



## Lezione 8

Il brand: che cosa è, come si alimenta, come si custodisce.

The aim of these lessons is to provide the basic elements to have an autonomous artistic life, making one's own artistic expressiveness to earn a living from one's work that allows one to live with dignity and form a family.

Today we address a theme -the brand- that could be misunderstood if applied sic et simpliciter to the artistic world. Yet knowing the rules and behaviour of the market, in this case the art market, helps us to understand how to equip ourselves, how to move in order to obtain the desired result: selling.

I remind you that we have two important appointments for which we will need these notions: the Koinè Fair at the end of April (25-28 April) and the Innocenti Exhibition at the end of May.

We will dedicate the next lesson to the Koinè Fair: conception and design of our stand, presence and work, relations, market study.

BRAND" is a technical marketing term.

Let's start with a film that can make you understand what we're talking about:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGYLVQhZig>

FAAC doesn't build gates, never built one. It designs and builds "systems for the automatic opening of gates": and in this video you don't see even one. What is the video about? On the brand "Faac", now known all over the world.

The brand is a distinctive sign developed by the selling company to identify its offer and differentiate it from its competitors. It synthesizes the notoriety and image that an offer has been able to consolidate with a specific target audience; the customers' perception of the offer system is reflected in the identity (brand identity), in the image (brand image) and in the brand positioning.



## **Brand functions**

According to the American Marketing Association's definition, the brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination thereof, which aims to identify the goods or services of a seller or group of sellers and differentiate them from those of competitors. This definition, however, does not fully express the concept of brand, as it only focuses on the identification and signage function of the brand, leaving aside the relational role it plays. The brand, on the other hand, plays a central role both in the process of differentiation of the offer system and in the management of customer relations.

What does this concept of brand have to do with my work as an artist and craftsman? If I can create a "brand" I will have a field of possible clients to plow: many contemporary art artists have created a brand to succeed. Jeff Koons, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein...: when I see one of Warhol's works I immediately understand that it's one of his works, there can't be anyone else who has done that.

And the same happens for example with Caravaggio or Gherardo delle notti, masters (and illusionists...) of light. And in fact they have been more or less well imitated and so were born the "caravaggeschi" like Orazio Gentileschi, Bartolomeo Manfredi, Caracciolo, Artemisia Gentileschi, Jusepe de Ribera, Francisco de Zurbaran...

So a first consideration I would like to make to you is the following: each of you came to the School of Sacred Art driven by the desire to learn to represent the sacred. Here you learn techniques and deepen the contents of the sacred (for this there are theoretical lessons in liturgy, sacred writing, art and Christianity, history of Christian art...) and you practice to represent the sacred with your works. But everyone must find his or her own way, must dare and go out of his or her comfort zone, risk not having consent and praise, innovate, experiment, "try and try again", new techniques, new materials, new ways. Without fear of "putting your underwear on the market": only in this way you can start to have your "brand".

There is also a second component of the brand, which is the place: and Florence has a very strong brand because it is synonymous with art, culture, history, tradition, innovation, beauty. Do you know where the "radar" was invented? Here in Florence. And the bill of exchange? In Florence. Brunelleschi has dared, experimented and dared to complete a dome that is unique in the world.

Having studied in Florence, having worked in Florence, having produced in Florence is already a brand in itself: you have to learn how to make it return.

Let's go back to the study of the brand: the brand can be understood as the result of a relationship with the market resulting from a process of sedimentation of the brand and the relationship with its users. The brand expresses "a specific relationship established with a given market for the affirmation of a particular offer". If properly managed, therefore, the brand may have an impact on the market such as to generate capital (brand equity) that adds to the value that a good or service provides to a company's customers and to the company itself.



Take for example the production of wedding rings: Agnese is an example of brand creation within the brand. "our wedding rings were made in Florence, by hand, by an artisan who is an artist": when a customer says this sentence (which everyone can of course decline on their artistic specialty) we can say that a brand was born.

Let's look at this example: in the meantime we defined "wedding rings". That is, they are not just rings, ornament and investment, fashion and glamour. They are "wedding rings" that is, they represent a pact of mutual fidelity (for better or for worse...), a bond forever.

There is a beautiful play written by a young Karol Wojtyła entitled "La bottega dell'orefice" (The Goldsmith's Shop), whose protagonists are the wedding rings. First of all, the wedding rings, which as long as they are in the window "are only precious metal objects", but once placed on the bride and groom's fingers will recall "the past as a lesson to remember" and will open "every day again the future by linking it to the past". Wedding rings alone have no weight, no value, they receive meaning from the communion of the couple. The weight of golden wedding rings "is the specific weight of the human being". Faith is the sign of a love that has the scope of the couple's entire destiny. Faith is the memory of the goldsmith's gaze, "meek and penetrating", a gaze capable of peering into the depths of the heart. When, in the midst of a crisis, one of the two spouses goes to the goldsmith to sell his wedding ring, the scales will not shift at all, and the goldsmith will say that "alone it is worth nothing...".

- **Classic**, round and blunt
- **Mantovana**, taller and flatter and usually heavier.
- **Umbrian**, with the engraving of the face of a woman or a couple divided by a bouquet of flowers.
- **Sardinian**, decorated like a chatty lace. In Sardinia it was also used, as an engagement ring, "su maninfide" (hands in the wedding ring), in which instead of the bezel two intertwined hands were depicted, sometimes with a heart in the middle.
- **Ossolana**, coming from Val d'Ossola, is the most significant expression of the ancient goldsmithing tradition of the area. It has four characteristic symbols: the edelweiss (representing purity), the buckwheat (representing prosperity), the interlaced ribbons (symbol of the perpetuity of union) and the half spheres (wish for prolificness).
- **Etruscan**, flat and decorated with good wishes inscriptions.
- **French**, thin and slightly rounded.
- **Jewish**, in enamelled filigree with beaded decoration.
- **Platinum**, very rare and expensive and therefore little used.
- **Two-tone**, consisting of two intertwined circles of yellow and white gold.
- **Tricolor**, consisting of three intertwined circles of yellow, white and red gold.
- **Unique**, set with a diamond.



Now perhaps we can understand why at the Jewelry Week in Milan in October last with hundreds of artists engaged in the most amazing expressions, the eye of the silversmith Milanese was attracted by Agnese's beliefs: because they say, express, innovate, conquer. Agnese has created a brand. And now she must cultivate it.

The benefits of the brand for the company derive essentially from increased customer loyalty and, as a result, reduced vulnerability to competitive marketing initiatives or market crises. A high level of customer satisfaction also helps to consolidate the brand's market position and ensure the company's long-term profitability: if the perceived quality of a brand is particularly high, the company can sustain a premium price, thus avoiding fierce competition based on a fairly constant price instead of reducing it to attract new customers (brand loyalty).

Let's see some applications to our case.

Meanwhile there is a particular rule of the market that should be known: luxury never goes into crisis, indeed when there is a crisis the luxury product sells more, it becomes a distinctive sign and produces distance between social classes.

This means that if we want to stem moments of crisis we must be able to produce works of great quality and level: those who can buy them will do so without paying too much attention to the price, certain to make an important deal, an investment of their money.

But there is also a lot of attention to be paid to what has been defined "the level of customer satisfaction": the example of the two paintings for the church in California is illustrative.

There are many ways to satisfy the customer, especially when he has agreed to pay a good price for our work: to "give him" for example a preparatory sketch of the work, a drawing, perhaps well presented with a pass-partout and a nice dedication. Or a small reproduction of the statue we made (example of Cody with the statues). This in the case of donors for a work in a church is very important: they will feel very grateful, proud, they will show your work to friends in their homes, it will become an important object in the furniture. And you will be known and esteemed.

We close today's session with a second video, also from Faac, celebrating the company's 50th anniversary.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMT4OIlvYTY>