# The Artifact Engine in the TCG: A Technical Analysis of Control, Utility, and Hybrid Integration

The Artifact archetype, introduced during the *Primal Origin* booster cycle, functions as a highly specialized control mechanism in the Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game (TCG). The deck's utility stems from its unique summoning condition, which allows its monsters to materialize onto the field during the opponent's turn, instantly triggering powerful disruptive effects. While historical competitive play centered on the now-Forbidden *Artifact Scythe*, the current environment demands a comprehensive understanding of the archetype's remaining components, focusing on adaptable disruption, Rank 5 Xyz utility, and hybrid synergy.

## I. Foundational Architecture and Trigger Mechanics

The successful operation of the Artifact engine relies entirely on mastering the precise timing and mandatory triggers inherent to its monster effects.

### A. The Artifact Identity: Type, Attribute, and Level Utility

All core Artifact main deck monsters—such as *Artifact Moralltach*, *Artifact Lancea*, and *Artifact Aegis*—share a common identity: they are Level 5, LIGHT Attribute, Fairy Type monsters.1

The universal Level 5 characteristic is the linchpin of the archetype's Extra Deck strategy. By Special Summoning two Level 5 monsters immediately, the archetype gains consistent access to powerful generic Rank 5 Xyz Monsters.3 This Level consistency allows the engine to slot into various strategies that can reliably generate Level 5 materials or facilitate easy Link Summons leading to

*Artifact Dagda*.

The Fairy Type designation, while sometimes beneficial for niche external support, presents structural conflicts when the Artifact engine is combined with modern archetypes that impose restrictive summoning conditions. For instance, core cards in the Labrynth archetype often lock the player into Special Summoning only Fiend monsters from the Extra Deck for the remainder of the turn.5 Since Artifact monsters are Fairies, this restriction must be carefully managed; any Rank 5 or Link play utilizing Artifacts must be completed before the Fiend lock is applied, otherwise, the Extra Deck functionality of the Artifact engine is entirely negated.

### B. The "Set and Destroy" Paradigm: In-depth Rulings and Timing Windows

The core mechanic of the Artifact archetype is a three-part process, requiring intricate timing to maximize disruption:

1. **Preparation Phase:** Artifact monsters possess an inherent, non-activated ability to Set themselves from the hand into the Spell & Trap Zone as Spell Cards.1 This action does not start a Chain and serves only to position the card for its activated effect.
2. **Special Summon Trigger:** The key mandatory trigger is initiated *During your opponent's turn, if this Set card in the Spell & Trap Zone is destroyed and sent to your GY*.1 This trigger is mandatory and does not care about the origin of the destruction effect (whether it was self-inflicted by the Artifact player or executed by the opponent). The monster is Special Summoned immediately after the destruction effect resolves, assuming it was destroyed while set during the opponent's turn.
3. **Payload Condition:** The high-impact secondary effect (e.g., destruction or floodgate) is an optional trigger effect that activates *If this card is Special Summoned during your opponent's turn*.1

The design of the effect timing creates critical tactical leverage. Since the Special Summon from the Graveyard is a mandatory trigger effect that occurs immediately upon the resolution of the destruction, the opponent cannot use common denial cards like *Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring* against the Special Summon itself. However, the subsequent payoff effect (e.g., *Moralltach's* destruction effect or *Lancea's* floodgate effect) is an optional trigger that starts a new chain link and is therefore susceptible to counter-effects such as *Infinite Impermanence*.7

This system also establishes a complex trade-off regarding the use of the archetype's support cards. While the Artifact monster itself Special Summons regardless of who destroys it, the primary support cards, *Artifact Ignition* and *Artifact Sanctum*, gain their secondary benefits only if they are destroyed by an opponent’s card.8 This forces the Artifact player to decide whether to use their own cards (like

*Ignition*) for controlled destruction to guarantee the Special Summon and payload activation, or risk waiting for the opponent to destroy the backrow, potentially triggering the support card's retaliation effect (e.g., skipping the opponent’s Battle Phase via *Ignition*).8

### C. Current Competitive Status in the TCG: The Scythe Ban and Redirected Focus

The historical power ceiling of the Artifact archetype was anchored by *Artifact Scythe*. This card's payload effect—preventing the opponent from Special Summoning from the Extra Deck for the remainder of the turn—was game-ending, especially when easily set by *Artifact Dagda*.5 However,

*Artifact Scythe* is currently **Forbidden** in the TCG.9

This prohibition fundamentally alters the engine’s strategic role. *Artifact Dagda* 10, the key Link 2 monster used to search and Set

*Scythe* from the Deck, remains legal but has dramatically reduced utility. Consequently, the Artifact engine has transitioned from a proactive lock-down strategy to a flexible, reactive toolbox used primarily in the Side Deck or as a supplementary main deck package for accessing powerful Rank 5 Xyz Monsters. The core competitive payloads are now *Artifact Lancea* (providing anti-Banish floodgate disruption) and, to a lesser extent, *Artifact Moralltach* (providing mandatory spot removal).1

## II. Core Engine Components and Consistency Flowcharts

The Artifact engine is utilized in hybrid strategies due to its high consistency in deploying Level 5 monsters. This reliability is achieved through multiple non-linear search and setup paths.

### A. Search & Setup: The Fuel of the Engine

1. **Artifact Sanctum (Normal Trap):** *Sanctum* is a crucial piece of internal consistency. It Special Summons 1 "Artifact" monster directly from the Deck.8 As a Normal Trap, it is easily searchable by Trap-focused control strategies or by power cards like  
   *Triple Tactics Thrust* (T.T.T.).5 The card carries the restriction that the player cannot conduct their Battle Phase the turn it is activated 8, confirming its intended use as a Turn 1 or Turn 0 (opponent's turn) control tool.
2. **Artifact Ignition (Quick-Play Spell):** This Quick-Play Spell provides immediate field manipulation and setup. It targets and destroys 1 Spell/Trap on the field (often an opponent's card, or a Set Artifact monster for self-triggering), and, if successful, immediately Sets 1 "Artifact" monster from the Deck to the Spell & Trap Zone.8  
   *Ignition* is exceptionally efficient because it can dismantle an opponent’s backrow threat while simultaneously setting up the Artifact monster payload (e.g., *Lancea*) in one action.
3. **Artifact Dagda (Link 2 Monster):** *Dagda* offers an Extra Deck avenue for resource access. Its Quick Effect allows the player to Set 1 "Artifact" monster directly from the Deck to the S/T Zone.13 Although its main historical target (  
   *Scythe*) is banned, *Dagda* remains a valuable generic Link 2 option for generating Level 5 material consistency, particularly for combo decks that easily produce two monsters (Link Spam).

The synergistic layering of these cards gives the Artifact engine significant resilience. The search paths are non-linear; the engine utilizes a Normal Trap, a Quick-Play Spell, and an Extra Deck monster to access its core payoffs. This redundancy means that a single negation (e.g., negating *Sanctum*) does not inherently collapse the strategy, as subsequent plays using *Ignition* or *Dagda* can still access the required Level 5 monsters.

### B. Payloads (Endboard Disruption Options in TCG)

The functional utility of the engine now lies in two key disruptive Level 5 monsters:

* ***Artifact Lancea*** **(Anti-Banish Floodgate):** If Special Summoned during the opponent's turn, *Lancea* prevents both players from banishing cards for the remainder of that turn. In the current TCG meta, where several high-tier decks rely heavily on banishing their own or the opponent's cards for sequencing and removal, *Lancea* functions as a mandatory competitive Side Deck inclusion, often referred to as the "banish tax" against certain strategies.11
* ***Artifact Moralltach*** **(Spot Removal):** If Special Summoned during the opponent's turn, *Moralltach* destroys 1 face-up card the opponent controls.1 This provides reliable spot removal that can be deployed at Spell Speed 2 (when chained in response to an opponent’s action via  
  *Ignition* or *Sanctum*), allowing the player to dismantle the opponent’s board before key effects resolve.

The defining characteristic of the engine is its **self-destruction loop as a form of counter-interaction**. By strategically placing an Artifact monster face-down, the player can chain *Artifact Ignition* targeting that Set monster, forcing the mandatory Special Summon of the Artifact, which then triggers its powerful payload effect. This action effectively transforms the opponent's potential backrow removal (e.g., if they target the Set *Ignition* with *Mystical Space Typhoon* or *Twin Twisters*) into an immediate field presence and triggered disruption for the Artifact player.14 This highly unique mechanism allows the Artifact engine to achieve positive card advantage by leveraging its unique trigger conditions.

Table 1 details the core components and their current functional status in the TCG.

Table 1: Artifact Core Card Interaction Matrix

| **Card Name** | **Card Type** | **Primary Function (Proactive)** | **Secondary Function (Reactive/Payload)** | **TCG Status** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Artifact Sanctum | Normal Trap | Special Summons 1 Artifact from Deck. | Destroyed by opponent → Destroy 1 card on field. | Unlimited |
| Artifact Ignition | Quick-Play Spell | Destroys 1 S/T on field, Sets 1 Artifact from Deck. | Destroyed by opponent → Opponent skips next Battle Phase. | Unlimited |
| Artifact Dagda | Link 2 Monster | Quick Effect: Sets 1 Artifact from Deck to S/T Zone. | Destroyed → Destroy 1 face-up card on field. | Unlimited |
| Artifact Lancea | Level 5 Monster | Hand Trap (discard to activate). | SS on opponent's turn → No banishing for 1 turn. | Unlimited |
| Artifact Moralltach | Level 5 Monster | N/A (SS condition). | SS on opponent's turn → Destroy 1 face-up opponent's card. | Unlimited |
| Artifact Scythe | Level 5 Monster | N/A (SS condition). | SS on opponent's turn → Opponent cannot SS from Extra Deck for rest of turn. | **Forbidden** 9 |

## III. Optimized Combo Lines and Endboard Construction

The current competitive strategy for the Artifact engine focuses primarily on utilizing the Level 5 materials to deploy highly disruptive Rank 5 Xyz Monsters.

### A. The Artifact Rank 5 Infrastructure (Turn 1 Strategy)

The primary objective when going first is to generate two Level 5 monsters, either directly through the Artifact searchers (*Sanctum* or *Ignition* chains) or indirectly via a supporting engine, to access the powerful generic Rank 5 toolbox.

1. ***Artifact Durendal*** **Disruption:** *Artifact Durendal* (Rank 5, 2 Level 5 materials) provides two Quick Effect disruptions.3
   * **Effect Redirection:** When a monster effect or Normal Spell/Trap is activated, *Durendal* can detach 1 material to change that activated effect to "Destroy 1 Spell/Trap your opponent controls".3 This is not a negation but a disruptive modification, forcing the opponent to commit a critical resource only to inflict self-damage or minimal disruption. This Quick Effect provides crucial protection for the Artifact player's set-up by misaligning the opponent's removal strategy.
   * **Hand Reset Loop:** The most potent application of *Durendal* involves its secondary effect, which forces both players to shuffle their hand into the Deck and draw the same number of cards.3 If the Artifact player can successfully chain  
     *Droll & Lock Bird* in response to *Durendal’s* activation (typically triggered after the opponent searches a card), *Droll* resolves first, locking both players out of adding cards to hand. When *Durendal* resolves, the opponent shuffles their entire hand but is prevented from redrawing, resulting in a devastating, non-archetypal hand loop.16
2. ***Constellar Pleiades*** **and** ***Cyber Dragon Nova*** **Utility:**
   * ***Constellar Pleiades*** (Rank 5) is a highly valued Rank 5 monster offering non-destructive removal (bouncing a card to the hand) as a Quick Effect.3 This is essential for handling opponent monsters that are immune to destruction or those that trigger effects when destroyed.
   * In hybrid decks that naturally incorporate Level 5 Machine monsters (e.g., Cyber Dragons), *Cyber Dragon Nova* acts as an intermediary step to summon the potent omni-negate *Cyber Dragon Infinity*. If the host deck cannot easily generate the Level 5 Machine requirements for *Nova*, the Artifact engine allows the deck to pivot to the generic Rank 5 options like *Durendal* or *Pleiades*.16

### B. The Control Engine Integration (Turn 0 Strategy)

A successful turn-one endboard utilizing the Artifact engine is defined by multiple, layered Quick Effect interactions. The synergy transforms the Artifact monsters from main deck material into reliable Turn 0 disruption.

The endboard configuration often includes Rank 5 Xyz Monsters (*Durendal* or *Pleiades*) alongside two Set cards in the Spell/Trap Zone: usually *Artifact Sanctum* and *Artifact Ignition*. This configuration maximizes disruption points: the Xyz Monster offers proactive interruption; *Sanctum* offers an immediate Special Summon of a payoff monster (e.g., *Lancea*) from the Deck upon activation; and *Ignition* serves as an enabler, ready to be activated during the opponent’s Main Phase to trigger a Set Artifact monster (like *Moralltach* for removal).8

Table 2 highlights the most critical Rank 5 Xyz monsters accessible by the Artifact engine.

Table 2: Key Rank 5 Xyz Toolbox for Artifact Engine

| **Xyz Monster** | **Materials** | **Primary Utility** | **Turn of Application** | **Disruption Mechanism** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Artifact Durendal | 2 Level 5 | Effect Redirection/Hand Reset. | Quick Effect (Either Player's Turn) | Flow Control/Hand Disruption |
| Constellar Pleiades | 2 Level 5 | Non-destructive bounce (field interaction). | Quick Effect (Either Player's Turn) | Non-Targeting Removal |
| Cyber Dragon Nova | 2 Level 5 (Machines) | Stepping stone to *Cyber Dragon Infinity*. | Quick Effect (Either Player's Turn) | Extra Deck Access/Negation Layer 1 |
| Number 61: Volcasaurus | 2 Level 5 | Targeted Destruction + Burn Damage. | Artifact Player's Turn | Aggressive Removal/Push Damage |

## IV. Cross-Archetype Synergy and Meta Integration

The Artifact engine is predominantly successful as a splashable component in hybrid decks, bridging consistency and power.18

### A. Integration Case Study 1: Rank 5 Hybrid Decks

The Artifact engine provides high utility to any deck that can easily summon Level 5 monsters or needs versatile interruption.

In Cyber Dragon decks, adding 3 copies of *Artifact Ignition* and 1-2 Artifact Level 5 monsters (like *Moralltach* or *Lancea*) enables the Cyber Dragon player to quickly amass Level 5 monsters for Xyz Summons. This integration allows the deck to access highly generic defensive Rank 5 monsters, offering a broader and more flexible Turn 1 strategy than relying solely on the *Cyber Dragon Nova* path.16 Historically, this synergy was also noted in decks like Heroes, which used the Artifacts to shore up inherent consistency issues and provide powerful supplemental disruption alongside key Hero Extra Deck monsters like

*Masked HERO Dark Law*.19

### B. Integration Case Study 2: Trap-Focused Control (Labrynth)

The synergy between Artifacts and Labrynth is predicated on *Artifact Sanctum* being a Normal Trap.8 Labrynth specializes in controlling the game through the continuous recursion and activation of Normal Traps during the opponent's turn.20

The power card *Triple Tactics Thrust* (T.T.T.) solidifies this connection. If the opponent activates a monster effect, T.T.T. can search for any Normal Spell or Trap from the Deck, allowing the Labrynth player to search *Artifact Sanctum* instantly. Activating *Sanctum* then Special Summons a desired Artifact payload (often *Lancea* in the current meta) directly from the Deck during the opponent's turn.5

However, the major tactical consideration is the Labrynth archetype’s self-imposed restriction. Certain key Labrynth traps (e.g., *Welcome Labrynth*) lock the player into Special Summoning only Fiend monsters from the Extra Deck for the turn.5 Since all Artifact monsters and their signature Xyz outputs (

*Durendal*, *Pleiades*) are Fairy Type, the Labrynth player must prioritize the execution of all Artifact Extra Deck plays *before* triggering any Fiend-locking effect. Failure to observe this sequence will result in the Artifact engine being deadlocked out of its primary Rank 5 utility.

### C. Destruction Enablers for Artifact Engine: Generic Quick-Play Spells

The reliability of the Artifact core relies on the availability of Quick-Play destruction effects to trigger the Set monsters during the opponent’s turn.

Beyond the archetypal *Artifact Ignition*, generic Quick-Play Spells are crucial for maximizing the engine’s flexibility:

* ***Twin Twisters***: This Quick-Play Spell destroys up to two Spell/Trap cards at the cost of discarding one card.14 It can be Set and activated on the opponent's turn to destroy two backrow threats, or, more critically, target a Set Artifact and an opponent's card, generating immediate board presence while reducing the opponent's resources.
* ***Mystical Space Typhoon*** **(MST)**: Though less common than *Twin Twisters*, *MST* is a simple, cost-free Quick-Play Spell for single S/T destruction.14 Its utility as a clean way to activate a Set Artifact monster during the opponent's Battle Phase or Main Phase remains a valid strategic choice.

The ability to use these generic cards, alongside *Artifact Ignition*, for controlled self-destruction provides the engine with significant going-second utility. By drawing into cards that simultaneously break the opponent’s established board (like clearing a Continuous Spell/Trap) and set up the Artifact loop, the hybrid deck gains the strategic flexibility to transition successfully regardless of the coin flip outcome, an advantage typically difficult for dedicated combo decks to achieve.21

## V. AI Canvas Blueprint: Visualization Protocols and Sequence Diagrams

To effectively utilize AI visualization tools, the complex interaction of Artifacts must be broken down into discrete, state-driven protocols that map resource location, mandatory effects, and player choices.

### A. Protocol for Mapping Card Interactions

The visualization framework must separate the three distinct mechanical stages of the Artifact loop, emphasizing the shift from a passive state (Set Spell) to an active field presence (Special Summoned Monster).

1. **Preparation (State Change):** Depict the Artifact monster moving from the Hand Zone to the Spell & Trap Zone, changing orientation (face-down Set Spell). This step is a non-activated, non-chainable state transition.
2. **Special Summon Trigger (Mandatory Transition Node):** The visualization must show the action of destruction targeting the Set Spell in the S/T Zone during the Opponent's Turn. This leads to a mandatory node labeled "SS Resolution," resulting in the immediate Special Summon of the Artifact monster from the Graveyard to the Monster Zone. This mandatory nature means the result (Special Summon) is guaranteed once the destruction resolves.
3. **Payload Activation (Optional Branching Node):** Following the "SS Resolution" node, the visualization should feature an optional diamond node labeled "Payload Activation" (e.g., *Moralltach* Effect or *Lancea* Floodgate). This represents the point where the Artifact player chooses to activate the effect in a new chain link, and where the opponent can respond with negation.7

### B. Sequence Diagram 1: Core Consistency Loop (Ignition Setup)

This sequence maps the process of using *Artifact Ignition* to guarantee the Special Summon and payload of *Artifact Moralltach* during the opponent’s turn.

| **Phase** | **Player** | **Action** | **Trigger/Result** | **Notes for Visualization** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Main Phase 1 (Turn 1) | Artifact Player | Set **Artifact Ignition** + other S/T. | Field State: Two Set S/T. | Initial setup. |
| Main Phase 1 (Turn 2) | Opponent | Activates a searcher monster effect (CL1). | Opponent commits to an action, opening the chain. | Target window established. |
| Chain Link 2 | Artifact Player | Flip *Artifact Ignition*. Target Opponent's S/T. | *Ignition* resolves. Destruction of Opponent's S/T, Set **Moralltach** from Deck. | *Ignition* uses its primary removal and setting effect. |
| Chain Link 1 | Opponent | Searcher monster effect resolves. | N/A. | Original chain resolves. |
| New Chain Link 1 | Artifact Player | Activate *Artifact Ignition’s* destruction effect, targeting the newly **Set *Moralltach***. | *Moralltach* is destroyed while Set on opponent’s turn. | The controlled destruction enabler. |
| Resolve | System | *Moralltach* Special Summons from the GY (mandatory trigger). | SS is successful. *Moralltach* optional trigger effect is now available. | Immediate field presence achieved. |
| New Chain Link 1 | Artifact Player | Activate *Moralltach* effect (optional trigger). Target 1 face-up opponent's card. | Destruction of opponent's card. | Final Payload delivery (Spot Removal). |

### C. Sequence Diagram 2: The Constellar Pleiades Endboard

This sequence demonstrates the heavy resource investment required to establish a formidable, multi-layered Rank 5 endboard.

| **Phase** | **Player** | **Action** | **Result** | **Notes for Visualization** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Main Phase 1 | Artifact Player | Perform core combo generating 2 Level 5 Artifacts. | 2 Level 5 monsters on field. | Focus on material generation methods. |
| Main Phase 1 | Artifact Player | Overlay the 2 Level 5 Monsters. | Summon **Artifact Durendal**. | First Xyz disruption layer established. |
| Main Phase 1 | Artifact Player | Perform secondary combo generating 2 additional Level 5 monsters. | 2 additional Level 5 monsters on field. | High investment required for double Rank 5. |
| Main Phase 1 | Artifact Player | Overlay the 2 additional Level 5 Monsters. | Summon **Constellar Pleiades**. | Second Xyz disruption layer established. |
| End Phase | Artifact Player | Set *Artifact Sanctum* + generic trap (e.g., *Infinite Impermanence*). | Endboard: *Durendal* (effect redirection), *Pleiades* (bounce), Set *Sanctum* (for SS interruption). | Mapping all interaction points for the opponent’s turn. |

## VI. Conclusions and Future Applications

The Artifact archetype, while handicapped by the banning of *Artifact Scythe*, retains high technical utility as a flexible control engine and a facilitator of powerful generic Rank 5 plays. Its current role is defined not by linear combo but by adaptable disruption.

The effectiveness of the engine is rooted in its unique trigger timing, allowing the player to manipulate the chain to guarantee a Special Summon and gain card advantage by turning the opponent's removal attempts into proactive disruption. This requires sophisticated understanding of the mandatory Special Summon condition versus the optional payload effect.

The ability of the engine to reliably pump out Level 5 monsters, particularly through the complementary search mechanisms of *Artifact Sanctum*, *Artifact Ignition*, and *Artifact Dagda*, ensures high consistency. In the current TCG meta, the strategic value lies in providing non-archetypal disruption via *Artifact Lancea* against banish-heavy strategies and securing access to powerful generic Rank 5 Xyz Monsters like *Artifact Durendal* and *Constellar Pleiades*. The flexibility of this Rank 5 toolbox allows hybrid decks to easily pivot their strategy depending on whether they are playing first (targeting proactive locks like the *Durendal* Hand Loop) or second (utilizing Rank 5 removal options).

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