



# The art of innovation: How arts-based initiatives can nurture innovation dynamic capabilities

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## ABSTRACT

The role of the arts in fostering organisational creativity and driving corporate innovation has long been recognized as an area of interest for both academics and practitioners. Yet, the mechanisms through which arts-based-interventions (ABIs) contribute to building dynamic capabilities remain underexplored. By drawing on 21 in-depth interviews with business managers and experienced artists, our study provides concrete insights into how artistic engagement enhances an organization's ability to sense opportunities, seize resources or capabilities, and transform structures, routines or processes to boost long-term innovation. We investigate the underlying mechanisms by creating a rich and contemporary taxonomy of ABIs for innovation. The findings offer a nuanced understanding of how artistic engagement can strengthen organisational adaptability and innovation capacity. This research advances theoretical perspectives on dynamic capabilities and provides practical guidance for managers seeking to leverage the arts as part of their innovation strategies.

## 1. Introduction

*"I truly believe that the future of innovation lies at the intersection of art and technology. Although these worlds mix today like oil and water – there is great value to be gained in finding the right way to bring them together in the context of your organisation's culture and goals."*  
(Domhnaill Hernon, former Head of Art and Technology at Nokia Bell Labs, 23/02/2024)

These are the words of Domhnaill Hernon, who, for over twenty years, has been an advocate for bringing these two worlds—art and technology—closer together to boost corporate innovation.

If sustained interest in a topic is a barometer of its importance, then the value and role of the arts in business, especially in innovation management, warrants further scrutiny. Industry and innovation hubs flourish by integrating the ideas and imagination of artists (Azagra-Caro et al., 2022). Despite the increasing adoption of arts-based initiatives (ABIs) in business, there remains no structured framework to guide managers in systematically initiating, scaling, and sustaining artistic engagement as a driver of innovation. Our paper responds to calls for

academics in the field of innovation to explore the two-way relationship between research or innovation activities and art (Azagra-Caro et al., 2022; Kirby, 2010; Muscio, 2023). Existing research primarily explores ABIs as one-time interventions (Schiuma, 2010), overlooking their potential to nurture dynamic capabilities — repeatable, strategic competencies that organisations can cultivate over time.

This paper presents a capability development pathway, outlining how organisations progressively integrate ABIs to enhance their dynamic capabilities for innovation. Art and management are often viewed as incompatible and mutually exclusive. *"The arts are irrational, iconoclastic, unruly, imaginative, disruptive, subversive, while management is rational, based on calculation, risk-assessment, modelling and assiduous performance metrics and measurements"* (O'Dea et al., 2020, p. 31). With their emphasis on disruption and transformation, ABIs in business organisations are often seen as running counter to the prevailing goal directed, commercial culture. Nevertheless, the adoption and application of these ABIs are on the rise (Ehrenfeld, 2019; Ferreira, 2018; Meisiek & Barry, 2018; Robbins & Sandberg, 2023; Simeone et al., 2018). The arts are both a spur to and a manifestation of creativity: and creativity is the crucial spark that sets innovation alight.

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Creativity is widely regarded as the engine driving societal and economic progress (An & Youn, 2018; Henriksen & Mishra, 2019), as most of the advances that have driven society forward have been driven by creativity (Sternberg, 2004). Organisational success, therefore, increasingly depends on organisational creativity (Bharadwaj & Menon, 2000), which is defined as an organisation's capacity to create tangible innovation assets from the ideas of its people (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005). Innovation is also the driving force of superior business performance, with some firms launching upwards of 1000 new products per year (Biemans et al., 2016). In many organisations, the pressure to innovate is high, but the success rates remain disappointingly low (Castellion & Markham, 2013; Nakata & Hwang, 2020). Consequently, the boardrooms of large corporations are investigating whether the arts can help them develop novel and sustainable ideas and new value propositions that will fuel their innovation pipeline (Bozic, 2018; Whittaker, 2016; Robbins, 2018; Schiuma, 2010).

To ensure that innovation can be rapidly developed and implemented, firms require strong dynamic capabilities—the ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences in response to a rapidly changing environment (Teece et al., 1997). However, while the adoption of ABIs has grown steadily, their role in supporting dynamic capabilities remains underexplored in the literature. Most existing studies have examined ABIs as creativity-enhancing interventions (e.g., Meisiek & Barry, 2018), typically focusing on individual or team-level outcomes. Few studies have considered how ABIs might influence organisational structures, innovation routines, or long-term capability development.

This presents a notable gap: current research does not explain how artistic approaches can be systematically integrated into organisational routines to support innovation. In addressing this gap, our study applies the dynamic capabilities framework to analyse how ABIs contribute to building innovation-supportive capabilities at the organisational level. Rather than simply affirming the creative value of ABIs, we explore how these initiatives can help develop repeatable, strategic competencies for innovation — what we position as our core theoretical contribution. In this way, we respond to the call for more systematic, theoretically grounded investigations of how the arts can serve as sustained drivers of innovation within firms.

Instead of casting the arts and management as opposites, we explore their intersection as a fertile space for creativity, transformation, and strategic renewal. We interviewed 16 business managers and innovation professionals in 11 organisations across Europe as well as 5 artists who worked, in corporate settings, on innovation projects or collaborated formally with innovation teams. The findings offer a structured pathway illustrating how ABIs evolve from basic engagements to becoming embedded capabilities. In addition to revealing this developmental trajectory, the study also sheds light on the often-overlooked role of the artist, whose creative processes and perspectives are vital to the long-term impact of these initiatives. In doing so, we contribute to the literature on dynamic capabilities and arts-in-business by offering new insights into how ABIs can move beyond episodic interventions to embedded initiatives that nurture all three critical dimensions of a firm's dynamic capabilities for innovation (i.e., sensing, seizing and transforming). We propose a framework to support organisations in initiating, structuring, and scaling their artistic engagements as a sustained driver of innovation.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. We begin with a brief review of existing research on arts-in-business and dynamic capabilities. We then outline our methodology, including the rationale for our qualitative, interview-based approach. Next, we present our findings and the emergent framework derived from them. Finally, we discuss the implications of our study for both theory and practice, and outline directions for future research.

## 2. Literature review

Our article directly addresses the questions posed by this special issue on the societal impact of art on research, particularly how ABIs contribute to innovation and to the development of dynamic capabilities in organisations (Muscio, 2023). One key aspect of this discussion is the growing integration of the arts into science and technology, reflected in the shift from STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) to STEAM, which acknowledges the role of artistic thinking and arts approaches in problem-solving, creativity, adaptability, but also the adoption and diffusion of science, technology and innovation (Azagra-Caro et al., 2022; Kirby, 2010; Muscio, 2023). In business, this evolution is seen through the rise of ABIs, yet their potential as a strategic lever for innovation and their role in developing dynamic capabilities—the ability to sense, seize, and transform opportunities (Teece et al., 1997), remains underexplored.

To address this, we first examine how (1.1) the Dynamic Capabilities framework provides a structure to analyse the impact of ABIs on innovation, before (1.2) exploring the role of ABIs as a catalyst for organisational change and adaptability.

### 2.1. Applying the dynamic capabilities framework to ABIs and innovation

Our study is located within the framework of dynamic capabilities (Teece et al., 1997). Our research question is how do ABIs help develop dynamic capabilities to support innovation. Dynamic capabilities have been a seminal theoretical lens since the 1990s. It is referred to by a number of labels such as distinctive capabilities (Day, 1994), combinative capabilities (Kogut & Zander, 2003), or dynamic capabilities (Teece et al., 1997). Even today, the influential paper on dynamic capabilities by Teece et al. (1997) is the most cited paper in management. Its popularity is easily explained by the strong emphasis on the question of how firms can glean and exploit knowledge and resources, from sources, including the arts, inside as well as outside their organisational boundaries (Audretsch et al., 2024; Vanhaverbeke et al., 2008). Dynamic capabilities are defined as processes which create and explore new strategic resources (Teece et al., 1997). Although definitions vary, they share the notion of dynamic capabilities being the firm's capacity and processes to reinvent its resources to achieve competitive advantage in new and future environments (Leemann & Kanbach, 2022). Such processes focus on the recognition of the value of new, external information, assimilating it, and applying it to commercial ends.

Firms have been focusing increasingly on external sources of innovation to improve both their innovation performance (Tidd, 2023; West & Bogers, 2017; Zobel & Hagedoorn, 2018) and more recently, to improve their innovation capability (Schiuma, 2017). However, the presence of valuable external sources of knowledge, whether in the arts or elsewhere, does not automatically imply that the inflow of new ideas and practices into the organisation is a painless or uncomplicated process. External knowledge can only be recognized, accessed and assimilated when firms develop new routines and change their organisational structure and culture to facilitate the likelihood of learning (Dahlander & Gann, 2010). The ability to recognize, value and exploit external sources of knowledge is crucial in explaining organisations' innovative capabilities (Cohen & Levinthal, 1994; Dyer & Singh, 1998).

The ability to exploit these sources of creativity differs between firms and therefore can be described as a firm-specific dynamic capability which develops over time, is path-dependent and is based on organisational routines (Teece et al., 1997; Winter, 2003). Consequently, dynamic capability theory is crucial in explaining why some companies are much better than others in creating and capturing value from integrating external ideas, concepts and processes with innovation partners. This paper contains several insights to enrich the concept of dynamic capabilities as it relates to ABIs. Internal and external sources of insight and inspiration are complementary and must be combined to improve the innovation performance of organisations (Vanhaverbeke et al., 2008).

Companies need internal experts or intermediaries to recognize the value and potential of collaborating with the arts and these intermediaries also need to be able to smooth the path to enable collaboration to be a success for both parties.

Carlucci and Schiuma (2018) conclude that an organisational capability to use the arts can be a cornerstone in the evolution of management mindsets and, if used judiciously, can be a value creation catalyst. A capability is the capacity to utilise resources to perform a task or an activity, against the opposition of circumstance; such opposition being, for instance, a competitive business environment or a shortage of available resources (Teece, 2014). A dynamic capability is an entrepreneurial approach that emphasizes the importance of signature business processes not only within the firm but also particular ways in which it links with external partners (Teece, 2014). Wernerfelt (1984), and later Barney (1991) began to define the relationships between firm resources and competitive advantage. Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) state that dynamic capabilities occur in both high-velocity markets and moderately dynamic markets, and our interviews have taken place in both of those contexts. Dynamic capabilities are firm specific and unique (Barreto, 2010) and hence referred to as ‘signature’ (Leemann & Kanbach, 2022) capabilities. Our paper takes the lens of dynamic capabilities, and we use it to audit the innovation practices of organisations to determine to what extent they have turned ABIs into a signature approach to innovation.

## 2.2. From art to ABIs: engine for organisational change

The arts can be a powerful engine for individual and organisational change (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001). Although the definition of “the arts” has long been the subject of debate among academics. In his bibliometric analysis of the field of arts-based management, Ferreira (2018) notes the widespread acceptance that it is “a special kind of quest for excellence” (Lee et al., 2015: 3). The value of the arts in having a positive effect on business performance has been significantly reported in the literature (An & Youn, 2018; Gahan et al., 2007; Meisiek & Barry, 2014; Nissley, 2010; Reckhenrich et al., 2008). This value, as Chia (1996) and Schiuma (2011) suggest, exists mainly because the arts can provide new avenues for proposing new patterns and frames of understanding the volatile and uncertain present-day business environment. Nissley (2010) asserts, “the arts offer the means for us to make sense of the growing complexity that managers and leaders are confronted with” (p. 11). Ideas are the start point for all innovation and organisations need a continuous flow of good ideas to fuel their innovation pipeline (Van Den Ende et al., 2015). ABIs are seen as stimuli for these new ideas, new ways of thinking and new ways of doing things in business because creativity generates new ideas (Antal, 2014). For instance, advancements in new products and processes generally emerge through the cultivation and development of individual creative skills that enhance complex cognitive processes (Darso, 2004). But the benefits of ABIs can also be seen at the very end of the innovation process where they facilitate the adoption and therefore diffusion of more radical innovation. Kirby (2010) and Muscio (2023) show how science fiction (respectively in films and in comics) can either positively or negatively influence perceptions towards radical scientific discoveries, reducing anxiety and stimulating desire for new technologies for example (Kirby, 2010).

### 2.2.1. From a variety of business applications

The benefits of engaging with the arts include the development of greater empathy and the ability to adapt to uncertainty and imperfection. It encourages new ways of thinking and new approaches to problem solving, accepting uncertainty and being open to the unknown, trusting intuition and giving the mind freedom to roam (Edmondson, 2020). According to Harvard Business Professor Rob Austin, “The economy of the future will be about creating value and appropriate forms, and no one knows more about the processes for doing that than artists” (reported by Adler (2006: 487). The transformational potential

of the arts is well documented and has already been applied in many management fields (Ferreira, 2018). Among the business fields in which the arts have been shown to have an impact are (Table 1).

The use of the arts to boost creativity and innovation in organisations is a practice which is gaining traction (Schiuma, 2011). We know many companies in different industries are tapping into the arts and many of the initiatives, even if the terms used to describe them are slightly different (see Table 2). Artistic Intervention in Organisations (Antal, 2009), Arts-Based-Initiatives (Schiuma, 2011); Workarts (Barry & Meisiek, 2010); Arts-based interventions (Schiuma, 2010; Sandberg, 2019); Artistic Interactions (Cacciatore and Panozzo, 2021); Embedded Artist (Bianco, 2023); Art Thinking (Bureau, 2019; Whitaker, 2016). Such practices can be defined as any organisational and management intervention embedding artists, art processes and practices in organisations and in teams, with the aim of improving innovation and value creation capacity in non-arts organisations. Examples would include on-site arts-based workshops or alternatively through attendance at art performances or through the purchase of a work of art (Schiuma, 2010). Carlucci and Schiuma (2018) suggest that ABIs help people to modify their comfort zone, stimulate new ways of seeing and feeling in terms of personal and business issues, enlarge and enhance individual perspectives, improve intuition and emotional responses, and inject passion.

Schiuma (2011) defines Arts-Based Initiatives (ABIs) as “the planned managerial use of art forms to address management challenges and business problems with the aim of developing employees and infrastructures that affect the organisational value-creation capacity.” (Schiuma, 2011, p. 2). ABI’s are a broader, more sustained approach to integrating the arts into business and go beyond one-off interventions by embedding artistic practices into corporate strategies, leadership development and even business models. This implies a more philosophical divide, describing arts-based interventions as tactical with arts-based initiatives representing a strategic capability. These initiatives embed artistic principles into organisational culture, governance, and strategic development, fostering continuous innovation and resilience. More recently, Schiuma and Carlucci (2018) emphasize the importance of ABIs in the broader context of the prevailing turbulent and unpredictable business environment.

#### 2.2.1.1. To a lack of definitional clarity. Despite the growing body of

**Table 1**

Mapping the arts influence on business areas - based on Ferreira, 2018.

Business Field	Research Papers
The generation of commercial ideas in corporate innovation and R & D projects	Carlucci & Schiuma, 2018a; Heinonen et al., 2011; Kratzer et al., 2008; Robbins, 2018; Sandberg, 2019; Tran et al., 2018
Human Resource Management	Townsend (2000)
Marketing and Strategy	An & Youn, 2018; Huettl & Gierl, 2012; Lee et al., 2015; Szulanski & Amin, 2001
Strategic information systems	Sakthivel & Mandell (1998)
Communication and corporate identity	Cummings & Angwin, 2011; Hoeken, 2005; Kerr & Darso, 2008; Kottasz et al., 2008
Leadership	Adler, 2006; Kuran, 2013; Mitra et al., 2010; Thomson, 2010
Business sponsorship	Thomas et al. (2009)
Teaching Business in University	Amidon, 2005; Freeman et al., 2015; Madden & Smith, 2015; Nissley, 2010; Wilson & Mantie, 2017
Tourism & Culture	Aquino et al., 2012; Robbins, 2018
Fashion and design	Aage and Belussi (2008)
Entrepreneurship	Bureau, 2019; Mitra, 2019
Social Innovation	Figueiró et al. (2023)
Management	Antal, 2014; Schiuma, 2010, 2011, 2017; Schnugg, 2014
Science communication through art.	Azagra-Caro et al., 2022; Azagra-Caro and Pavone, 2024; Schnugg, 2019; Muscio, 2023; Kirby, 2010.

**Table 2**  
Defining arts based initiatives (ABIs)

Term	Definition	Key Feature	Source
<b>Artistic Intervention in Organisations</b>	The structured integration of artists and artistic practices within business settings to foster creativity, learning, and innovation.	Focuses on collaborative engagements between artists and organisations, often as part of a broader strategy for cultural change.	Antal (2009); Schnugg (2014, 2019)
<b>Arts-Based Interventions</b>	Short-term, targeted applications of artistic methods, such as theater, music, or visual arts, aimed at addressing specific organizational challenges like leadership, teamwork, or innovation.	Includes workshops, performances, and creative problem-solving exercises, often facilitated by external artists or consultants.	Schiuma (2010); Sandberg (2019); Meisiek and Barry (2018)
<b>Arts-Based Initiatives (ABIs)</b>	Long-term, strategically embedded engagements with the arts that integrate artistic principles into an organization's culture, governance, and value-creation processes to drive continuous innovation and transformation.	Arts-based initiatives embed artistic methods and thinking into the long-term strategic vision of organisations, differentiating them from short-term arts-based interventions. These are often in the form of creative labs or programmes.	Schiuma (2011) Schiuma and Carlucci (2018) Simeone et al. (2018)
<b>Workarts</b>	A concept describing how artistic processes and art-making practices can be embedded into daily business operations.	Encourages continuous artistic engagement, rather than one-off interventions, to sustain long-term organizational creativity.	Barry and Meisiek (2010)
<b>Art Thinking</b>	A mindset that applies the open-ended, explorative, and iterative nature of artistic creation to business and innovation challenges.	Unlike Design Thinking, it does not start from a user problem but from an artistic perspective that embraces ambiguity and uncertainty.	Whitaker (2016); Robbins and Sandberg (2023); O'Dea et al. (2020); Bureau (2019)
<b>Artistic Interactions</b>	Engagements where artists and organisations co-create new knowledge through artistic experimentation.	Emphasizes mutual learning between artists and corporate professionals, fostering unexpected innovation pathways.	Cacciatore and Panozzo (2021); Simeone et al. (2018)

literature on the subject, the lack of definitional clarity has led to conceptual ambiguity, which could have the effect of limiting the effective application of these methods in business contexts. Table 2 below clarifies these concepts and positions them within the broader discourse on organisational innovation.

We contend that the proliferation of terms to describe approaches in this field is evidence of an S-curve of implementation. The S-curve observes that as new practices, such as ABIs, develop over time, typically following a slow start, there is rapid acceleration and ultimately maturity as a dominant form of the practice emerges. We are in the rapid acceleration phase where various firms adopting ABIs experiment with and test multiple variations, hence the proliferation of new terms and descriptors. Prominent terms, aside from the ones above, include: arts-in-business (Darso, 2004), artful making (Austin & Devin, 2003), artful leadership (Adler, 2006), arts-based managerial methods (Taylor & Ladkin, 2009), arts-driven leadership development (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014), aesthetic understanding in organisational learning (Sрати, 2008), artistic interventions (Sköldberg et al., 2015), arts-based learning at work (Nissley, 2010) and in education (Chemi, 2020; Chemi & Du, 2018). However, except for Art Thinking (Bureau, 2019; Whitaker, 2016) the other approaches are simply variations on the theme of ABIs (Schiuma, 2011). The distinction between art thinking and ABIs is that art thinking is fundamentally an individual mindset that embraces uncertainty and ambiguity: it is more philosophical and is associated with radical innovation and has been linked with double loop learning (Robbins & Sandberg, 2023). ABIs, on the other hand, are practical applications of artistic methods within organisations (O'Dea et al., 2020). They involve structured and strategic initiatives that bring art into business contexts to achieve specific goals, usually linked to creativity and innovation (Schiuma, 2017). This paper will therefore focus on ABIs.

### 2.2.2. Three types of ABI for corporate engagement with the arts

In their EU report, O'Dea et al. (2020) note that there are three principal approaches from which organisations can choose when planning their engagement with the arts: *artists in residence*; *artists as consultants* to business and *embedding artistic practices*.

Artists in residence programmes have become increasingly popular in the last decade. For O'Dea et al. (2020), "Residing" mainly corresponds to bringing the artists into the workplace of enterprises to produce a specific artwork within the physical location of the company and the residence is usually brief. Since 2012, many high-profile tech companies have initiated programmes to place artists in residence in the heart of their organisations. Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Adobe are all

examples of this wider movement amongst technology companies who have turned to Artist-in-Residence (AIR) programmes. These programmes, although differing from company to company, generally exist as short-term artistic production residencies in which the company provides studio space within its offices to artists to produce new works. As well as the space, they are generally paid for their work and time. Despite the recent instances of these programmes amongst the major tech companies within a short period of time (2012 – Autodesk, 2013; Facebook, Planet Labs, 2014; Google Labs, Microsoft Research, 2015; Adobe, 2017 – Nokia Bell Labs), these residencies are a legacy of the 'Art and Technology' movement of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Bell Labs' Experiments in Art & Technology (E.A.T.) (1966), Art & Technology at LACMA (1967) - PARC Artist-in-Residence Program, all based in the United States and European projects such as Artist Placement Group (APG) (1966) in the United Kingdom and Experimenten in Kunst en Technologie (EKT) (1970) in the Netherlands.

The second approach "Consulting" describes engaging artists as consultants to show how their methodologies can be deployed or replicated in business. According to Schiuma (2010), an *intervention* is the kind of arts-based activity performed within a limited time frame, usually between 2 and 3 days in the forms of workshops, masterclasses or courses for a specific project, whereas a *project* corresponds to an initiative characterised by a set of integrated and coordinated events and activities, planned and programmed over a period of time usually ranging from one to six months, all coordinated to achieve some particular business performance outcome. In both cases, artists and ABIs are employed for a specific, usually short term, engagement with identified aims and goals.

In the third approach, "Embedding" artistic practices become central to the organisation's functional practices. It draws upon a well-established tradition where managers actively invite, engage, and integrate the arts within the organization, directly incorporating artistic practices into managerial processes (Antal, 2014; Schiuma, 2011). Schiuma (2010) describes this as a "programme," the most developed and sustained form of arts-based initiatives. Numerous studies have identified key operational principles of arts-based management across various organisational contexts, utilising diverse forms of art. Examples include hosting artistic residencies to stimulate creativity (Harris, 1999) organising dance performances in the banking sector to create more appealing workplaces (Reinhold et al., 2018), commissioning theatre troupes to facilitate organisational change (Meisiek & Barry, 2014) and using great literary fiction as a framework for studying organisational transitions (Czerniawska, 2018).

Rossi et al. (2021) suggest a similar perspective as they reprise the

work of Austin and Seitanidi (2012) who developed a Collaborative Value Creation (CVC) framework for analysing social partnerships between businesses and nonprofits. Though their work is situated in partnerships between the arts and universities which are known to produce valuable societal outcomes, the CVC framework has relevance for ABIs. Austin and Seitanidi (2012) outline three models of business-nonprofit collaboration on a continuum. Transactional collaborations involve minimal engagement, peripheral relevance to mission, and independent value creation. Transactional collaborations center on one-way resource transfers rather than shared objectives (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). They require little trust, rarely drive innovation, and seldom change external systems and, according to Bellini et al. (2019) typically, the main benefit of the collaboration accrues to one of the partners (usually, the one who receives the resources). Transformational collaborations, by contrast, are deeply integrated, mission-critical, and foster joint value creation. They demand high trust, frequently spur innovation, and often reshape external systems. Integrative collaborations fall in between, blending elements of both.

### 3. Methodology

Our research question: *how do ABIs help develop dynamic capabilities to support innovation within organisations* - justifies the choice of case study. This is the preferred qualitative approach when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed (Yin, 2003) as it is particularly effective in surfacing meaningful insights through a limited number of examples (Pettigrew, 1990). As pointed out by Glaser and Strauss (2017), case studies support a research strategy involving an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon, such as ABIs in our case, within its real-life context by using multiple sources of evidence (Robson, 1993). We apply a multiple case study method to capture the richness of the context (Yin, 2003) in the observed phenomena, which is the intersection of arts and innovation. We then perform in-depth context analysis and study the patterns across the cases. This method allows us to identify both theory-driven patterns and new emerging data-driven patterns (Bell & Bryman, 2007; Yin, 2003).

Since our research question is rather narrow and exploratory, it requires a sampling strategy ensuring context diversity and richness of data. We initially applied a purposeful sampling strategy (Patton, 1990), more specifically theory-based sampling, first, we searched for cases where companies cooperate with artists and apply other ABIs in their innovation and business processes. Then we looked for companies and experts in different industries and European countries to ensure richer context (maximum variation sampling). Finally, we added criterion sampling logic when we selected specifically the cases where companies applied arts and collaborated with artists, and it affected the innovation and business processes. During the interviews with company representatives, we asked them to recommend the following interviewee thus we also used snowball sampling. This way we ensured the broader representation of interviewees (Baum et al., 2025; Castillo Holley & Watson, 2017). To address multiple stakeholder perspectives (Parmar et al., 2010) and to understand the role of artists involved in the innovation process in companies, we also interviewed five artists.

In total, our sample included 5 artists and 11 organisations (Appendix B) operating in both the private and public sector: telecommunication, IT, beverages, foundry, fashion, jewellery, education, consulting, automobile and creative industry, across different European regions such as France, Ireland, Austria and Spain. These companies ranged from SMEs to large enterprises, each having implemented art-based initiatives in their innovation processes. Artists' background lies in visual and performing arts, sculpture and photography.

#### 3.1. Data collection

To ensure consistency and to minimize interviewer bias, semi-structured interviews followed the predefined interview guides (see

Appendix A). Two separate interview guides were developed for interviewing artists and another for company representatives. Each interview lasted 56 min on average, covering themes such as the rationale for adopting art-based innovation, collaboration mechanisms, and the perceived impact on business processes (See Appendix A).

Interview guides were developed using theory behind innovation process and management, arts-based initiatives and, additionally, it covered areas on approaches to innovation management in the firm, innovation processes and stakeholders (internal and external) management, tactical art-based interventions and more strategic art and innovation initiatives. We touched upon art thinking, role of arts in innovation process, how and why arts have been integrated in commercial and R&D routines. This topic guide yielded key insights or learnings derived from the ABIs. The interviews with artists also followed a structured approach and included questions about artist background, perception of artistic and creative processes, collaboration experiences, especially about ABIs in companies, role of artists in collaboration with company on innovation. We aimed to understand whether through residencies or other ABIs, they focused on the value artists bring to organisations in areas like skill development, leadership, team cohesion, and innovation. Discussions also addressed the role of art in the innovation process, the need for intermediaries between artists and industry professionals, and the integration of social and environmental issues into ABIs, particularly in the context of responsible innovation.

For each of the 11 organisations studied, we conducted from one to three semi-structured interviews with managers (16 interviews in total). The interviewees were selected based on the following criteria: (a) a good understanding of the entire business and (b) direct involvement in the art innovation project. Such informants were CEOs, innovation managers, head of design, marketing directors, creative directors or product managers (see Appendix B). As recommended by Gioia et al. (2013), for consistency, although some cases consist of single informant interviews, each informant was asked to speak as the collective.

The five interviewed artists were either independent professionals collaborating with firms on specific innovation projects or part of structured residency programs. Their perspectives were analysed separately to compare them with business representatives' accounts, ensuring a balanced interpretation of the findings. The artists were selected based on the following criteria: they all had to have experience working in a company in order to be able to speak about both worlds — their artistic practice and the corporate environment in which they had worked.

We acknowledge that the use of specific terminology in the interview guides, such as art thinking, may have influenced responses, as some participants associated it with pre-existing concepts (e.g. design thinking). To mitigate this, we sought clarifications during interviews and cross-verified responses with secondary sources. However, since not all companies had both artist and business representatives available for interviews, some insights remain one-sided, which we acknowledge as a limitation. The objective was not to achieve triangulation between managers and artists from the same company, but rather to understand the motivations of artists who had been involved in the implementation of ABIs within corporate settings. Details about the artists and their residencies are provided in the interviewees list in appendix B.

In total we interviewed 21 art and business professionals. The total interview time exceeded 17 h resulting in a corpus of 217 pages of transcribed interviews. The interviews were conducted between November 2023 and March 2024 and were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. To ensure the validity and reliability of the transcriptions made, the member check technique was applied: the interviewees were invited to review, validate, and if necessary, revise the completed transcripts to avoid any misinterpretations. Aiming for data triangulation, along with the primary data collection, secondary data such as background information on companies and their art innovation projects were collected from firms' websites and other materials shared

by the interviewees. The secondary data also included working documents on different ABIs, podcasts, reports made by the artists after their residency, websites and PR documents describing the arts initiatives.

### 3.2. Data analysis

To ensure internal validity and reliability, the analysis of the interviews was first run by all co-authors independently. Following that, their results were compared, discussed, and aggregated. To systematise the case study analysis, first, a template analysis technique (Cassell & Symon, 2004) was applied. A literature-based template analysing the art based initiatives for each company was filled and the company background information was carefully documented. The database of 21 interviews was then transferred to NVivo software for further analysis. In-depth reassessment of the 11 cases revealed that all of them were suitable for our research. Multiple rounds of auto coding and manual data coding were run (see examples of codes in Appendix C).

Initially, open coding was performed to identify emergent themes, followed by Nvivo coding to interpret how companies integrated art into their innovation process, which aimed to define concepts and differentiate them into categories. With Nvivo codes, we interpreted the phenomenon and explored the process of how companies applied arts in the innovation process. The codes covered all events occurring between the initiation of the arts-based initiative and the outcome. We identified the main events, at both the organisational and project (collaboration with the artists) levels, that companies passed when they integrated arts and artists in their innovation process. Studying the process 'How companies integrated artists and art in the innovation process', revealed codes that were grouped into 4 main categories of ABIs. Three of them were similar to the typology suggested by O'Dea et al. (2020) and Schiuma (2009), to which we added a 4th category, "Hubbing" (See results section). During the analysis we concluded that the integration of arts in the innovation process was closely accompanied with the development of a variety of innovation capabilities that led to transformation of organisational processes. Given these recurrent patterns in capability development (see examples of codes in Appendix C), we applied theoretical coding using the dynamic capabilities framework (Teece, 2014) refining our categories in alignment with Leemann and Kanbach's (2022) taxonomy. This deductive approach, introduced in the later stages of coding, allowed us to systematically classify firms' evolving capabilities in relation to ABIs. In the final model, 15 dynamic sub-capabilities (five in each group of sensing, seizing and transforming) are revealed, explaining how ABIs are impacting the firms' innovation dynamic capabilities (see Fig. 1 and Table 5 in 3.3).

## 4. Results

The results are presented in three sections. First, we describe the four categories of ABIs for innovation that emerged from our analysis. Second, we highlight the main determinants for integrating artists and ABIs within the firms' innovation process. Third, we show how ABIs impact the dynamic capability framework.

### 4.1. Four variations of ABIs

We found a wide spectrum of practices through which organisations engage with the arts. Our interviews with artists and corporate innovation managers yielded a dynamic pattern of four principal integrative initiatives. The first three – Residing, Consulting and Embedding – correspond to and corroborate O'Dea's (2020) taxonomy and the fourth – 'Hubbing' – extends current knowledge as it has not been identified in the literature before.

Table 3 (below) summarises the four approaches with the different ABIs undertaken and the corresponding interviewees. appendix C gives a larger overview of examples of corresponding quotes.

The first ABI, we identified is **Residing or Artist in Residence** -

where artists are identified for a particular quality, style or insight and are purposefully chosen to work with enterprise in their role as an artist (O'Dea et al., 2020; Simeone et al., 2018). Residing is a collaborative form akin to patronage where traditionally artists in residence work on short-term projects and create a single and unique piece of art: "Every year they invite around 25 ... designers and artists. So you have a grant and you can work on any issue you want" (A1) Artists experience creative freedom and get a "carte blanche" to work on a self-selected topic: "my work takes the form of performance projects, where I generally call on materials or skills and hybridize them to come up with new perspectives and proposals ..." (A1). Some companies establish longer projects: "... what we ended up doing was, in our artist in residence program, where we had about 25 artists at one time. We brought them in and we would work with them for at least a year's time" (B6).

Other residencies imply more active collaboration between artist, technical personnel and other stakeholders: "when I was in residence ... the collaboration with the technicians was great ... I've been in contact with people, workers and managers too" (A3) and "... there is the artist who started talking with the expert... and there the work of art was born between the artist's idea and the technicality or the way of working the work that had to be implemented ..." (B9). Aiming for learning and improving innovation processes, companies encourage dialogue between the artist and the employees. This dialogue or reflection comes often in the interviews with artists in residence: "and after three months I was asked to come and spend three days with them to put into words what had happened ... at every level, in terms of the space, the staff and the customers" (A4).

Companies involve artists in events organising and developing a piece of art depicting the company's values and history: "Last year we celebrated our 100th anniversary ... We should be able to make a piece that represents history ... and that can be shown for everyone to see ... a kind of totem that is representative of our society ..." (B9). Joint events, like this, bring together not only artistic competences and the business world, but also different cultures and experiences: "a bank in Paris asked me to exhibit as a Spanish artist in France. By chance, it happened to bring together my two cultures and my two professions: finance and art, Spain and France ..." (A4). These joint events stimulate partners to open their minds and try new things: "... to bring the world of business and culture closer together, but also to give businesses the chance to try something different from what they usually do, ... to open up to something a bit different ..." (B6)".

The second ABI is **Consulting** – when artists and artistic methodologies are employed by companies for specific, discrete, usually short term, engagements with identified aims and goals, thus, artists act as consultants to business. For example, companies organise art training thematic workshops "It was part of the training plan ... we published a ... catalogue with themes ... People signed up ... (to) training courses ..." (B10) and active artistic learning exhibition, where it was important that participants are not being passive learner but active: "... we asked people to do mini exhibitions, oral presentations ... People go there, they enjoy it, but they have to share it with others, so it was the idea of return and restitution. ... We had a mini-modelling workshop. We had design equipment. And we had highly skilled people ..." (B11). These artistic practices can help companies in ordinary work tasks to do them more creatively: "We have monthly workshops about artistic practices - the last one was about stage and set design and we take learnings from these about how we merchandise our brands" (B4).

Artistic learning expeditions are about developing or offering tailor-made artistic journeys "a tour ... it wasn't a visit, it wasn't an experience" (B10) or experimentation "It's about getting people out of their own environment. ... to go and see artists who are creating" (B10). These experiences put employees into new creative and inspiring settings, where they can observe and learn from artists (dancers, visual artists, designers, architects, etc.): "... the architects, we went to see two of their creations and we worked with them on semiotics, on the link between images and words" (B10) and tell their innovation story in a more creative way: "... who are the most interesting artists working on the same subjects as us? Telling a story in space. We worked with a visual artist and architects" (B10).

**Table 3**  
Four variations of ABIs - Adapted from O'Dea et al. (2020) and Schiuma (2010).

RESIDING		Cases
Artists in residence: realisation of a unique piece of art	Short-term project with company, "carte blanche" on topic	A1, A3, A5, A4
	One year residence program	A1, A3, A5, B6
Artist project or event: Developing unique environment and a space for engaging dialogue	Involving artist into event organising and developing a piece of art	B9, A1, A3, A4, A5
	Patronage - Industry and artists joint event	B9, A1, A5, A3, A2
	Engaging dialogue between the artist and the employees	B9, A4, A3, A5
CONSULTING		
Art training workshops, exhibitions and artistic learning expeditions	Art training thematic workshops	B10, B11, B12, B4
	Active learning exhibition	B10, B11
	Artistic learning expeditions	B10, B11, B12
Collaboration, training and co-creation with artists	Artists involved in marketing activities and NPD	B4, B7, A4, B15, B11, B12
	Co-creation with artists	B1, B4, B15
	Artist-consultant or art university as a trainer	B10, B13, B15, A4, B16
EMBEDDING		
Organizational and functional structures	R&D department and in-house designers	B13, B6
	Art director to manage graphic artists & art-oriented technical employees	B8
Embedding creative practices	Inspiration and benchmarking of creative practices	B7, B13
	Embedding artistic work in product development	B7, B13, B8
HUBBING		
Specific program or place (organisational structure) in the intersection of art and technology	Innovation Lab	B13, B6
	System approach to artists integration and collaboration with scientists and engineers	B6
	Open Innovation network and ecosystem	B13

Artists are also involved as consultants in marketing activities "... we arrange tasting events with artists where participants get to hear the artists talk about their work while they sample drinks and cocktails ..." (B4), and as co-creator for new brands: "... well-known artists to design limited edition bottles ..." (B4) and bring companies external knowledge and inspiration. Other firms use artists to give them a creative boost or jump "We work on technology roadmaps - and we use external inputs, such as the arts ... because bigger shifts need bigger creativity from designers and artists" (B1).

Artist-consultants also act as trainers in, for example, visual arts and dance workshops: "... we worked with a visual artist who plays with light and colour. And that really spoke to them. And at the same time it highlighted the problems of perception ..." (B10). Sometimes, the training aiming at developing new creative skills is conducted by the collaborating university, involving several artists-consultants: "... this was an open innovation collaboration with the ... Institute ... I went over there for two months and we have been integrated into this artistic work ... And the music; the

theory, the people; the dancers ... And so this institute had all these disciplines they had together. And the evening they met together, they did some art ... And then I thought, art and science can inspire each other" (B13).

In the third ABI, 'Embedding', artists can be employed by the firms and art initiatives become central to the organisation's core business and innovation processes, even though they might not always be explicitly identified as such within the enterprise. Embedding can take the form of in-house designers, staff writers, artistic or creative directors (usually in creative industries). A feature of creative industries is that they often have a dedicated creative or artistic director to coordinate the interactions between artists and technical workers: "The creation of the reflection, which is somewhere what is in the head of the artistic director, ... that will integrate developers, so computer scientists to be more prosaic, but who are computer scientists oriented towards art, towards the artistic and towards graphics, ... also have part of the team working on music ... people who do visual effects ... that's also art ..." (B8). One case company adopted the 'Disney' method: "... This is a four-colour method where you have blue, red, green and yellow colours and you went through these four colours with a different mindset during the development of new projects ... I had engineers, I had designers, I had people from product development and from marketing in one team ... always when we discussed, they could not speak the same language". (B13).

The fourth approach we identified, that did not appear in earlier taxonomies, we called 'Hubbing' as it implies that artists themselves, not only their practices, are physically integrated to the innovation process of the company, usually in a separate entity, in a 'hub.' Innovation Hubs are generally structurally independent and externally oriented, while conventional innovation teams are embedded within existing business units. Brattström and Faems (2024) report that firms increasingly establish structurally separate corporate venturing units designed to fast-track innovation and new product development. These come in many forms: innovation labs; incubators; accelerators; innovation hubs or corporate venturing groups and are a sign of strategic organisational transformation (Sharma & Meyer, 2019). While they may be branded differently, they share some common structural and cultural design elements. They emphasize proactiveness and risk-taking, they have a high degree of autonomy and work discretion (Kreiser et al., 2021) and hence can experiment more with external groups such as artists. When artists are seconded into hubs, these entities work at the intersection of art and technology, generally in a specific program or project (e.g. in an innovation lab or separate entity) or network (like open innovation network) or ecosystem. We relate this category with the establishment of dedicated innovation creative labs or art and technology labs.

One of our case companies, evolving in the luxury goods sector, developed the Innovation Lab, a research unit promoting exploration and R&D with purpose. Although they had conventional NPD processes, the management team were concerned that the company "did not have the right approach to bring the next level of products into the fashion industry". And the company wanted "to go for more ... for fulfilling ... promise in innovation to bring in highly innovative products that surprise the customer ... (B13)". Thus, a structurally separate innovation hub was born, where processes were more fluid. This innovation lab brought together "engineers, designers ... people from product development and from marketing in one team ...". I-Lab aimed to integrate technology faster by collaborating with designers and researchers, answering the question: "How can this design process be translated into this engineering world?" Design thinking and open innovation were concepts that heavily contributed to the development of the I-Lab: "to help, to speed up one thing

and to integrate technology faster” (B13). Working this way, I-Lab process was very much inspired by artists, who provided implementation of concepts “We had contacts with artists ... there have been artists from everywhere in the world who sent us their proposals. I gave them a briefing and they developed new product concepts. They have been very innovative and driven by art” (B13).

Another case company, in the Telecom field, has worked with arts and artists since 1929 and this makes them probably the most experienced in the field. “Everything in (Company X) was about technology - that’s the currency in there - so we mapped the right artists to the right engineers to work together” (B6). Artists have a degree of intellectual curiosity that is exceptional and provide significant and highly original input to the innovation process: “When I met with these artists, every single conversation blew my mind. It was like an intellectual anvil was dropped on my head”(B6). Artists collaborated directly with engineers and scientists, and it created a lot of management complexity: “So my role in the organisation with the Innovation Incubation organisation, and then I carved out a small part of that to focus on the arts and tech. My role was to establish the frameworks and methodologies that overcame those tensions and turned those differences from being tensions into value creation” (B6).

Building the open innovation network and ecosystem simulates better integration of artists into innovation and product development processes: “we then started to build the Open Innovation Network ... And today it’s beautiful because everybody has access to knowledge ... we simply need to take the right partners from inside and outside to design the right process ... with this modern learning that we have from the principles of ... dedicated innovation networks ... you can orchestrate them” (B13).

#### 4.2. Determinants to integrate and collaborate with artists for innovation

The cross-case analysis highlights two main sets of factors which, when activated, produce the most conducive culture for ABIs. The first set relates to the company and the second to the project upon which the team is working (see Table 4).

##### 4.2.1. Organisational factors

What comes up most often is the importance of having an organisation appropriately primed to truly collaborate with artists. The stronger their engagement in the innovation process (from residing to hubbing), the more likely they are to succeed: “To be perfectly frank, you’re going to get nowhere with any of that stuff [Art] unless the organisation itself is willing to look at fairly radical transformation.” (B2). This means creating the conditions for the business environment to be as

**Table 4**  
Determinants of the integration of artists and ABIs in the innovation process

Organisational Factors	Project-based Determinants	Artist Characteristics
Organisational culture Enabling collaborative environment Supporting leadership	Defining criteria for a careful selection of the artists  Clear purpose of the collaboration	Collaborative Adaptive Able to share his/her vision Tech or business transposition  Aligning the work of the artist to the objective of the project Being clear about common objectives
Clear strategic intent Management vision Shared objectives	Mutual interests	curiosity, cognitive proximity, alignment of individual interests, respect and trust relationship
Sufficient resources Human, Financial, Material, Immaterial	Mastering the different languages	Understanding, speaking the same language and translating
Technical and business replicability	Presence of an intermediary	Mediator, Connector, Arbitration, matchmaking

collaborative as possible: “you’re only good when you get people to work together” (B8). It means provoking unexpected, unfamiliar but rich encounters: “what we did at the end was to bring everyone together, the participants and the artists who didn’t know each other.” (B10); creating links between professions by going out, seeing exhibitions, but mostly by building a community to facilitate the exchanges, not only professional but also social. “We need this kind of grounded community and capacity building element so people get close to each other and can explain and can talk about.” (B16). Naturally, this requires support at the highest level of the organisation: “What you need is a mandate from the very top within an organisation” (B2). This support is not only financial but also strategic as the integration of artists or arts-based initiatives is usually brokered by an organisational “sponsor.” The sponsor designs and coordinates certain initiatives for their team or “champions” who, in their own teams, departments or business units, lead these experiments.

Beyond the necessary support of management, the second most important factor is the definition of a clear and shared strategic intent for these ABIs: “Most importantly you need a vision for the initiative. You need a purpose statement and vision that acts as the glue that binds all your decisions and that vision should be linked to the future of your organisation and industry.” (B6). This mission can be of the highest managerial level, especially for “Embedding” or “Hubbing”: “I think the most important thing is we need a common mission.”(B16). We found it also for shorter interactions, such as artists in residence or training workshops where the sponsors insisted on always keeping in sight the common objectives they had settled beforehand “because otherwise you get carried away.” This is especially the case when experimenting with unusual and out-of-context ABIs such as dancing, painting or performing.

##### 4.2.2. Project-based determinants

A critical consideration in the integration of artists and arts-based practices is the careful selection of the artists who will be integrated. As often cited: “Not all artists will be able to work in innovation. There are certain profiles.” (A1); “It is critical that you find the right collaborative artist to work with.” (B6).

We identified four principal common characteristics of artists who successfully engaged with organisations and innovation.

- 1. Capacity for collaboration.** Many artists are used to working alone: “The artist should be highly collaborative in that they should by their nature seek out and thrive on engaging with different people with different perspectives.” (B6).
- 2. Adaptability of the artists.** Artists need to have the proper mindset that allows them to adapt their artistic project to the business and/or industrial requirements, to make compromises: “I’m used to working alone, I want to do everything from A to Z, but that wasn’t possible. So I had to open myself up a bit to suggestions, ideas and so on. But it was really interesting.” (A5) The adaptability helps artists to switch in and out of different modes of communication and action. It also facilitates the technical transposition of the artistic approach or vision.
- 3. Ability to explain,** to clearly communicate and share their artistic vision to the innovation team, in particular through the artistic embodiment of concepts that are sometimes difficult to grasp: “He made little clay models, so it became concrete quite quickly.” (A2). “Making sense” of the artistic process helps to overcome the barriers that exist between the artistic and the corporate world and facilitate collaborative innovation: “the least I can do is go out and explain to people why I’m doing it? (...) So I explained Babel to them, I explained ... And then, all of a sudden, it all makes sense.” (A5).
- 4. Alignment** with the mission or objective of the project. Successful pooling of objectives is often accompanied by mutual interest on both sides as we frequently observed in the interviews: strong intellectual curiosity on both sides, time and space given to better understand each other’s vision in order to take a mutual “ownership of the project” (B9).

**Table 5**

The dynamic capabilities framework - Adapted from Teece (2014, 2020) and Leeman and Kanbach (2022).

SENSING		SEIZING		TRANSFORMING	
Networking and Collaborating	26	Acquiring and leveraging of resources	11	Adapting processes and functions	13
Institutionalizing idea generation	22	Shaping strategies and decision making	11	Managing internal and external knowledge and resources	15
Recognizing internal resources	20	Developing business models	7	Changing business culture	10
Screening external opportunities -	19	Shaping ecosystems and entering new markets	6	Top management commitment	7
Experimenting with new ideas	17	Joint venturing and partnering	6	Adapting organisational structure	7
	<b>104</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>52</b>

Additionally, the presence of an **intermediary** seems invariably to be a key asset. This intermediary takes on several roles: the most frequently mentioned is the mediating role, knowing and considering all players on both sides, challenging what they say, listening to and understanding each of them and at last being able to translate or reformulate, establishing therefore a bridge between both worlds. This role involves also to ease or avoid potential conflicts. “Our team would act as the translators, the mediators that go between” (B6); “I put myself in the position of mediator, in fact, between curator and mediator.” (B10); “My skill is the ability to talk to people and understand them and get them to talk about their job so that I can understand them (...) It’s the ability to reformulate, to understand what the person is saying, to get them to reformulate it for others.” (B8).

#### 4.3. The impact of ABIs on the dynamic capabilities framework

According to Sheehan et al. (2023) there is a growing need for a better understanding of the micro-foundations of dynamic capabilities for innovation. Teece (2020) looked at the link between dynamic capabilities and open innovation and showed how a firm’s dynamic capabilities could be strengthened using open innovation processes. In the same way, our research proposes to evaluate how ABIs can nurture a firms’ dynamic capabilities for innovation. We mapped our interview quotes onto the dynamic capabilities taxonomy presented by Leemann and Kanbach (2022). Our results highlight how ABIs impact all three critical dimensions of the dynamic capabilities framework (Teece, 2020; Leemann & Kanbach, 2022): 1) *Sensing*: identifying and evaluating external knowledge and opportunities as well as establishing cross-boundary collaboration; 2) *Seizing*: acquiring new insights and resources as well as leveraging internal capabilities to better respond to significant opportunities or threats once they have been identified; and 3) *Transforming*: capabilities that foster an organisational culture supporting openness, flexibility and experimentation.

As *sensing* includes the recognition of the value of external resources as well as the networking and collaboration, it is not surprising that this is the capability in which most of our corporate interviewees’ practices reside. This is the gateway to deeper collaboration.

Table 5 provides an overview of the dynamic capabilities influenced by different types of ABIs, with the figures indicating the relative prominence of each capability based on the frequency of references in our interview data. We built upon the taxonomies developed by Teece (2014, 2020) and Leeman and Kanbach (2022), consolidating certain categories to propose a refined framework of 15 dynamic capabilities, structured around the three pillars of sensing, seizing, and transforming. The sensing category accounts for the highest number of references (104), followed by transforming (52) and seizing (41). These findings suggest that ABIs are predominantly mobilized at the front end of the innovation process, where organisations explore new perspectives, test emerging ideas, and engage in creative experimentation.

##### 4.3.1. Sensing opportunities: exploring new perspectives for innovation

In Sensing, artists help to recognize and identify new ideas, opportunities, and facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge as well as rapid experimentation of new practices. They also facilitate the integration to external networks and stakeholders which can open perspectives and reveal different insights, developing imagination, new languages and mutual learning. Using ABIs encourages managers, technicians as well as engineers to open up their minds, to see and do things differently and to take risks, sometimes even deviating from established processes. Using art as a “laboratory for agile methods” (B10) enables companies to experiment with novel approaches, such as dancing or performing, which push employees to “do things differently” (B10). It also leads to experimenting new ways of thinking, introducing a greater freedom in product development: “I love, always love the freedom that you have if you work in arts, so you are completely free.” (B13); increasing creativity and helping to find new ideas and solutions: “When you innovate with the background of art or in the field of art, you have much more freedom for the innovation process than if you go for a direct product development.” (B13).

Working with ABIs also has a positive impact on the idea generation process as having artists nested in the teams enables those teams go further, out of context, to disrupt usual processes and shift perspectives: “go to those for whom there is no risk in spitting out the craziest ideas, the craziest applications.” (B2) “The first [benefit of Art] is obvious, but it’s about asking questions in a different way.” (B10). Art is seen as a “unifying and driving force” (B8) and many interviewees admit that they find inspiration in the creative process of artists: “artists are not wishful thinkers. They set up creative processes and it’s interesting to see how they do it and perhaps take inspiration from them.” (B10). Moreover, artists can bring to innovation new insights such as emotions, beauty, a sense of aesthetics. They also offer a deeper understanding of new concepts. For example, one of our respondents had to design the “car of tomorrow” that should be “immersive” and worked with artists to better grasp this notion too abstract for engineers: “if you talk to an artist, I think immersion is much more concrete for them than it is for us. We’re all engineers, so I think he can bring things to the table.” (B11).

##### 4.3.2. Seizing opportunities: leveraging arts for strategic differentiation and acquiring resources

In Seizing, artists help organisations to acquire new knowledge and resources and develop existing knowledge structures by facilitating the understanding of abstract reasoning and concepts and by developing strategic sense-making. Seizing refers to the ability to capture opportunities through innovative responses. Three sub-capabilities were really impacted by ABIs (see Table 5): 1) Acquiring new resources and leveraging existing ones and 2) Shaping strategies and decision-making,

and to a lesser extent 3) Developing business models.

First, the integration of artists in the innovation process produces enthusiasm, satisfaction, joy, a desire to emulate their approach and even motivation to work harder were often cited as direct consequences of the presence of artists or the engagement in ABIs. Further direct evidence of the nurturing of dynamic capabilities is the acquisition of new skills and competencies. In line with the literature, we found that integrating arts for innovation developed agility and improvisation skills, making it easier to accept mistakes inherent in the innovation process. Moreover, thanks to their ability to bring ideas and feelings to life, “to make things concrete” (B11) through the medium of their art, artists facilitate the understanding and the transposition of conceptual insights into more concrete resources to leverage for innovation: “I think that somewhere along the line, he [the artist] could be an imagination coach, you know. And imagination isn’t just in words, it’s in your fingers and hands. This practical imagination that you don’t know how to express in ideas. But you can use mediums. I think the artist can really contribute to something.” (A2).

ABIs also impact companies and brands’ capacity for differentiation. The emotional resonance and cultural association that art brings can be a powerful differentiator, both in terms of product offerings and corporate reputation. Supporting the arts not only generates a “feel good” effect among clients and employees but also enhances the company’s reputation among stakeholders. As seen with one of the respondent’s brand, associating with the arts helped the company connect more deeply with its target consumers: “because that’s where our target consumer kind of lives and breathes” (B4). This strategic use of art creates a competitive advantage by positioning the company as thoughtful and cultured, thereby “setting us apart from our competitors” (B7).

Working with artists also leads to adapting or developing new collaboration tactics to ensure that all employees understand or speak the same language and share a common mission: “I think the most important thing we need is a common mission.(...) It doesn’t mean that everybody has to talk the same language or do the same things, but we have to head into the right direction to do something.” (B16) Arts positively impact the communication and exchanges between people within the organisation and with the artists: “in most industries, between the creative teams, the technical teams, and so on, it’s always hard to talk, and having things that help to create a link is no luxury!” (B12). Hosting training sessions with artists, expeditions to art exhibitions or trips to the theatre but also integrating the artists in the process help organisations to enlarge their perspectives and rethink their value proposition through “new narratives, new imaginary worlds” (A1). In some instances, a gap or a need is identified: “Neither the written nor the spoken word can touch people emotionally when it comes to tech - only art can evoke the sorts of emotions we try to embed in our customers. We search for artists we believe can unlock the emotion that we seek.” (B6).

#### 4.3.3. Transforming: adapting processes and shaping organisational culture

Finally, in *Transforming*, the integration of artists within the innovation process impacts the organisational creativity and agility, enabling organisational changes, particularly the adaptation of processes, the restructuring of the organisation and the change of business culture. Transforming involves reconfiguring the organisation’s resources and competencies to maintain or enhance competitiveness. Also qualifying as Transforming are initiatives such as acquiring knowledge externally, reconfiguring resources, adapting business processes and structures and changing organisational culture (Leemann & Kanbach, 2022). Engaging with the arts facilitates this transformation by promoting a culture of agility and innovation. Through arts-based activities,

organisations create environments that encourage employees to step out of their comfort zones and adopt new ways of thinking and working. This transformative process is not just about fostering creativity but also about unlocking broader perspectives and emotions that are crucial for innovation.

However, the embeddedness of artists in the innovation process as well as in the organisation itself entails a necessary adaptation and transformation of initial processes. From “monthly workshops about artistic process” (B4) to the creation of specific innovation labs hosting artists together with engineers and designers, the emphasis is on the innovation managers’ ability to facilitate exchanges and understanding between all these stakeholders and to offer specific frameworks: “My role was to establish the frameworks and methodologies that overcame those tensions and turns those differences from being tensions into value creation.” (B6); “what I really feel is that in a team, you need multidisciplinary and the ability for people to work together and so it’s very much down to the producer who is responsible for getting everyone to work together. (B8). A great deal of thought is engaged by the managers to adapt the process and change the business culture so that these two populations, who think and act differently, work together in order to perpetuate this virtuous embeddedness of artists and ABIs: “the idea was to think about how we could work together in such a way that we didn’t restrict creation but made it intelligible to engineers” (B12).; “We had learned to listen to each other and to understand the principles of thinking, the mindset of the others, and to respect it, and to see that if we put them together in the right process at the right time, then you will have a successful project. (B13).

Indeed, the engagement with the arts has been shown to alter organisational culture significantly. What begins as a simple public relations activity, such as commissioning a commemorative piece of art, can lead to profound changes within the company, reshaping how it operates and interacts with its stakeholders. “Supporting the arts makes everybody feel good. It makes the clients feel good. It makes us feel good because we are supporting the arts. It makes the staff feel great.” (B7). “We try to build a culture of creativity or innovation and we need to hire the right people externally and this can be scary for senior management when we’re hiring expensive talent and their only output is culture and thinking.” (B1). A second stream of organisational impacts that is shared by most of our respondents refers to the strong sense of pride and team cohesion that such ABIs instil in participants. It goes beyond the “feel good” factor we identified in the motivations. “We were very proud, very proud. There was all this experience and there was information, there were more emotional moments because we were shy at the start” B11”; “Everyone was there and everyone was, I think, in a state of concentration, a kind of synchrony, of attention to each other, of joy.” A2; “I think it was a great experience, not only at an operational level, but also at a managerial level, for team cohesion” (B12).

In summary, we can say that integrating artists and ABIs in the innovation process develops an organisational culture of change and innovation: “Art is a transformation, it’s a catalyst, it’s a catalyst for transformations in organisations.” (A4) .

#### 4.3.4. Cross-category analysis of dynamic capabilities and arts-based initiatives

Our final analysis examines the intersection of the three categories of DC with the four groups of ABIs we identified in our results: *residing*, *consulting*, *embedding*, and *hubbing*. This cross-category analysis allows us to assess not only the distribution of artistic engagement across dynamic capability dimensions but also how different sets of ABIs contribute to specific aspects of the innovation process. Fig. 1 gives a graphic

		Residing	Consulting	Embedding	Hubbing	
<b>SENSING</b> 104	Networking and collaboration	6	10	9	1	26
	Institutionalising idea generation	5	12	3	2	22
	Recognise internal resources	7	1	5	7	20
	Screening external opportunities	9	5	5		19
	Experimenting with new ideas	5	4	5	3	17
<b>SEIZING</b> 41	Acquiring and leveraging resources	2	2	3	4	11
	Shaping strategies and decisions	1	4	5	1	11
	Developing business models		1	2	4	7
	Shaping ecosystem & new markets		2	3	1	6
	Joint venturing and partnering		1	5		6
<b>TRANSFORMING</b> 52	Adapting processes & functions		3	7	3	13
	Managing external & internal knowledge & resources	4	3	5	3	15
	Changing business culture		3	3	4	10
	Adapting organisational structure	1	1	3	2	7
	Top management commitment	2	3	1	1	7

Fig. 1. Relations between dynamic capabilities and ABIs for innovation.

illustration of the differentiated impact of the ABIs on the dynamic capabilities for innovation.

*Residing* ABIs, which involve external artistic engagement with minimal integration, are predominantly linked to *sensing* activities, such as networking (26 quotes), institutionalizing idea generation (22), and recognizing internal resources (20). This highlights their role in fostering creative exploration and knowledge acquisition, yet their impact on seizing and transforming remains limited due to a lack of deeper organizational embedding. In contrast, *embedding* and *hubbing* ABIs, which involve a structured integration of artistic practices, are more frequently associated with *seizing* and *transforming* capabilities, playing a key role in acquiring and leveraging resources (7 quotes) as well as managing internal and external knowledge and resources (8). They are also strongly related to the capability of restructuring organizational processes (10), shaping new strategies and decision-making (6) and developing or adapting business models (6). These findings suggest that while ABIs are widely used to stimulate ideation and sensing, their ability to drive strategic decision-making and organizational transformation depends on the depth of their integration within the firm.

### 5. Discussion

Our main aim in this research was to answer the question: how do arts-based initiatives (ABIs) help develop dynamic capabilities to support innovation for organisations? Our work contributes to literature on ABIs in both theory and practice. First, we have updated and enriched the inventory of art-based practices being undertaken in corporate innovation. We have also, for the first time, framed ABIs in a dynamic view; first examining the triggers that lead organisations to contemplate and integrate these initiatives; next, the search and matching process they go through to find the appropriate mechanism and, finally, how they bring the collaboration to fruition and make it flourish. Additionally, we contribute to this body of work by proposing a new theoretical lens and providing preliminary empirical evidence to suggest that ABIs

nurture the three critical dimensions of a firm’s dynamic capabilities for innovation (i.e. seizing, sensing and transforming). Thus, we extend the application of dynamic capability theory into a new sphere. The intersection of innovation and art has enormous potential not just for generating novel business ideas but also for building a heightened capacity for innovation in organisations. We have found evidence of signature practices, those that define dynamic capabilities (Leemann & Kanbach, 2022).

#### 5.1. Theoretical contribution

Innovation plays a pivotal role in driving organisational success and growth, serving as a fundamental driver for achieving competitive advantage in an unpredictable and dynamic market environment (Gök & Peker, 2017). Firms face the relentless challenge of changing customer expectations, needs and behaviours (Kotter et al., 2021) and, as new capabilities are required (Teece, 2014), there is a need for swift organisational capability reconfiguration or substitution (Lavie, 2006). Equally, there is a crucial need to understand how these new capabilities are identified and subsequently developed (Ellonen et al., 2011).

The dynamic capabilities framework offers a theoretical lens through which the evolution of organisations can be understood, particularly in how they identify and capitalise on external opportunities, by reconfiguring their resources and competencies (Teece, 2018; Teece et al., 1997). This framework is characterised by three core dimensions: *sensing*, *seizing* and *transforming* (Teece, 2018). The development of dynamic capabilities is grounded in both individual and organisational strategies, activities, skills, and knowledge, which collectively enable firms to respond to changing environments (Teece, 2018). Dynamic capabilities could be considered higher-order organisational capabilities that facilitate learning about new domains, create new asset combinations and build new capabilities to match market (perceptible and latent) needs (Helfat & Peteraf, 2015; Teece et al., 1997).

Our research has grounded the ABIs we discovered in the dynamic

capabilities framework (Leemann & Kanbach, 2022). Recently, there have been a number of studies taking signature management practices and assessing whether they qualify as dynamic capabilities: open innovation (Teece, 2020); sustainability and green innovation (Mura et al., 2024); AI and e-commerce (Aljarboa, 2024); Design Thinking (Robbins & Fu, 2022); adaptability to continuous change (Harvey & Kudesia, 2023); ambidexterity (Birkinshaw et al., 2016; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008) and sustainable supply chain management (Heldt, 2024). Our study now highlights the importance of integrating artists and different ABIs to nurture the development of dynamic capabilities for innovation.

In our findings, we have adapted Leemann and Kanbach's (2022 p.491) *Taxonomy of Dynamic Capabilities* which enumerates the sub elements associated with the three core pillars of dynamic capabilities. Their taxonomy is derived from a broad set of published academic evidence, including different firm sizes, different industries and different operating contexts and cultural environments. In our NVivo analysis, we analysed our interview quotes in terms of this *Taxonomy of Dynamic Capabilities* and we found a strong fit as illustrated in Section 3.2. The results of our cross-category analysis of DC and ABIs (Fig. 1) show that the impact of ABIs on the firms' dynamic capabilities depends on how deeply they are integrated into an organization.

*Sensing* is a front-end of innovation activity (Van Den Ende et al., 2015) and it describes the capacity to imagine, 'to learn, sense, filter, shape and calibrate opportunities' (Teece, 2007, p.1326). It represents a fundamental capability in the early stages of innovation, enabling firms to detect emerging trends, recognize valuable external resources, and foster cross-disciplinary collaboration. Our findings demonstrate that ABIs play a pivotal role in broadening organisations' perceptual and cognitive boundaries, allowing them to engage with new ideas, explore opportunities, and rethink established paradigms. Through artistic exploration, firms develop greater openness to unconventional insights, facilitating the identification of novel market trends and fostering a culture of experimentation.

We found the highest level of activity in this pillar which is hardly surprising because all subsequent and deeper engagement with the arts begins here. This phase includes the recognition of valuable external resources, and our research characterises the arts as such a valuable resource. It also enables the recognition of valuable internal resources such as empathy and curiosity, which are necessary skills for innovation, especially disruptive innovation, as well as the development of a more vivid awareness towards emotions, senses and sensibility. Following Schnugg (2019), the collaboration between artists and organisations, at that stage, has a "huge transformative potential" as "there is a great potential for gaining new insights, applying new methods and perspectives, and creating new research and artistic agendas" (*ibid.*, p.16). The integration of ABIs within corporate innovation processes enhances firms' capacity to engage in cross-sector collaboration, particularly by bridging disciplines such as engineering, science, and the arts. This interdisciplinary interaction fosters a more holistic approach to problem-solving, wherein artistic methodologies contribute to reframing challenges, unlocking latent creative potential, and generating alternative perspectives.

This increased awareness is a powerful asset to develop more responsible innovation as it helps to better understand situations of inclusion, disabilities, but also environmental or social emergencies. In this first pillar, the four types of ABIs were impacting the different sets of sub-capabilities, with a stronger presence of Residing and Consulting. This high degree of engagement highlights the foundational role of artistic initiatives in initiating deeper innovation processes within organisations, serving as a gateway to subsequent strategic and structural transformations.

*Seizing* refers, principally, to acquiring and leveraging new and valuable resources (Leemann & Kanbach, 2022). However, *seizing* entails more than simply procuring or buying them (Katkalov et al., 2010), it refers to their identification, integration and even modification. These resources are not exclusively connected with the product or service but

can be things that expand organisational capabilities and organisational mindset (Subramaniam & Shankar, 2020). The ability to seize opportunities is fundamental to transform creative exploration into strategic advantage. While traditional approaches to innovation often emphasize data-driven decision-making and analytical rigor, ABIs introduce alternative pathways by leveraging artistic thinking to enhance agility, improvisation, and strategic sense-making (Meisiek & Barry, 2018; Sandberg, 2021). Schnugg (2019) highlights that the collaboration between artists and R&D (scientists) enhances interdisciplinary skills - that can be considered as valuable, non-transferable resources - by fostering open communication, trust, and mutual understanding between artists and scientists, making it a valuable approach for innovation. The development of new skill sets is a critical impact of ABIs on the innovation process, particularly in adaptive learning, creative problem-solving, and intuitive decision-making (Springborg & Ladkin, 2018). ABIs introduce an experimental mindset, where failure is reframed as a productive step in the innovation process, thus reinforcing organisations' ability to rapidly iterate and refine new ideas. This is in line with research on design thinking and improvisation, which highlights how iterative, creative methodologies contribute to business model evolution (Robbins & Fu, 2022). Beyond internal capabilities, ABIs also serve as a strategic differentiator in competitive markets. The emotional and cultural depth that art brings can significantly enhance brand identity and market positioning. Several of our respondents noted that associating with the arts enabled their companies to establish stronger emotional connections with consumers, reinforcing brand authenticity and creating a unique, experience-driven value proposition (Koronaki et al., 2018). This strategic use of art extends beyond marketing, as it influences how firms redefine their purpose, engage stakeholders, and embed cultural narratives into their corporate identity (Carlucci & Schiuma, 2018; Schiuma, 2011). As noted in prior literature, the intersection of art and business fosters new imaginaries and narratives, offering companies novel ways to communicate their vision and establish a competitive advantage grounded in cultural relevance (Meisiek & Barry, 2018).

Our analysis reveals that organisations engaging in ABIs at a more advanced stage move beyond sporadic artistic collaborations toward structured engagement models, where artistic insights are systematically leveraged to enhance innovation strategies. Rather than remaining isolated initiatives, these collaborations evolve into a strategic resource that firms can activate to refine decision-making, reshape business models, and develop new competitive advantages.

The *transformation* capability represents the highest level of dynamic capability maturity, as it entails the reconfiguration of organizational structures, processes, and culture to support long-term innovation (Teece, 2018). While sensing and seizing allow firms to identify and mobilize opportunities, transformation ensures that these changes are sustained, institutionalized, and continuously adapted in response to evolving challenges. In the context of ABIs, transformation occurs when artistic engagement moves beyond short-term experiments and becomes deeply embedded in corporate identity, leadership models, and decision-making frameworks. *Transforming* is the ultimate evidence of the acquisition of external knowledge and practices and their dissemination throughout the organisation (Dixon et al., 2014; Ellonen et al., 2011). In our interviews, a small number of companies had reached this level of integration of ABIs where they had reconfigured teams, projects and processes to enhance the impact of ABIs in their firms. Some organisations have fully seconded artists into innovation hubs where they are part of a dedicated innovation project team charged with imagining and identifying radical new business opportunities. The creation of dedicated spaces for artistic engagement with R&D or innovation teams is consistent with research on creative workspaces, which highlights how environmental design fosters a culture of exploration, risk-taking, and interdisciplinary exchange (de Vaujany et al., 2019; Schmidt & Brinks, 2017). These spaces are not merely symbolic; they serve as structural mechanisms that enable firms to maintain a high level of artistic

interaction, ensuring that creativity remains an ongoing, rather than episodic, part of innovation processes.

Beyond physical infrastructure, transformation also manifests in the reconfiguration of leadership styles and team dynamics. Several of our respondents described how ABIs reshaped their organisations' approach to problem-solving, moving from rigid, hierarchical decision-making to more adaptive, co-creative, and emergent strategies. This aligns with research on aesthetic leadership (Adler, 2006; Schnugg, 2019) which argues that exposure to artistic methodologies encourages leaders to embrace ambiguity, emotional intelligence, and intuition as central elements of strategic decision-making (Carlucci & Schiuma, 2018; Schiuma, 2011). Such shifts indicate that ABIs do not merely influence isolated projects but instead can alter fundamental aspects of managerial cognition, leading to long-term cultural and operational transformation. The reconfiguration of such resources to address opportunities in dynamic environments is a hallmark of *Transforming*. In sum, transformation is what differentiates firms that experiment occasionally or even regularly with the arts from those that fully integrate them as a strategic capability. While *sensing* and *seizing* allow organisations to explore and implement artistic insights, transformation ensures that these ABIs are not only sustained but become an inherent part of how the firm evolves over time.

In summary, we found evidence of corporate innovation practices against each subset of dynamic capabilities, indicating that ABIs have become a signature practice for innovation in those organisations.

### 5.2. A capability development pathway for ABIs

Prior research has developed an extensive taxonomy of ABIs that have been imported into business (Schnugg, 2014): an inventory of the most common has also been published (O'Dea et al., 2020). Schiuma (2009) created a matrix to position various art-based initiatives in terms of their potential impact. Scholars have attempted to locate a 'sweet spot' to make these collaborations work (Meisiek & Barry, 2018). ABIs have been classified in terms of duration (Schiuma, 2010). Research has examined the impact of simply reproducing art on products and packaging (Sharma & Estes, 2024). Academics have also contrasted ABIs with design thinking (Robbins & Sandberg, 2023). But what these studies have in common is that they treat ABIs as a static model: existing processes applied to existing scenarios and, moreover, they tend to look

at the process exclusively from the perspective of the sponsoring organisation. Our research addresses these gaps by presenting a *capability development pathway*, which captures how organisations progress through distinct phases in their integration of ABIs—from initial conception to full-scale strategic embedding. We examine how organisations plan for these initiatives; how they make them happen or bring them to life, how they choose which art form to engage with and which specific artist to use. Our research sheds light on the key success factors to make ABIs work and, finally, we ask, how these initiatives can be sustained.

Through our research, we have identified five progressive stages (see Fig. 2) that organisations should follow in their engagement with the arts. These stages are not rigid steps but rather overlapping and iterative phases, where organisations refine and adapt their approach over time. Importantly, we found that certain key success factors directly influence how organisations navigate these stages, shaping the effectiveness and long-term viability of ABIs.

#### Stage 1: Conceiving

The integration of ABIs into innovation processes does not occur spontaneously. Instead, organisations first undergo a triggering phase, where internal or external stimuli highlight the need for artistic engagement as a potential driver of innovation. These triggers may include market shifts, internal creativity deficits, competitive pressures, or strategic ambitions to differentiate through ABIs. At this stage, a critical success factor is organizational openness to learning from different perspectives. Companies that successfully initiate ABIs tend to foster curiosity and interdisciplinary exploration, creating an environment where non-traditional approaches are considered legitimate pathways to innovation. Previous studies have shown that organisations with high absorptive capacity—the ability to recognize, assimilate, and apply external knowledge—are more likely to engage with the arts in a meaningful way (Carlucci & Schiuma, 2018).

#### Stage 2: Planning

Once the idea of artistic engagement takes shape, organisations must legitimize and structure their approach, ensuring that there is internal alignment and support for ABIs. A major challenge at this stage is obtaining commitment from senior leadership (sponsors), as artistic initiatives are often perceived as peripheral or non-essential

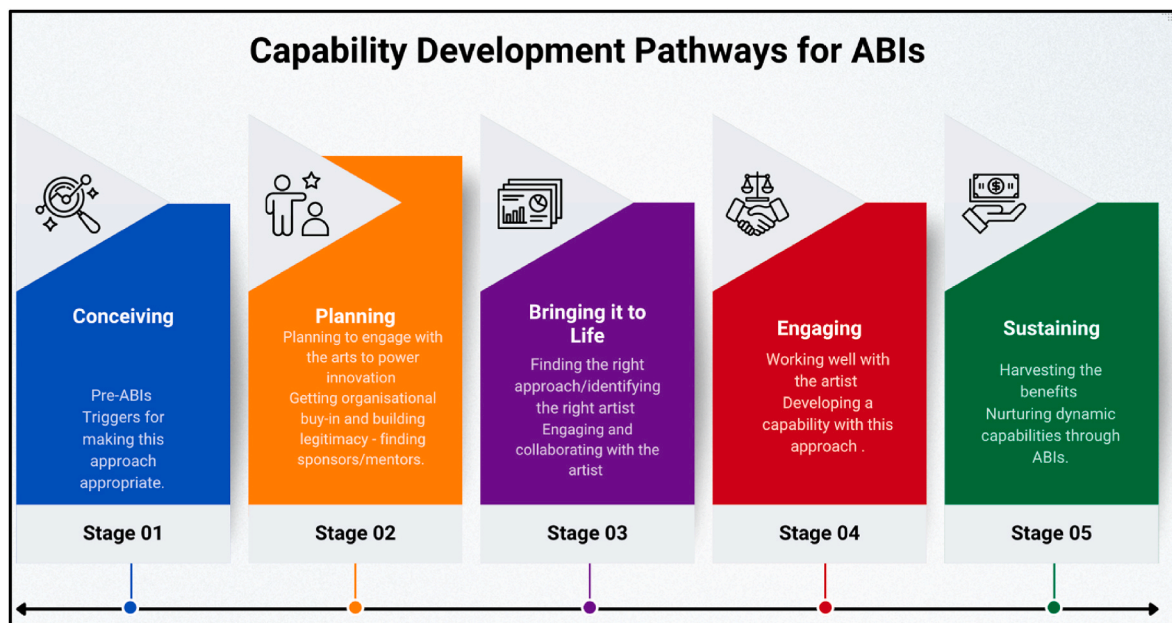


Fig. 2. A capability development pathway for ABIs.

compared to traditional innovation investments. A critical success factor here is the authentic endorsement of ABIs by senior management. Our findings confirm that organisations where leadership actively champions artistic collaboration—rather than treating it as a symbolic initiative—are more likely to sustain their ABIs. This aligns with research on aesthetic leadership, which highlights that leaders who value artistic thinking embed creativity more deeply within organizational strategy (Schiuma, 2011). Additionally, securing dedicated resources—whether financial, human, or spatial—is essential to move beyond one-off artistic interventions toward more structured ABIs. Another key factor at this stage is ensuring that the vision for the collaboration is clearly articulated and shared between the organization and the artist(s). Misalignment in expectations is one of the primary causes of failed artistic engagements, as businesses and artists often operate under different logics, objectives, and modes of evaluation (Meisiek & Barry, 2018). Establishing a common understanding of goals and success metrics at the outset significantly improves the effectiveness of ABIs.

### Stage 3: Bringing It to Life

The transition from planning to execution requires organisations to identify the right ABI. Firms must decide which artistic discipline aligns best with their innovation challenges, whether it be visual arts, music, performance, or interdisciplinary art forms. They must also carefully select artists whose creative vision, working style, and values align with the company's culture and objectives. At this stage, one of the most critical success factors is the role of a cultural intermediary or "translator"—an individual who acts as a bridge between the corporate and artistic worlds (Simeone et al., 2018). Our research highlights that organisations that assign dedicated coordinators or facilitators to manage ABIs experience greater alignment, smoother communication, and more impactful outcomes. This supports existing findings that interdisciplinary innovation benefits from boundary-spanning roles that help mediate between differing epistemic cultures (Schnugg, 2019).

### Stage 4: Engaging

As artistic engagement deepens, ABIs begin to influence not just specific projects but the broader organizational mindset. Companies at this stage are not merely experimenting with art; they are actively developing internal capabilities that integrate artistic methodologies into their innovation, decision-making, and problem-solving processes. A key success factor here is the organization's ability to build internal competencies around ABIs. This means moving beyond reliance on external artistic expertise and developing internal teams that can sustain creative experimentation independently. Additionally, fostering psychological safety—an environment where employees feel comfortable taking creative risks—has been shown to be essential for integrating artistic and design-driven approaches into business innovation (Meisiek & Barry, 2018).

### Stage 5: Sustaining

The final stage of the framework involves embedding ABIs into the organization's long-term strategy, ensuring that artistic engagement remains an enduring, rather than episodic, practice. At this point, firms move beyond viewing ABIs as "innovation experiments" and instead treat them as a structural component of their creative processes. A crucial success factor at this stage is establishing dedicated structures—such as innovation labs, residencies, or permanent artistic partnerships—that ensure the continuity of ABIs. Firms that successfully sustain ABIs also adapt their business models to integrate artistic thinking into their core value creation strategies, reinforcing the competitive differentiation that artistic engagement provides (Schiuma, 2010).

In summary, sensing spans the early stages (Conceiving and Planning), reflecting the organization's search for new opportunities through artistic engagement. Seizing aligns with the middle stage of Bringing it to Life and Engaging, where organisations begin to embed ABIs, found to

have been impactful and effective, and allocate resources toward innovation. Finally, Sustaining covers the final stages, particularly Hubbing, where ABIs become a long-term structural part of the organization's innovation strategy. Our capability development pathway shows how organisations can progressively integrate artistic engagement into their innovation processes, establishing ABIs as a dynamic capability.

## 6. Conclusion

In response to one of the core themes of this special issue, regarding the "societal impact of art on research stakeholders," we proposed to examine the role of arts-based initiatives (ABIs) in shaping organizational innovation processes. Furthermore, our work addresses key questions raised in this issue, such as the extent to which ABIs influence innovation and the underlying mechanisms that drive this relationship. By analyzing ABIs through the dynamic capability's framework, our study provides concrete insights into how different types of artistic initiatives and engagement enhance an organization's ability to sense opportunities, seize resources or capabilities, and transform structures, routines or processes to sustain long-term innovation.

Our research shows the breadth of ABIs that are commonly being commissioned by organisations to amplify the novelty and originality of their innovation pipeline and to help inspire a more creative culture in their organisations. Importantly, we provide the first preliminary empirical evidence that the integration of ABIs within the organization qualifies as a dynamic capability for innovation and using it well, where it becomes a signature process for the organisation can yield superior market performance and competitive advantage. We report evidence of practices and insights of the 15 sub-capabilities that make up the triad of dynamic capabilities. We present the first capability development pathway to help guide practitioners in their efforts to embed ABIs into their innovation processes. Our research also reveals a previously unreported category of ABIs such as *Hubbing*. This paper demonstrates that the benefits of ABIs can be significant but that there are many pitfalls. We help practitioners navigate a pathway through these by providing insights and key success factors for each stage in the collaborative journey. We also take the perspective of the artist and show that on top of hygiene factors, like payment and fees, there needs to be a shared motivation and vision for the engagement for both parties to benefit. This area remains a very fertile topic for academic research and there are many dimensions that still need to be explored.

### 6.1. Managerial implications

There are several managerial implications deriving from our empirically based study. Our dynamic model looks at the 5 stages involved in engaging with the arts and we spotlight the key success factors at each stage in embedding the arts into the process of corporate innovation. We provide the first guide for innovation practitioners to begin to engage with the arts and we look at the critical success factors for such engagement from both perspectives.

The work of O'Dea et al. (2020) classified approaches to these ABIs into three main types: *residing, consulting and embedding*. These levels of engagement describe the integration of ABIs into organisations' innovation processes. But, we found a need to extend this triptych to include a fourth descriptor '*hubbing*' where not just the practices or processes but the artist herself gets fully seconded and totally dedicated to a specific project. Artists in residence are generally deployed in various contexts and have a more generic role to fulfil in an organisation whereas our '*hubbing*' category describes an artist who is located in an innovation hub, working with a project team and dedicated to a particular innovation project which is structurally separated from the main organisation. Sharma and Meyer (2019) note that such hubs, and therefore '*hubbing*', are indicative of long term organisational transformation. This fourth type also identifies companies that adopt various innovative practices in art and innovation collaboration, enabling them to diversify

and scale up at a higher level.

One element we highlight, more than previous studies have done, is the benefit of having a mediator or translator involved in these projects. Our findings show that there is often a vast gulf between the artist and the firm: a gulf which covers everything from the language they use to describe the project to their ambitions for its outcome and thus projects can benefit from having a ‘translator’. *‘Aligning language is the most complicated thing’* according to one artist we interviewed. We also highlight the necessity for senior leadership support for these initiatives, without it, failure is far more likely. Additionally, finding common ground in the projects’ vision and purpose and making it meaningful both for the business and for the artist is a vital precondition for success.

The benefits of collaborating with the arts are at least two-fold: first, the creation of novel ideas for new product and service development and, second, strengthening the organisation’s capacity for creativity and innovation. In terms of the former, what types of innovation outputs are likely to result from these collaborations? We find that the capacity of art to operate at an emotional level is what separates it from design. The arts can trigger, access and manipulate emotions in a way that is unique. *‘Written text or oral speech can’t render emotion and in the tech world we need to be able to evoke an emotional response. We use artists for this. (B6)* For the latter, we found organisations acknowledging the role arts can play in driving a more risk-taking and creative culture.

Our study is not exempt from certain limitations. First, we acknowledge that the study’s findings, being derived from a purposeful, non-random sample of European firms, are context-specific. Hence, like most exploratory, theory building research, our findings are not intended for statistical generalisation. Furthermore, while the research captures perspectives from both corporate managers and artists, the inability to secure paired interviews from every participating organisation means that the insights from some cases are necessarily viewed from a single stakeholder perspective.

## Appendix A. Interview Guides

### Interview Guide for Companies

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#### 1. General Background Questions

##### **Innovation architecture**

How do you approach or manage innovation (person, team, department/function, outsource - use an agency); Do you have a R&D Department?

##### **Innovation processes**

What processes do you use (Stage-Gate/Design Thinking). Specifically, do you use design thinking or other creative processes, open innovation? How and why do you collaborate with external stakeholders? What are the biggest challenges?

##### **Sustainable/responsible innovation**

How important is circular economy in your process? Do you use circular design principles? Is there in-house expertise in ESG?

#### 2. Narrowing the funnel to talk about Art innovation and Thinking

##### **Art-based initiatives**

Do you have some level of corporate engagement with the arts? How intensive is your engagement with the arts/what use do you make of it? Which branch of the arts? What do you think arts can bring as additional value to the innovation process? At what stage of the innovation process? Have these processes had any impact? Link to design and art thinking? At what phase of the process do you think this is most helpful?

#### 3. Specific Questions on Arts Based Innovation Initiatives

##### **Art and innovation**

Have you integrated the arts into any of your corporate innovation practices? What made you think of this as an approach? What department initiated it - business development, marketing, HR, R&D, leadership team other? How was the proposal (to engage with the arts in this way) framed for the company? Did you already have the right contacts to make it happen? Did you get a specialist agency involved? Which branch of the arts did you use? How did you find the experience of working with them? Were the results what you had hoped for? Do you think it helped unlock any novel ideas that perhaps wouldn’t have come to the fore otherwise?

Is the art collaboration initiated? Does R&D team get involved? Are artists who are collaborating, connected with academia or purely commercial? Does the project simply feed into management research or the engagement was being evaluated artistically too

##### **Art thinking in the future for your organisation**

Are there any key insights or learnings you derived from this initiative? Is it something you/the team will think of repeating at any stage? Did you find any additional applications for use of art thinking because of this experiment? Do you think that it worked - or delivered any tangible benefits for your organisation?

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## 6.2. Avenues for further research

However, our research has revealed a broad range of practices in which the arts are integrated into corporate innovation processes generally and individual projects. We can see a potential spectrum of levels of engagement from the organisations who use ABIs to sell their product or market their service right through to companies who transform their innovation processes and structures to exploit the advantages that ABIs can offer. Further research could usefully develop a capability maturity framework to illustrate how organisations can move from episodic interaction to more holistic integration. The development of a maturity framework will need careful evaluation because simply using more and more ABIs may not necessarily be a hallmark of an ‘advanced’ practitioner.

Another area ripe for exploration is metrics: in ABIs, the literature is silent on what gets measured and how it is measured. We can also see how the concept of double loop learning (Argyris, 1977) could also apply to ABIs with those firms who have a fleeting and project-led association with the arts being seen as single loop learners while organisations who adapt and transform their processes achieving double loop learning. Equally, the lens of ambidexterity could be applied to this field as it meets the characteristics of both exploring and exploiting creativity (March, 1991; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2008).

### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Anne Berthinier-Poncet:** Writing – original draft, Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Daria Podmetina:** Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Methodology. **Peter Robbins:** Writing – original draft, Investigation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization, Project administration.

Interview Guide for Artists

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1. The Artist  
**Background**  
 Education background/Evolution  
**Work description**  
 Can you describe what you are doing as an artist? Have you ever worked for organisations (private or public)? If yes, what have you done?

2. The Creative Process  
**Artistic vs creative process**  
 Do you think there is a difference between the creative and the artistic process? If yes, can you elaborate? What are the different stages you go through? What are the main challenges?  
**Open and collaborative process**  
 Do you create alone, or do you often collaborate? If you collaborate - with whom, why and where? (artists residences, collective places, other)  
 As for innovation, how far do you think an artist must open her/himself to external influences/collaborations?

3. Art & Enterprise  
**Arts-based initiatives**  
 Do you think that art and artists can bring an additional value to companies/organisations (public or private)? If yes, how and what? If no, why? At what level do you think art/artists can have an impact (HR, developing skills– individual level, leadership, team building, reputation – organisational level, innovation (design, R&D, engineering)  
**Art and innovation**  
 What does Innovation mean for you as an artist? How far do you think art can be of value in the innovation process? At what stage of the innovation process can it be more impactful? Have you ever worked with designers or engineers to develop new products/services?  
**Collaboration and intermediary role**  
 Do you think that artists and industry people (managers, engineers, workers, technicians, designers, others) can easily work together? Do they speak the same language? Do you think they would need an intermediary to collaborate? To understand each other/to speak the same language/to meet and see each other. Who could best play this role of intermediary in the innovation process between artists and industry people? What qualities should she/he have?

4. Art and responsible innovation  
 How far do you integrate environmental or social issues into your artistic work? Place of sustainable development or gender equality or poverty or circular economy or inclusion or pollution or any other issues (SDG). How far do you think (committed) artists can have an impact on the development of responsible innovation?

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Appendix B. List of all interviewees and Interviews data

Industry/ISIC Code Description	ISIC Code	Country/Size (employees)	Creation Year	Code	Position of interviewee	Date/Duration of interview	Page Nb
Manufacture of computers and peripheral equipment	2620	Switzerland 7.400 emp.	1981	B1	Head of Design for AI & VR (Location: Ireland)	12/02/2024 00:47:00	9
				B2			
General public administration activities	8411	France/51.000 emp.	1859	B3	Head of the HR Innovation Mission	30/01/2024 00:56:00	11
Distilling, rectifying and blending of spirits	1101	Ireland 19.480 emp.	1975	B4	Marketing director & Senior Brand manager (Location: Ireland)	24/01/2024 00:25:00	6
				B5			
Telecommunication and IT/R&D	7210	10.000 emp.	1925	B6	Global VP of Metaverse	23/02/2024 01:03:00	13
Market research and public opinion polling	7320	19.000 emp.	1975	B7	CEO of the Irish branch (Location: Ireland)	30/01/2024 01:10:00	17
Video Game industry/Software publishing	5820	France 21.000 emp.	1986	B8	Executive producer of one of the biggest game of the company	2/02/2024 00:52:00	11
Foundry/Casting of iron and steel	2431	France 250 emp.	1923	B9	CEO	14/02/2024 00:43:00	11
				A2	Photographer + Innovation manager (organised the artist residence)	24/01/2024 01:25:00	18
Automobile industry/Manufacture of motor vehicles	2910	France/31.000 emp.	1898	B10	Product Manager (inbound marketing)	18/12/2023 01:15:00	12
				B11	Product Innovation Department (inbound marketing)	01/02/2024 00:30:00	5
				B12	Interior Product Manager	05/01/2024 00:50:00	9
Manufacture of jewellery and related articles	3211	Austria, about 29 000 emp.	1895	B13	Former Head of Innovation (retired)	23/12/2023 01:00:00	10
				B14	Senior Platform Manager	12/02/2024 01:00:00	14
Management consultancy activities	7020	UK		B15	Consultant in innovation, design and sustainability	07/03/2024 00:58:00	11
University/Agency for knowledge transfer/ R&D	7210	Austria 520 emp.	1688	B16	Head of the institute	06/02/2024 00:29:00	6
Performer, Visual artist & Consultant in innovation/Creative activities by independent artists	9000	France		A1	Food Artist + DESIGNER/Innovation and Futures consultant	26/01/2024 01:03:18	13

(continued on next page)

(continued)

Industry/ISIC Code Description	ISIC Code	Country/Size (employees)	Creation Year	Code	Position of interviewee	Date/Duration of interview	Page Nb
Sculptor/Creative activities by independent artists	9000	France		A3	Numerous residencies in French companies Sculptor - 1 year residence at the foundry in 2023	22/02/2024 01:14:00	16
Consultant and painter/Creative activities by independent artists	9000	Spain		A4	Consultant in Change Management and Art thinking	08/02/2024 01:16:00	18
Visual artist (painter and sculptor)/Creative activities by independent artists	9000	France		A5	Painter/Residency in a French bank Visual artist participated to a patronage initiative L'industrie Magnifique (Strasbourg, F) 1 year residency in a company in the construction industry (750 employees)	25/03/2024 01:18:00	18

Footnotes: ISIC - International Standard Industrial Classification, B1 to B16 - code for interviewed business managers/companies, A1—A5 - code for interviewed artists.

### Appendix C. Coding examples

#### Practices of arts' engagement in innovation

1st order codes/3rd order codes	2nd order codes and Quotes
<b>RESIDING</b>	
Short-term project with company, "carte blanche" on topic	<b>Artists in residence: "realisation of a unique piece of art"</b> "... my work takes the form of performance projects, where I generally call on materials or skills and hybridize them to come up with new perspectives and proposals. And the last project was at ... company that makes luxury and social housing. Every year they invite around 25 ... designers and artists. So you have a grant and you can work on any issue you want. And they invited me to work on stone. So stone is their terrain, and they want to give it a new lease of life ... I realise that all my artistic exploits can also be applied to design work ..." "when I was in residence ... in the company, ... in the metalwork, it was great. The collaboration with the technicians was great, but we weren't doing research anymore, we were finalising the project ... I've been in contact with people, workers and managers too. But I was enthusiastic! And the metalworkers were extremely helpful, they found solutions for everything ..." (A3)
One year residence program	"... what we ended up doing was, in our artist in residence program, where we had about 25 artists at one time. We brought them in and we would work with them for at least a year at a time." (B6)
Engaging dialogue between the artist and the employees	<b>Artist project or event: Developing unique environment or space for engaging dialogue</b> "And after three months I was asked to come and spend three days with them to put into words what had happened ... we spent time defining what had happened, at every level, in terms of the space, the staff and the customers." (A4) "So now, there is the artist who started talking with the expert. And there, emulation was formed. Because the work of art was born between the artist's idea and behind the technicality or the way of working the work that had to be implemented ..." (B9)
Involving artist into event organising and developing a piece of art	"Last year we celebrated our 100th anniversary and as part of open discussions we had ... on innovation, on the history of the company and especially on the history of our foundry, which is a craft, an ancient profession ... from molten materials, we manage to make pieces of all shapes ... We should be able to make a piece that finally represents the history of ... (firm) and that can be shown for everyone to see. A room that would be outside, a kind of totem that is representative of our society ... (B9) "My first experience really came from using the design thinking method ... bank in Paris asked me to exhibit as a Spanish artist in France. By chance, it happened to bring together my two cultures and my two professions: finance and art, Spain and France ..." (A4)
Patronage - Industry and artists joint event	"... Industrie Magnifique is all about ... to bring the world of business and culture closer together, but also to give businesses the chance to try something different from what they usually do, ...to open up to something a bit different, but also to promote themselves ... through a major event. An event with a lot of substance, with a lot of momentum. ... artists had to meet the companies and work together ... there are several possibilities ... one, the industrialist produces something, ...then the artist uses what the industrialist produces to create a work. ... The second configuration is that the company is a service. It produces nothing tangible ... at that point, the artist will create a work using his own resources. But this work will be financed by an industrialist who is a patron of the arts. So it's based on the concept of patronage, not sponsorship" (A5)
<b>CONSULTING</b>	
Art training thematic workshops	<b>Art training workshops, exhibitions and artistic learning expeditions</b> "It was part of the training plan. So, every year, we published a ... catalogue with themes that we had either tried to find through interviews with managers or it was our proposal ... People signed up ... (to) training courses ... and we tried to have groups ... as mixed as possible in terms of gender, profession, age ... And then we developed the plan over the year ... I did this for six years ..." (B10) "We have monthly workshops about artistic practices - the last one was about stage and set design and we take learnings from these about how we merchandise our brands." (B4) "You were also talking about singing, cultural practices, artistic practices. That's what it's all about. It was a desire to mix things up, to say that the same mission could go and see an artist and then do choreography, and then I'm off to do ceramics. The idea was to open up the field as much as possible, just as we did for people. We also do it for the practices." (B10)
Active learning exhibition	"... we asked people to do mini exhibitions, oral presentations ... People go there, they enjoy it, but they have to share it with others, so it was the idea of return and restitution. ... We had a mini-modelling workshop. We had design equipment. And we had highly skilled people. we hung things up. They were really mini-exhibitions. All in all, a pretty high standard for this kind of activity, which has no commercial, productive or public purpose, which wasn't made for the public, it was made for the employees." (B11)
Artistic learning expeditions	"... a question of building a tour. Or it wasn't a visit, it wasn't an experience. It was really a succession of experiences all feeding into the same subject." (B10) "It's about getting people out of their own environment. ... to go and see artists who are creating, to go and see artists who ultimately live the same life as us, on a daily basis, and who are thinking about the same issues as us. So, it's in our interest to go and see them" ... "It's always better to have an inspiring setting ...In the meantime you get to see them rehearse. In fact, we see how they work, we talk about choreology, dance

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1st order codes/3rd order codes	2nd order codes and Quotes
Artists involved in marketing activities	<p>notation, the need to have a choreologist there to pass on.” “we spent a day ... to understand their approach. So, the set designer, we were on the set. With the visual artist, we went to see an exhibition. We saw her work and then we did some workshop work. And then the architects, we went to see two of their creations and we worked with them on semiotics, on the link between images and words. ““What can we do to bring something different to the table? ... And I said to myself: what are we trying to do with our cockpits? We’re trying to tell a story in a space. So, who are the most interesting artists working on the same subjects as us? Telling a story in space. We worked with a visual artist and architects.” (B10)</p> <p><b>Collaboration, training and co-creation with artists</b></p> <p>“We arrange tasting events with artists where participants get to hear the artists talk about their work while they sample drinks and cocktails - the last one was called Colourful Creatives for Spot Whiskey.” (B4) “When we’re debriefing a client on a big piece of market research work, we sometimes use artists to assume the persona of the target segment or persona that we want to personify for our clients.” (B7) “... if we want to create an atmosphere for our client meetings, we have used the costume and props room of ... national theatre where we’re surrounded by stage sets and props and it creates a very creative atmosphere.” (B7)</p>
Co-creation with artists	<p>“We get contemporary, well-known artists to design limited edition bottles for Absolut vodka - and the most famous example was Andy Warhol” (B4) “We try to build a culture or arts of creativity or innovation and we need to hire the right people externally and this can be scary for senior management when we’re hiring expensive talent and their only output is culture and thinking”(B1) “We work on technology roadmaps - and we use external inputs, such as the arts, when we’re looking for really big ideas outside of these roadmaps - bigger shifts. And bigger shifts need bigger creativity from designers and artists” (B1)</p>
Artist-consultant or art university as a trainer	<p>“... we worked with a visual artist who plays with light and colour. And that really spoke to them. And at the same time it highlighted the problems of perception. The next day, we had a one-day workshop. So, we have a day where the morning is really the workshop with the teacher. We spend 3 h dancing, building something together, we start with an intention, we start with what we know how to do ourselves, and then we share and then we all build together and come up with a kind of choreography. People are always surprised when, after 3 h, they come up with a collective thing that holds together. But what’s interesting is that what the teacher does is he puts in little gestures at the start and an articulation of the choreography that we’ll see again on stage in the evening during the show but done by professionals. So, there’s a link between what we do in the morning and what we do in the evening” (B10) “... all that got me thinking: why not offer this to everyone in the company? Why stop at design, at the design team? Because, at the end of the day, we all need it. So, after six years, it took me a year to build a project ... I found someone who was an HR manager ... he was doing training for the company and so also on management methods, trying to do things differently ... he was very interested in that. What’s more, he’s a bit of an art lover. He said OK, we’ll give it a go. ... So things were changing ...”. (B10) “... this was an open innovation collaboration with the CalArts Institute ... I went over there for two months, and we have been integrated into this artistic work in order to manage. ... He called it Cross-fertilisation that he brought in musicians .... And the music. The theory, people. The dancers. And all these people he brought into one school, into one art, and he founded a new discipline that what was called animation, film animation, movie animation. And so this institute had all these disciplines they had together. And the evening they met together, they did some art. And so that was really fun. And then I thought, art and science can inspire each other. And then we had a long collaboration, long I would say two or three years” (B13)</p>
<b>EMBEDDING</b>	
R&D department & in-house designers	<p><b>Organizational and functional structures</b></p> <p>“... at the moment we have our departments, we have other designers. So the contracts with scientists, I would say today, it’s very dynamic, and it always has to be adapted to the strategy.”. “... I would say that maybe we are using this dynamic system ... we built very much on these experiences, and these experiences are about processes, about mindset and about, let’s say, the skills to collaborate and to bring in the right knowledge from what, wherever it comes.” (B13)</p>
Art director to manage artists & technical employees	<p>“The creation of the reflection, which is somewhere what is in the head of the artistic director ... that will integrate developers, so computer scientists to be more prosaic, but who are computer scientists oriented towards art, towards the artistic and towards graphics, ...who are in the process of developing the way to play ... So, for us, art goes all the way there. So that’s more on the graphic artist side ... I also have part of the team working on music. Audio artists ... you have people who do visual effects ... that’s also art ... I’ve got choreographers, dancers and costume designers on top of all that! And after that? Then I’ve got the video artists, so that’s also in the visual side ...” (B8)</p>
Inspiration and benchmarking of creative practices	<p><b>Embedding creative practices</b></p> <p>“I was so inspired by Walt Disney ... there was one book about the Walt Disney creativity method. This is a four-colour method where you have blue, red, green and yellow colours and you went through these four colours with a different mindset during the development of new projects ... I had engineers, I had designers, I had people from product development and from marketing in one team ... always when we discussed, they could not speak the same language. And ... what help ... that’s my deep learning about this art and science point and innovation is that we had we had ... beautiful rooms. And so I gave every room a colour. I said, this is the green room, this is the blue room. This is the yellow room and the red room. And then when we started to work on new projects and to discuss, ...for a period of two years, ... the rooms had the rules for, let’s say the red colour is really the one who fails to everything and says “this will never work that way”. And that yellow room is the room of the designers, of the creative people. Everything, everything is allowed to say, everything is allowed to talk, and it’s forbidden to fire at it and to criticise at that point ...” (B13) “Supporting the arts makes everybody feel good. It makes the clients feel good. It makes us feel good because we are supporting the arts. It makes the staff feel great. It’s a cumulative thing, layer upon layer upon layer.” (B7)</p>
Embedding artistic work in product development	<p>“For the last 35 years, every Christmas we choose an artist and commission them to make a limited edition print for our clients. They are then individually and professionally hand printed using carborundum, silk-screen etc and we create a gift box in which we package them and the box is designed each time by the guy who designed U2’s album covers.” (B7) “And our work was then very much influenced by companies like Hallmark ... they did very good artwork and integrated it into innovation process for industrial, let’s say repetition ... especially for Christmas gifts and greeting cards ... we got inspired by these companies and then my job then was as head of product development ... to combine these two disciplines: industrial management of processes and repeatability. And on the other hand, the artistic work and integration into product development, that for me was always the challenge and I love this work ...” (B13)</p>
<b>HUBBING</b>	
Innovation Lab	<p>“in 2005 I founded an innovation lab, the I-Lab, and there I had engineers, I had designers, I had people from product development and from marketing in one team ... In (2005) our processes have been perfectly organised. Our product development process was very ... good. But we felt that we did not have the right approach to bring the next level of products into the fashion industry ... We had the problem that the we built our product lines and we renewed our</p>

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1st order codes/3rd order codes	2nd order codes and Quotes
System approach to artists integration and collaboration with scientists and engineers	product lines, but we saw that it's not enough to renew. We had to go for more, let's say, for fulfilling our promise in innovation to bring in highly innovative products that surprise the customer, that make women more attractive ... we had to look for new ways that we saw. We have to go for a different research organisation or, let's say, integrated process because everything in former times was like, like not iterative, it was like stage-gate and it was formalized" "And so we thought, what is in there if we want to integrate, if we want to be more fast, how does this creation process of designers work? How can it be translated? How can this design process be translated into this engineering world? That is what Design Thinking is a lot ... And the purpose of this lab was exactly to help, to speed up one thing and to integrate technology more fast. So that was the time when open innovation started and when we saw, oh, there are a lot of innovation labs all over the world, if you could collaborate with them, then we will succeed. When we had our innovation network with other companies, we could collaborate with this. So that was the purpose" (B13)
Open Innovation network and ecosystem	"Bell Labs history with art goes way back to 1929, and it was immensely powerful for decades ... Everything in Bell Labs was about technology - that's the currency in there - so we mapped the right artists to the right engineers to work together. We chose specific topics. in Bell Lab ... how we select the artists and all of that is very important and how we map the artists to the engineers. But in Bell Labs, we used to have the artist collaborate directly with our engineers and our scientists on particular topics and that brought a lot of complexity. ... and our team would act as the translators, the mediators that go between ... So my role in the organisation with the Innovation Incubation organisation, and then I carved out a small part of that to focus on the arts and tech. My role was to establish the frameworks and methodologies that overcame those tensions and turns those differences from being tensions into value creation and what we ended up doing. ... When I met with these artists, every single conversation blew my mind. It was like an intellectual anvil was dropped on my head". "Written text or oral speech can't render emotion and in the tech world we need to be able to evoke an emotional response. We use artists for this - we choose them carefully and they follow a very well curated induction programme and work with our best people so they can deliver specific work for our brands and products." (B6)
	"(My another) experience ... was ... the open innovation when I met then Henry Chesbrough ... and we then started to build the Open Innovation Network ... in the last year I would say it's about networking and about innovation ecosystem ... to design the ecosystems and see who are my contributors to innovation ... And then to see how can I bring this together? And today it's beautiful because everybody has access to knowledge ... we simply need to take the right partners from inside and outside to design the right process ... with this modern learning that we have from the principles of ... dedicated innovation networks, you can put them all together. And then you can orchestrate them and everybody can orchestrate" (B13)

Dynamic Capabilities, extracts from the coding table

	Nb	Companies' quotes	Artists' quotes
<b>Sensing</b>			
Screening opportunities and risks - To screen the external environment in-depth in an institutionalized and regular manner	R	"it's the piece of art. This made it possible to finally put aside what I was saying to you here, I repeat myself, to put aside maybe a lot of problems, problematics that in a normal context, if we had talked about a foundry piece that could be less complicated, we should have done 1000 and all this, we would rather have asked ourselves the question of saying how are we not going to get there instead of telling ourselves how we are going to get there at the end. And that's what, I think, actually contributed to pushing our limits much further and to finally putting forward everything that we can finally do in our job with our tools and to what limit we can push our process up to." (B9)	"Companies that work with a strong materiality. Take a foundry, for example. Well, there's metal, there's even movement, there are wooden elements. So, in the end, that gives material or materials, if you like. It extrapolates, so you rediscover, you rediscover the material, you master all that material, but all of a sudden, it has other potentialities. So I think it's these potentialities that unfold. And then you become more confident, you say to yourself: Ah, in the end, everything you mastered was a lot of norms, a lot of standards, a lot of reproducibility. And then, all of a sudden, you can escape. I'd say that that's a great benefit" (A2)
	R	"... indeed, maybe it motivated the troops to work on it to open their minds. Effectively going out and working. Because innovation is finally about working out of the box, that's it. That is to say Voilà, you have a frame now, you are thinking outside the frame. And finally, artistic work may allow us to think outside the box" (B9)	
	C	"For me, it's about going to see art as it is created today, it's about going to see artists as they are created today." (B10)	" I think that in the face of everyday life, which is full of constraints, we [the artists] can introduce freedom, with very little." (A2)
	R	"when the artist thinks further and when we talk about profitability, we are talking about reproducibility, it is in relation to what we know. But maybe that's where the innovation is happening. If we have innovation, it is precisely in order to be able to overcome that. And it is by overcoming this that we will do something that has never been done. Because for me, innovation must meet a need. And we've never been able to meet that need before. Perhaps this is where there is the switch to innovation." (B9)	"I was invited as an artist, not a designer. So there's a very clear distinction to be made, and that is that the artist sets imaginary worlds against each other, there's a porous space in which he's going to translate narratives, sensibilities and explorations, whereas in the observation, the invitation of a designer to a residency, he's in the process of thinking about imagining new possibilities, new functionalities, new uses." (A1)
	R	"... the benefit of this kind of thing [artist in residence] is to shake up everyday life, you know, to make people see things again that we can't see any more, we can't see the light through a glass partition, we can't see any more, we can't see any more. So there you have it, it's all about the sensory again." (A2)	"I'm convinced that it's extremely important to include an artist in every team, because he or she has that counterpoint nature. That's what we're trained to do." (A1)
	C	"I think we keep our ear to the ground when it comes to what's going on in culture and in art, locally." (B5)	" Personally, I'm more comfortable with part A of the ideation process because that's what makes me love it and I adore it.

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	Nb	Companies' quotes	Artists' quotes
			So maybe that's why I'm into things, trendy quests, things like that. Because what I like to do is keep an eye on things, observe, read and then synthesise, either in terms of drawings or materials, or experiments of some kind. And that's it. And I find that experimentation and questioning are really what artists are all about. " (A1)
	C	"It was a desire to mix and match, to say that the same mission could go and see a visual artist and then do choreography, and then I'm off to do ceramics. The idea was to open up the field as much as possible, just as we did for people. We also do it for the practices. That's the first thing. And the second thing is also displacement. I'm really attached to one thing. For me, it's getting people out of their own environment." (B10)	
	C	" So I think art can really shed light on things. To help us build something as precise as specifications. But Fabrice's intelligence was in choosing the right people and the right people, that means the right disciplines." (B12)	
	E	"For that matter, dance shows, I go to see them with my creative director, they're things we do in our free time and they're things that are more about "feeding us". "(B8)	
<b>Seizing</b>			
<b>Building and adapting business models -</b> To rethink the value proposition and profit formula (link to business model innovation)	C	"So it's definitely something that we would continuously like to have our foot in culture and the Arts, because that's where our target consumer kind of lives and breathes" (B5)	
	S	"I saw a gap that I thought there would be value. I saw a personal area that I knew I could, by expanding my energy, I would grow and learn ... and then I saw an opportunity for potentially immense value creation, but understanding that there's a long journey ahead. True. What I knew about innovation, organisational culture change, how you really bring people together in different ways and create new modes of value creation." (B6)	
	E	"so the risk matrices, basically, they're like matrices where you say, when you're in a brand, does a new project you're going to propose have an innovation component? Yes or no? Is this innovation component close to your business, to what you usually do? Or is it much more of a break with the past? And depending on that, we won't expect the same things from you and we'll expect you to diversify your risk a bit. You see, with Just Dance, people are going to say to me, I'm going to propose, let's imagine a game in virtual reality. So it's going to be a bit innovative because it's not what I usually do and it's on other platforms. But on the other hand, I'm sticking with the same type of gameplay, the same type of use, the same type of game. So it's what I would call an adjacent innovation." (B8)	
	E	"I would say the designers and the artists, they have been first people who have been aware about that. But what happens if they did not have the proof of concept data for their right brain management thinking. In most cases, very often, they have been overruled by business decisions... And that is why now it is important that these business decision points have to include the sustainability points. And so the designers have a better life in bringing in the sustainability." (B13)	
	S	"if I have this art thing over here, this creative thing, and I want to bring that in, I want to actually, in the long term, create change." (B6)	
	S	"Bell Labs basically pioneered a whole form of innovation by bringing artists and creators deep into our technological work. And by the way, a lot of people don't know this. Now, put you in people that have research, in touch with people, have researched this. Bell Labs history with art goes way back to 1929, and it was immensely powerful for decades and decades." (B6)	
	S	"... we thought, what is in there if we want to integrate, if we want to be more fast, how does this creation process of designers work? How can it be translated? How can this design process be translated into this engineering world? That is what Design Thinking is a lot. Yeah, I think we have been working like that. And the purpose of this lab was exactly to help, to speed up one thing and to integrate technology more fast. So that was the time when open innovation started and when we saw, oh, there are a lot of innovation labs all over the world, if you could collaborate with them, then we will succeed. When we had our innovation network with other companies, we could collaborate with this. So that was the purpose. But from beginning, we knew that such labs do not survive for too long time." (B13)	
<b>Defining strategies and tactics -</b> To define the strategic path of the firm and the strategic moves along that path	C	"It was part of the training plan. So, every year, we published a sort of catalogue with topics that we had either tried to find out about through interviews with managers. Or we suggested them ourselves. In other words, if I felt something was needed, I could suggest a theme. For example, one year I worked on the players in the contemporary art world. Understanding the contemporary art world. It didn't come from the field, it was me who pushed the subject." (B10)	
	C	"From my point, I think the most important thing is we need a common mission. We need a common ethics, ground where this kind of lead. And, I think this is a bit lost over the last decades because there are so many different issues. And if you're not interested in this, then you're not really interested in that. The world is becoming highly complex or even, I would tend to say hyper complex. And also the environment is becoming human unfriendly." (B16)	
	E	"that's the beauty of the technology industry I think, which is that in my opinion you're only good when you get people to work together. Because designers and artists are going to have a vision. But you absolutely have to let the tech guys, you have to give them the space to understand that vision and amend it and make it evolve. Because otherwise you end up with things that aren't feasible on the one hand, and the answer on the other is just no, I can't do it. But if you get them to move forward together, they'll make compromises that aren't actually compromises, they'll develop the vision in line with the constraints and even the technical constraints will bring new opportunities. So the difficulty is to succeed, and that's not always easy. " (B8)	
<b>Defining strategies and tactics</b>	C	"It was part of the training plan. So, every year, we published a sort of catalogue with topics that we had either tried to find out about through interviews with managers. Or we suggested them ourselves. In other words, if I felt something was needed, I could suggest a theme. For example, one year I worked on the players in the contemporary art world. Understanding the contemporary art world. It didn't come from the field, it was me who pushed the subject." (B10)	"the story we tell is absolutely crucial. Because if you don't tell the story, you miss out, you stay closed, and people miss out on lots of things. So as soon as you start telling the story, it becomes much more powerful." (A5)

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Acquiring and leveraging of resources - To acquire new resources, to leverage existing ones, and to secure funding for both	R “We get contemporary, well known artists to design limited edition bottles for Absolut vodka - and the most famous example was Andy Warhol” (B5).	“in this case, the young guy who works for the metalworker and who built my structure. He must have developed something through his work and that. And that’s it. In other words, I didn’t bring him to my taste for art, but I brought him to understand that he too can contribute things and he brought me something ... And the people ... they also brought me things and in the end, we share the result” (A5)
<b>Transforming</b>		
Acquiring and circulating knowledge - To acquire knowledge externally and to circulate that knowledge across the firm	R “So all this work had to be done beforehand, millimeter by millimeter. And then we also had to imagine how we were going to cast it, what we were going to have to develop as a tool to be able to do it, to be able to ensure that we have this piece. And I think that’s what I’ve gained.” (B9)	
	R “when we do design thinking, the fact of having an artist, the artist may be able to do, when talking about a product, to make maybe a synthesis between the aspect, maybe the technical aspect that we want to obtain, the functionality. But also the story and what the company or company concerned wants to be able to present, or the object that it wants to present. Maybe he can make that connection.” (B9)	
	R “ there’s professional respect too (.). There’s the observation of the professional gesture. And on both sides. And what’s also interesting is that Antoine [the artist] synchronised with them straight away. He also made little models, so they were able to work with them and turn them around. (...) And that’s why I say that the residency was good, because they went back and forth as often as they wanted and that allowed them to ask lots of questions. “ (A2)	
	E “My initial significant engagement with art occurred when I was tasked by my company to recreate an antique chandelier from Louis XIV’s sleeping quarters at the Château Versailles in Paris. This experience highlighted the complexities involved in reconstructing and adapting ornate crystal glass art, particularly pieces with baroque shapes and patterns, to modern manufacturing processes. Consequently, we explored innovative digital technologies to translate this baroque style into a contemporary context. Our approach involved reinterpreting the original playful intent, thereby bridging the past with the present through the development of a timeless artistic expression.” (B13). “This example showed me that using artistic approaches to development outpaces the tools that we so far have from digital roads in terms of creativity by far.” (B13)	
	E “And always to translate technology into the fashion that was in special my learning. “ (B13)	
	C “It is a Friday lunchtime kind of thing where we sat in for an hour and we listened to, I think it was Nancy I was going to name. But she’s brilliant, though, and I think they do that once every month. But sometimes it’s once every two months and it’s usually like, artists kind of. It’s an inspiration session. “ (B4)	
<b>Reconfiguring of internal and external resources - To reconfigure resources, specifically also external resources</b>	H “... what we ended up doing was, in our artist in residence program, where we had about 25 artists at one time. We brought them in and we would work with them for at least a year’s time.” (B6)	
	E “But as one of the biggest entertainment markets, it’s clear that the artistic side of things is very, very important. All the more so when you’re in production, less so when you’re in marketing, support services and so on. But when you’re in production, it’s really part of the strong values and you can’t do management in video games if you can’t speak the same language as some artists. There’s also the fact that you manage artists directly or globally. But yes, artists are a third of my team.” (B8)	
Top management commitment - To express genuine commitment by the top management for the change	C “What you need is a mandate from the very top within an organisation. You have to hope that leadership really at the very pinnacle of a company understands sufficiently what they’re trying to achieve through innovation and then they’re actually willing to fund, you know, over time, the group that has the flexibility. Is able to change itself dynamically, bring in new people and influences from the arts. (B1)	“They wanted to be photographed with the CEO in front of the art piece! And he’s really available for that. I thought wow, he’s really happy because it’s done and it’s perfect. When I took these photos, I said to myself, this is the story they made. But you see, there’s a dimension, I don’t want to say a kind of transcendence, but there’s a dimension that goes beyond them” (A2)
Acquiring and circulating knowledge - To acquire knowledge externally and to circulate that knowledge across the firm	R “So all this work had to be done beforehand, millimeter by millimeter. And then we also had to imagine how we were going to cast it, what we were going to have to develop as a tool to be able to do it, to be able to ensure that we have this piece. And I think that’s what I’ve gained.” (B9)	The least you can do is go up to people and explain why that is? Why I paint cranes? Why I paint ancient columns and why I make, why I stack bricks to make some kind of stupid tower that speaks to them. So I explained Babel to them, I explained ..... Ah yes, there you go. Yes, that rings a bell. The Tower of Babel. Oh yeah, so we’re talking about it. And then ... And then, all of a sudden, it all makes sense. Because I was there to explain to the people in the company, I was there to explain to the guests in the company, I say to explain to the people in the street, because that too has to be done.” (A5)

Codes: R – residing, C – consulting, E – Embedding, H - Hubbing.

## Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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