

In Control but Uninspired: Artist Self-control Undermines Perceptions of Creativity

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Cite as:

Kokkoris Michail, Stavrova Olga (2023), In Control but Uninspired: Artist Self-control Undermines Perceptions of Creativity. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, (117195)

Paper from the EMAC Regional Conference, Athens, Greece, September 27-29, 2023



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Abstract

Previous research highlighted the interpersonal benefits of self-control in professional contexts: People prefer high self-control individuals as work or study partners and expect them to perform better than low self-control individuals. We show that these benefits of self-control reverse in the artistic domain. Results of five preregistered experiments (N = 1,413) reveal that artists with high (vs. low) self-control are perceived as less creative. This effect replicates across various artistic domains (visual art, music, poetry, screenwriting), holds for both male and female artists, and can be explained by perceptions of lower experiential processing, which is considered indispensable for creativity. However, art created by high (vs. low) self-control artists is ascribed higher market value due to stronger attributions of professionalism. These findings provide novel insights into the social perception of self-control and contribute to the understudied topic of the downsides of self-control as well as to the literature on lay theories of creativity.

Keywords: *Self-control; Creativity; Social perception*