

# Modern Art Board Game: Comprehensive Rulebook & Guide

## Introduction & Overview

**Modern Art** is a classic auction game designed by Reiner Knizia. Players act as museum curators seeking to buy and sell paintings for profit. Over **four rounds**, everyone auctions paintings from a hand of cards. When a **fifth painting of an artist** appears, the round ends. The artists whose works sell the most during a round become more valuable and earn money for owners when sold to the bank <sup>1</sup>. After four rounds, the curator with the most money wins <sup>2</sup>.

## Components

The basic CMON edition of Modern Art includes the following parts <sup>3</sup>:

Component	Quantity/Description
<b>Game board</b>	1 board showing the five artists in order. Beneath each artist are four rows of spaces for placing <b>Artist Value tiles</b> to track their value from round to round.
<b>Painting cards</b>	70 cards divided among five artists: Manuel Carvalho (12 cards), Ramon Martins (15), Daniel Melim (15), Rafael Silveira (15) and Sigrid Thaler (13) <sup>4</sup> . Each card shows a painting, the artist's name and an auction type icon.
<b>Money tokens</b>	132 tokens in various denominations (1 k€ to 100 k€). Players hide these behind a screen <sup>5</sup> .
<b>Artist Value tiles</b>	12 tiles showing values of 10 k€, 20 k€ and 30 k€ <sup>6</sup> . They mark how much each artist's paintings are worth at the end of each round.
<b>Museum screens &amp; hammer token</b>	Five cardboard screens hide players' money and one hammer token marks the current auctioneer <sup>7</sup> .

## Painting Card Icons

Each painting card has an icon showing the auction type you must use when selling that painting. The five auctions are described below. There are also **double-auction** cards that let two paintings be sold together <sup>8</sup>.

## Setup

1. **Shuffle painting cards and deal:** For the first round, shuffle all painting cards. Deal **10 cards each in a 3-player game, 9 cards each in a 4-player game, or 8 cards each in a 5-player game** <sup>9</sup> . These cards form each player's hand; unused cards remain in the deck for later rounds.
2. **Banker & money:** Choose a **banker** who manages the money supply. Each player starts with **100 k€** <sup>10</sup> and places the money behind a screen <sup>11</sup> .
3. **Hammer token:** The youngest player receives the hammer and conducts the first auction <sup>12</sup> .

## Game Flow: Four Rounds of Auctions

### Turn Sequence

1. **Choose a painting to auction:** On your turn you are the **auctioneer**. Choose any painting from your hand, place it face up and announce the artist and auction type <sup>13</sup> .
2. **Conduct the auction** according to the card's symbol (see "Auction Types" below). The auctioneer participates like anyone else and may buy the painting. If they do, they pay the bid **to the bank** instead of to themselves <sup>14</sup> .
3. **Transfer painting:** The highest bidder pays the price (to the auctioneer or bank) and places the painting face-up in front of their screen; their museum now owns that painting <sup>15</sup> .
4. **Pass the hammer:** The hammer moves clockwise to the next player, who chooses a painting from their hand and auctions it <sup>16</sup> .
5. **End of round:** When the **fifth painting of an artist** is played (it is not auctioned), the round ends immediately <sup>17</sup> . Any unsold paintings used to trigger the end remain face up but are not owned by anyone <sup>18</sup> . Players often still have cards in hand; these carry over to later rounds <sup>19</sup> .

### Auction Types

Auction Type	Icon & Rules	Summary
<b>Open auction</b>	All players, including the auctioneer, openly bid in any order. Bids must increase by at least 1 k€; players can bid as many times as they wish. The auction ends when no one wants to increase the bid. If nobody bids, the auctioneer gets the painting for free <sup>20</sup> .	Free-form bidding; talk and bluff to drive up prices.
<b>Once-around auction (One-offer)</b>	Starting with the player left of the auctioneer and going clockwise, each player gets <i>one</i> chance to bid or pass. The auctioneer bids last. Highest bid wins; if all pass, the auctioneer gets the painting free <sup>21</sup> .	Tension comes from having only one opportunity to bid.
<b>Hidden auction (Sealed bid)</b>	All players choose a secret amount of money in a closed fist <sup>22</sup> . Everyone reveals simultaneously; the highest bid wins. Ties go to the bidder closest clockwise from the auctioneer; if the auctioneer ties, they win <sup>23</sup> . If nobody bids, the auctioneer gets the painting free <sup>24</sup> .	Encourages guessing opponents' budgets and valuations.

Auction Type	Icon & Rules	Summary
<b>Fixed-price auction</b>	The auctioneer sets a price for the painting. Beginning with the player on their left, each player may buy at that price. The first to accept pays the auctioneer and takes the painting; if nobody buys, the auctioneer must buy it at their own stated price <sup>25</sup> . The auctioneer cannot set a price higher than they have in cash <sup>26</sup> .	Forces the auctioneer to set a tempting price while risking having to buy it themselves.
<b>Double auction</b>	The auctioneer may optionally play a second painting of the <b>same artist</b> (but not another double-auction card) and auction both together. The type of auction is determined by the second painting's symbol <sup>27</sup> . If the auctioneer declines, other players clockwise get a chance to play the second painting <sup>28</sup> . Whoever plays the second painting becomes the new auctioneer and receives the payment; the original auctioneer doesn't get paid <sup>29</sup> . If no one adds a second painting, the original auctioneer keeps their painting for free <sup>30</sup> .	Allows two paintings to be sold at once; strategic for driving demand or ending a round.

## General Auction Rules

- **Bid increments:** All bids must be in increments of 1 k€ <sup>31</sup>.
- **Must afford your bid:** You cannot bid more money than you have behind your screen <sup>32</sup>.
- **No tie-reducing:** Bids must always be higher than the previous bid <sup>31</sup>.
- If no one bids, the auctioneer gets the painting free except in fixed-price auctions where they must pay their own declared price <sup>33</sup>.

## Ending the Round & Selling Paintings

1. **Round trigger:** When the fifth painting of an artist is played, the round ends immediately. If a double-auction card triggered the end, there may be two unsold paintings <sup>34</sup>.
2. **Count paintings per artist:** Include unsold paintings that ended the round. Determine which artists sold the **most**, **second-most** and **third-most** paintings. Ties are broken in favour of the artist whose column is farther left on the board <sup>35</sup>.
3. **Assign value tiles:** Give the top artist 30 k€, the second artist 20 k€ and the third artist 10 k€ by placing the corresponding value tiles on the board in the current round's row <sup>36</sup>. Artists ranked lower earn nothing <sup>37</sup>.
4. **Payout:** Players sell **all paintings they purchased that round** to the bank. Each painting's value equals the **sum** of all value tiles in its artist's column across this and previous rounds <sup>38</sup>. Unsold paintings are worthless. After paying all players, discard all purchased paintings and unsold cards <sup>39</sup>.
5. **Deal new cards:** Before the next round, deal additional cards based on player count and round number <sup>40</sup>. Players add these to any cards still in hand <sup>19</sup>.
6. **Next auctioneer:** The hammer passes to the player left of the one who played the unsold fifth painting <sup>41</sup>. Another auction round begins.

## Number of Cards Dealt per Round

Players	1st round	2nd round	3rd round	4th round
<b>3 players</b>	10	6	6	0 <sup>42</sup>
<b>4 players</b>	9	4	4	0 <sup>43</sup>
<b>5 players</b>	8	3	3	0 <sup>44</sup>

## Selling & Artist Value Across Rounds

An artist's value accumulates across rounds. When an artist ranks first, second or third in a round, place the appropriate tile (30 k€, 20 k€ or 10 k€) in their column. In later rounds, each painting sold of that artist is worth the **sum** of all tiles in its column <sup>36</sup>. Artists not ranked in a round receive no tile. Thus, if an artist was first in the first round (30 k€) and third in the second (10 k€), each of their paintings sold in subsequent rounds would be worth 40 k€ <sup>45</sup>.

## Two-Player & Three-Player Variants

- **Two-player games** are not standard for the CMON edition, but many fans play with a simple variant: remove some cards and use a dummy third hand. The official rulebook describes a **3-player variant** called the **"mystery hand."** Deal cards as if there were four players and keep one hand face-down. After each normal auction, a player may flip a random card from the mystery hand. The mystery painting is not auctioned, belongs to nobody, but counts toward the end-of-round condition <sup>46</sup>.
- A **2-player variant** (not in the official rules) generally uses a dummy third hand and similar mechanics.

## End of the Game

After four rounds, once all paintings are sold and the final payouts are done, everyone reveals their money. The player with the most money wins <sup>2</sup>. If tied, players share the victory.

## Tips for New Curators

- **Track finances:** Because bidding is open in most auctions, keep an eye on opponents' spending. You cannot win if you overpay early and have no cash when valuable cards appear.
- **Know the artists' distribution:** Each artist has a different number of paintings in the deck (Ramon Martins, Daniel Melim and Rafael Silveira have 15 each, Manuel Carvalho has 12, and Sigrid Thaler has 13 <sup>4</sup>). Artists with more cards might be easier to push into first place.
- **Use auctions strategically:** Choose auction types that disadvantage opponents. For example, if you suspect others have little cash, a **fixed-price auction** at a high but fair price may force you to buy your own painting (keeping it for scoring), while a **hidden auction** can exploit uncertainty.
- **Consider timing:** Playing a double-auction can speed the end of a round, lock in values or push an artist into a scoring position. Sometimes it's worth giving another player the payment to control the timing.
- **Bid to block:** Even if you don't want a painting, bidding high might force the auctioneer to overspend or end a round prematurely, positioning you for better payouts later.

## Differences Between Modern Art and Modern Art: The Card Game

CMON released **Modern Art: The Card Game** in 2024. Although it retains the theme of art speculation, it is a distinct game where players display artwork in front of them rather than auction it. Each round they choose cards to play and trigger effects; when enough works of an artist are displayed, the round ends. Players score based on the artists with the most displayed cards <sup>47</sup>. Unlike the board game, the card game uses value tokens and award tokens, and there is **no bidding**—it is more of a set-collection game <sup>47</sup>. Make sure you are referencing the correct rulebook when learning Modern Art.

## Additional Resources

- **Publisher page** – CMON’s product page summarizes the game and notes that players act as museum owners who buy and sell artwork over four rounds; the more popular an artist, the more money you can make <sup>48</sup>. It also lists the beautiful components, including paintings and screens, and offers a PDF rulebook.
- **BoardGameGeek** – The game’s BGG page notes that five different artists produce paintings and players are both buyers and sellers, trying to profit from speculating on changing tastes <sup>49</sup>.
- **Video tutorials** – Numerous YouTube videos (e.g., *How to Play: Modern Art* or *Modern Art in about 3 minutes*) offer visual explanations of auction types and strategy. Watching a tutorial can help new players understand the bidding dynamics. When searching, ensure the video covers the board game rather than the card game.

This guide synthesizes official rules and community wisdom to provide a clear pathway for new players to learn and enjoy **Modern Art**. With the components laid out and auction styles understood, you are ready to run your own high-stakes art market!

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30  
31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 Modern Art Rulebook - 1jour-1jeu.com

<https://cdn.1j1ju.com/medias/41/f6/9b-modern-art-rulebook.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> [MDC-Rulebook.pdf](#)

<https://www.cmon.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MDC-Rulebook.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> [CMON - Modern Art](#)

<file:///home/oai/redirect.html>

<sup>49</sup> [Modern Art | Board Game | BoardGameGeek](#)

<https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/118/modern-art>