entrepreneurship” including: economic wealth, social transformation, artistic novelty, institutional progress. This optics indicates the dynamic development of intangible cultural features in and between societies, but it may correspondingly involve the progress of infrastructure and organizations. These factors may define a musician’s work as an entrepreneur. However, self-defining as an entrepreneur is not so obvious among artists. According to Albinsson (2018) the lion's share of artists accept regarding themselves as artist entrepreneurs. But people who started their careers in the 1960s and 1970s were not willingly to call themselves as entrepreneurs. The majority only unenthusiastically admits entrepreneurship as part of their artistic identity and they regard it as necessity-driven. A part of artists state to be entrepreneurs not interested in profit maximisation only; they want to contribute to the cultural sphere of humanity and earning just a satisfactory revenue. The entrepreneurship of artists from the charitable music segment bears vital parallels with social entrepreneurship. There is a strong element of necessity-driven entrepreneurship among freelance artists. The opportunity-driven entrepreneurship refers to a higher degree of creativity, innovation and novelty in comparison to necessity-driven entrepreneurship (Andersson *et al.*, 2011). Artists-entrepreneurs hold qualities of entrepreneurship driven by necessity and opportunity. Effective entrepreneurs are full of passion predominantly. The lack of effective entrepreneurial education among artists may lead to their identity crises, especially when they will enter the market and will see no interest about their professional skills.

The phenomena of subversion and resistance in art are explored rarely in case of entrepreneurship (Bureau & Zander, 2014), although the concept of “creative destruction” is commonly used (de Mateo Pérez, 2015; Poorsoltan, 2012). There is also a need to add these lenses into creativity area. Having all three elements, which can be named as separate identities, and seeing all three of them through the lenses subversion and resistance, we are able to find new conclusions in area of “complex identities”.

### **Creativity in entrepreneurship and artistry**

Creativity and entrepreneurship, as well as artistry and entrepreneurship, are not the same. There are non-creative individuals being strongly entrepreneurial, and non-entrepreneurial individuals being strongly creative. In opposite, we find individuals being artfully and/or creatively entrepreneurial (Bureau & Zander, 2014). Entrepreneurship and innovation are seen as formulas putting an end to all crises, but those who repeat the statement mislead the right sense of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship (Benazzouz, 2019; Borowiecki & Makieła, 2019; Borowiecki & Dahl, 2021; Bigos & Wach, 2021). The entrepreneurial person works in areas of opportunity recognised by Drucker: the unexpected; the incongruity; the innovation based on process need; changes in the industry and market structure; demographics; changes in perception, mood and meaning; new knowledge, both scientific and non-scientific (de Mateo Pérez, 2015). A complete and interdisciplinary consideration of the impact of the creativity

into entrepreneurship theory and practice is described by Fillis and Rentschler (2010). Randomness, uncertainty and ambiguity must be seen in wider business and social contexts. They researched creativity's link with motivation, actualisation, innovation and interrogation of entrepreneurial artists as owners/managers, concluding that creativity has crucial impact into successful entrepreneurship practice. Creativity, among personality and cognitive style, is the crucial factor in entrepreneurial decision making (Doanh, 2021).

The features of an entrepreneur can be described as: focused on opportunities, inventive, open to modification, individuality motivated, functioning under resource limits, colloquial knowledge use, entrepreneurial interacting. Among entrepreneurial competencies we can list: enthusiasm, vigour, perseverance, dedication, determination, focus on opportunities, vulnerability to risks, indigence for achievement, locus of control. One should add that education positively influences the shaping of entrepreneurial skills and competencies (Solesvik, 2019). The learnable intellectual abilities, being situational personality features – i.e.: imagination, inventiveness, ability to create ideas, intuition, flexibility, motivation, fearless, emphasis on opportunities, exploitation of links, analytical skills, judiciousness, willpower, aspiration, novelty, unrestricted thinking, self-belief, positive approach to a change – have impact on the creativity. Creativity in area of entrepreneurship may be seen as: tactical missile, fixed viewpoint, competitive advantage, providing to entrepreneur and his workers impetus, developed functioning as well as problem solving (Bureau & Zander, 2014).

The relations between creativity and artistry were described in detail by Szostak and Sułkowski (2020) especially in area of semantic distinction between these two dimensions. Win (2014) underlined the factor of innovative entrepreneurship as one of general contemporary trends in arts. We can add here an example of Ferran Adrià, a culinary artist, entrepreneur and creator (DeFillippi *et al.*, 2007). His all three spheres of activity are managed and developed separately: developing new enterprises (consulting agency) to gain profits for creativity development (kitchen laboratory research) to use the creative achievements in artistic sphere (own restaurant).

### **Identity (personality) crisis**

Artists, being sensitive individuals, can be much more vulnerable for all kinds of identity crises, although their ability to use the paradoxical thinking in managing identity tensions is not well described yet. The identity can be discussed at two levels: independent (the identity is constructed in terms of its difference from others) and social (the interactions are viewed in terms of the connections with others). The social self can be divided into two dimensions: the relational and the collective. On this base, there are three self-concept systems depending on the activation factors and circumstances: independent, relational, and collective (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Taking into the consideration the above identity concepts, the pandemic impact on the relations between individuals (self-isolation and social distancing especially) are the main factors leading to the personality crises.

Identity crisis is a feeling of being uncertain about who or what the person is. The reasons of identity crisis may be caused by new situations in life (marriage, relative's birth or death, unemployment) but also by migrations, economic/financial situation, injury, destroy of heritage, shock in culture, or the pandemic. Destruction of the cultural heritage examines the attachment of people to the cultural heritage that reflects on their daily rituals, memories, and community life, and it shows the constructions of identity and the understanding of intangible cultural heritage of the people. The solution comes from the aspiration to rebuild a sense of identity (Harles & Rajbhandari, 2017). On the base of the concepts of home, identity and exodus, ideas such as integration, reception and interdependence are crucial in finding a solution of the crisis (Sánchez-Escalonilla García-Rico, 2019). Art itself can be healing because of the distance it creates from the current socio-political matters (Rikou & Chaviara, 2016). The crisis situation takes to the forefront the aspect of social experience in its incoherence and the complexity of practises growing beyond individual control. The crisis may be paradoxically seen as an occasion for the artists to offer their work in new geographical or psychological zones. Artistry during crisis may magnify ways that people visualise their existences. An art receivers reveal, remark, and intervene in community on the situations that brought about these key modifications (Szostak, 2020a). The artworks produced during crisis times determine responses oscillating around attempts to keep a

detachment from the stream of events. Each work of art came into being as an outcome not only of an individual but also of a bond of associations being crucial to cure the crisis of identity. A diversity of orientations can be used for identity construction. The creativity in managing identity references rather than normative cultural sincerity turned out to be a prerequisite for emotionally important identification. The identification selections are constructed on the foundation of the perception of collective strategies offered by external factors, the individual creativity and dialogical practices (Masso, 2010). There are many suggestions how to deal with mental challenges after getting into the crisis: give yourself the space to rest; stay involved with your art in “new” ways; remove yourself entirely; stay on a schedule; celebrate small victories; find other creative outlets; cross-train; find a group or a therapist; take advantage of the time off (Rasminsky, 2019).

Young professionals entering the market as entrepreneurs describe three ways of reactions for high degree of insecurity internalizing their new role: rejection, adoption, conversion. They also underline the meaning of learning and internalisation of new standards of working behaviour, especially those of entrepreneurial labour: self-promotion, availability, self-learning, adaptation to market constraints, autonomy and accountability (Vivant, 2016). These conclusions can be applied into the theory of identity crisis caused by external factors, like pandemic. Artists, whose creativity is centred on environmental aesthetics, need freeing up from financial constrictions to work effectively; it requires significant shifts in consciousness (Dahlsen, 2015). These artists’ diverse and fragile career paths necessitate their downfall during tough economic times and compromise their creativity expressing individualism. History shows that arts are able to survive even the worst circumstances. Arts can be healing in those situations. Arts are able to live even if their creators suffer hunger, pain and loss of sense. Arts can revive from the ashes. But still, artists pay the whole price of the individual creation process.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

The qualitative research was conducted in form of in-depth interviews with key informants and auto-ethnography. The key informants were people who are artists in their professional life with different “experience” in area of entrepreneurship. The research sample was not limited to persons who currently play both roles at the same time; among the respondents were also people who played both roles at different periods of their lives, to varying degrees and at different levels. The selection of the research sample was justified by the availability of people with possibly diverse artistic and entrepreneurial experience from different countries and cultures. We asked 32 artists for the participation; finally, 21 (66%) of them agreed to take part in the research. The majority of the interviews were conducted in February and March 2020 in the form of a face-to-face or online conversation; several respondents completed the questionnaire with 36 questions in writing. Interviews with Polish respondents were conducted in Polish, while interviews with other respondents were conducted in English. Then, all non-English interviews were translated into English. The majority of the sample was from Poland ( $n=11$ , 52%), three from the USA (14%), two from the UK (10%), one person from Bulgaria, Nigeria and Ukraine (4,5% each). Furthermore, the majority of the respondents were men ( $n=15$ , 71%), have experience from the music field ( $n=18$ , 86%). There was no effort to achieve a balance in area of sex nor age of the participants, neither we did not balance the sample according to their professional experience length nor their art form chosen. Due to qualitative character of this research, we also did not differ our respondents according to their personal features (e.g. optimist-pessimist, pro-active-passive). We are fully aware of the impact of these elements on the research results but – due to the character of this study and the rapidly changing pandemic situation – we continued with the findings and the conclusions. All answers of each respondent were listed in the table together with the basic categories defining them. The fragment of this material is shown in Table 1. This article contains a minor part of conclusions from the research materials only.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There was no hesitation among the respondents to describe themselves as an artist. Their artist’s identity referred to their professional activities in different arts (music, painting, handcraft) and/or to their

education (formal and informal). In reference to an entrepreneurial identity, approximately half of the respondents was confident in this area underlining their own professional activities (establishing and/or running a company, an organisation or a project) and own responsibility for professional and financial stability and development. But another half of the respondents – those who do not run own business nor organisation – had problems with naming themselves as an entrepreneur, even that they have been doing activities fitting into different definitions of entrepreneurship (we did not provide any definition of entrepreneurship). It was seen that for majority of the respondents, being an entrepreneur equals to running own business or organisation; they do not perceive the entrepreneurial identity in non-business nor non-organisational environment. In case of creativity, the respondents were more unequivocal like in case of artistry; almost all found themselves as possessing the creative identity equalling it with artistry without any doubt (following the common sense of creativity and artistry): if I am an artist, I am a creative person too. Referring to our previous research analysis (Szostak & Sułkowski, 2020a), being an artist is not equal being creative.

**Table 1. Description of the research sample**

Nationality	Birth year	Sex	Activity as an artist	Activity as an entrepreneur
USA	1965	M	Instrumentalist; choir director, teacher	None
USA	1947	M	International instrumentalist	Self-employed entrepreneur in area of art
Russian-USA	1977	F	Instrumentalist	Coordinator and designer of art projects
Ukraine	1990	M	Poet, translator	Entrepreneur; concert house director; orchestra director
British	1948	M	Instrumentalist	None
British	1981	M	Instrumentalist, choir trainer, choir conductor	Music department manager; concert hall manager
Nigerian	1995	M	Composer, instrumentalist, choir director	None
Bulgaria	1978	M	International vocalist, lecturer	International art agency creator, owner and manager
Poland	1989	M	Instrumentalist	Creative manager at a cultural institution
Poland	1981	M	Independent origami lamp and graphic creator	Entrepreneur, own business manager; 17 years
Poland	1974	M	Singer-soloist at operas, philharmonics, ensembles	Opera impresario; head of artistic department at opera house
Poland	1999	M	Concert musician; 12 years	Creator, owner and teacher at music school; orchestra founder and director; promotion agency founder and manager
Poland	1992	M	International conductor	None
Poland	1980	M	International concert instrumentalist; music teacher; 18 years	Entrepreneur (own business); manager in international companies (16 years); NGO founder and CEO
Poland	1964	F	Painter and visual artist; 23 years	Self-employed art entrepreneur; artistic associations member
Poland	1999	F	Instrumentalist	Creative manager in artistic agency
Poland	1991	M	Instrumentalist	Promotion and program departments at cultural institutions, NGO creator
Poland	1952	F	Vocalist; 25 years	Musician associations president; dance group manager and co-founder; arts impresario
Poland	1978	F	Vocalist; book author	Self-employed arts entrepreneur, employing dozen people
Poland	1970	M	Actor, opera singer; 30 years	Self-employed; creator of a young musicians' stage; organiser of concerts and own artistic career
Poland	1982	F	Instrumentalist	None

Source: own study.



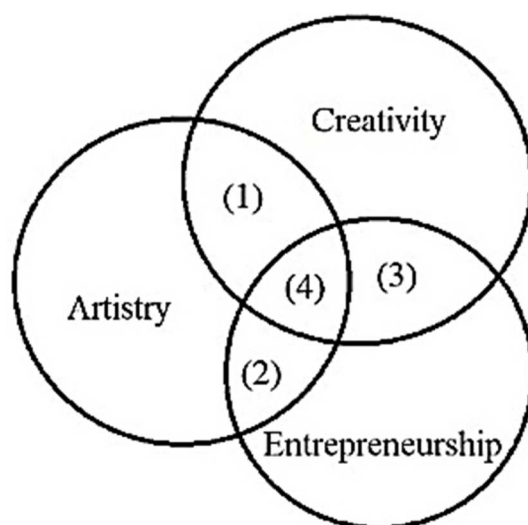
The next general conclusion from all respondent's answers is that the pandemic – especially its social restrictions – caused deep structural changes in life of artists: both in the creative/artistic area and in financial/safety area. Situations described by the respondents can be recognised as the artist's identity crisis ("nobody wants me," nobody is interested in my art," "people are afraid to participate in arts because health is more important than art"). The majority of respondents – because of the turbulences caused by the pandemic and the following waves of restrictions – focused on creative and entrepreneurial identities to find new options. The creative and entrepreneurial identities determined the effects of the external crisis and its impact on artist's identity. We can say that having developed entrepreneurial identity is the basic step towards healing the artist's identity crisis caused by the pandemic. All respondents underline the dramatic decline in demand on their new artistic creations – ongoing projects were finalised (if possible) or frozen, but nothing new (in traditional meaning) started, no new traditional projects emerged. In this situation an artist started to feel itself unnecessary and not important element of the society. Additionally, or in the consequence of the above, the money issue appeared: no work – no money – no possibility to pay the bills. This factor was also underlined by the respondents.

The respondents had problems to verbalize the differences between artistry, creativity and entrepreneurship in their identity. Many of the respondents had the ideas where to look for solutions but not all of them started to act. Another group tried to copy others' ideas starting new activities and projects (e.g. online performances, workshops, contests); unfortunately, without creative approach nor creative implementation it was not successful. Here, the type of a follower of others' ideas was dominant.

The issue of entrepreneurship versus creativity among artists-entrepreneurs can be seen in actions undertaken by professional artist organisations as well. E.g. *The American Guild of Organists* from the USA, *The Royal College of Organists* from the UK – immediately after the beginning of the pandemic and the lockdown in western countries (March 2020) – started to develop the virtual programs for their members, underlying the element of the identity maintaining, giving the sense of practicing and looking for new possibilities for artistic development. But after a few months of the pandemic, the efforts diminished and not much left of these ideas. It can be an example of entrepreneurship without creativity – doing something without creative analysis of needs or possibilities of participants or general sense. It can be stated that organisational entrepreneurship without minimum of creativity, in medium-long perspective, was lost in many cases. In opposite, even small "amount" of creativity can gain "good" effect; e.g. online performances for special group of participants, online contests formulated especially for musicians-performers who suffer lockdown (e.g. *Sound Espressivo Global Contest*). Any kind of activities which allow the artists to do their profession was named as healing in reference to the artist's identity crisis. Even short moment of online public performance catalysed the need of preparation, the possibility of artistic creation, it gave the hope for the end of the crisis.

The application of the theory of aesthetics from the field of artistic creativity as a basis for the analysis of the phenomenon of entrepreneurial creativity, opens up new potential areas of analysis of creativity in area of arts and entrepreneurship among entrepreneurs. The novelty of this approach in area of theory of entrepreneurship as well as empirical results described in our research, allow to catch sight of new optics of the problem.

Summarizing conclusions from the interviews and auto-ethnographical analysis, we created the matrix which combines the three crucial identities among which the interviewees surfed while giving the answers: artistry, creativity and entrepreneurship (Figure 1). On this base, we found the three basic types of complex identity of artists-entrepreneurs characterized by the following features: 1) Artistry and creativity but no entrepreneurship; 2) Artistry and entrepreneurship but no creativity; 3) Creativity and entrepreneurship but no artistry. In the middle of the all above types of complex identity, there is the fourth type of the complex identity possessing all three features of simple identities: 4) Artistry, creativity and entrepreneurship. We found that an external crisis (like the Covid-19 pandemic) changes the position of the "pendulum" moving between simple identities towards entrepreneurial identity with the fundamental role of the creativity factor and not an easy task of adjustment in artistry (to keep the appropriate level of artwork – without shift towards kitsch). There is high probability that, when the crisis feature disappears, the pendulum moving between the fractional identities will go back to the "normal", neutral position.



**Figure 1. Artistry-Creativity-Entrepreneurship Matrix**

Source: own elaboration.

## CONCLUSIONS

Using the aesthetic theories of artistic creativity, and referring to the research questions, we assume that artists-entrepreneurs – who use sociological theory of creativity (meeting the needs of social groups), cultural approach (the state of culture having various artistic ideals at a certain level of human development) or creating artworks in the image of the nature – while losing the social context or the natural order context, can feel the identity crisis due to the pandemic. Artists-entrepreneurs – who use other theories of creativity (internal inspiration, discovering timeless ideas, imitating the divine creativity, creating according to the human life physiology theory, ideological theory, or using the psychological approach) – can be more resistant against the crisis and its impact on their complex identity. We see that the Covid-19 pandemic have deep impact on artist's identity and this situation has all features of the identity crisis. Artists, possessing the entrepreneurial identity, deal with the crisis better than artists without creatively entrepreneurial identity. The description “better” means: they are able to look and find the solutions; they do not feel deep internal pain because their additional identity is able to manage the process of change. Creative artists-entrepreneurs are increasingly looking for new forms of activities during crisis. The pandemic confirms that combination of different identities is helpful in situations of change and uncertainty.

Among limitations of the research we need to underline: 1) The research was conducted during the beginning phase of the Covid-19 pandemic and – in the moment of sending this article to the editors – we still don't see the end of the situation; 2) In case of a crisis, art and other “high cultural” areas of human life are going to the second plan of consideration for majority of the receivers; 3) We did not differ interviewers according their personal characteristics – qualitative character of the research does not allow to draw more detailed conclusions.

The results of the research can be used by: 1) Individuals (entrepreneurs, managers, artists) having complex/mixed identities for better understanding of a crisis situation and its impact and possibilities flowing from different layers of human personality with underlining of creativity; 2) Business looking for new types of customers and/or wanting to understand more complex market participants; 3) Researchers who want to investigate the issue of: a) the perception of complex identities (e.g. artists-entrepreneurs), b) the designation of distinguishing features of artistry, creativity and entrepreneurship among artists-entrepreneurs, c) the impact of personal characteristics of artists-entrepreneurs into their own complex identity (there is high probability that the personal features

are the dominant factors in case of artistry, creativity and entrepreneurship of an individual). Potential research questions for future qualitative research or the hypothesis for further quantitative research may be: 1) Majority of the society does not recognize the difference between creativity and artistry); 2) We will observe the turn into remote methods of participation in arts and artistic communication (even that it is worse way to participate in classical arts, it is still easier, faster and safer to maintain the connection between artists and audiences); 3) There will be the turn to marketing approach in aesthetical situation<sup>1</sup> (art will be more willing to fulfil audiences' needs than being a tool for mission and education; if the "content" of the performance will not be interesting, the audience will switch off the streaming or the record; in the traditional circumstances, the audience is more obliged to "stay physically present" until the end of performance).

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed description of the "aesthetical situation" was made by Szostak and Sułkowski (2020a).

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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