Reaching A Consensus: Plagiarism In Non-Text Based Media

Dr Margo Blythman London College of Communication, University of the Arts London
Dr Susan Orr   York St John University
Professor Joan Mullin University of Texas at Austin

Abstract
There has been considerable work recently on all aspects of text-based plagiarism; however, there has been little exploration of non-text based plagiarism, particularly in the area of visual forms of communication. Yet many students now move regularly between text and visual representation of their own ideas and the ideas of others. As a result, differing rules of acceptability in the visual area can cause confusion for the same students in text-based areas. This case study presents information about issues of plagiarism and students' work gained through working with art and design academic staff. Examples of general statements which can be used in art and design teaching are given as well as a series of student activities; these can be adopted not only by other art and design staff but also by those teaching classes which have visual components. Clarifying plagiarism for students in their often preferred visual domain should enable them to understand the reasons and application for citation in text arenas.

Background for The Project
There has been considerable work recently on all aspects of text-based plagiarism; however, there has been little exploration of non-text based plagiarism, particularly in the area of visual forms of communication. While most public, visual forms of communication have some sense and regulation of copyright, the particular issues of visual plagiarism in an academic context are much less visible. In addition, visual disciplines have a complex, and often ambivalent, approach to the acceptable use of the work of others. At one extreme there is fashion where high street fashion is based on close and unacknowledged copying of the catwalk; in film there is a fine line between copying and 'homage'. Sometimes there is no arena to reference and acknowledge influences (e.g. interior design).

This lack of exploration and clarification becomes relevant to a much wider area of higher education than art, design and media disciplines in university as more and more students are given opportunities to express their ideas in visual forms. Many students now move regularly between text and visual representation of their own ideas and the ideas of others. As a result, confusion over rules of acceptability in the visual area leak into text-based areas for students. Clarification for students in their often preferred visual domain will help them apply this to the text arena.

Methodology
The first stage in making any inroads into this complex web of issues is to enable academic communities of practice, particularly but not exclusively those in the visual arts, to clarify, through discussion, the crucial boundaries of acceptability and non-acceptability in their area. We worked with five course teams in two institutions:
London College of Communication, University of the Arts London:

- o BA Photography
- o BA Interior Design
- o BA Surface Design

York St John University:

- o BA Design Practice (focus on textiles and CAD)
- o BA Contemporary Fine Art Practice

One or more of the team producing this case study held a meeting with each course team asking them to explore with each other the nature of appropriation in their particular sub-discipline, areas of confusion for students and what would make suitable material to help students clarify acceptable boundaries.

Each discussion generated a checklist of issues to be discussed with students and a piece of supporting learning and teaching material that will advance student learning in relation to these issues. This work was written up by the project managers and sent back to the contributors to check that their meaning had been captured accurately. The prompt list for the interviews is given in Appendix 1.

Findings

Art and design staff are very clear about the long tradition of art on which their students are expected to build. They use the terms "appropriate", "expand on a resource" or "homage" to acknowledge that artists use each other's ideas, processes and materials, but use them differently from each other by developing their own particular grammar/vocabulary. They do this through a number of processes particular to each field and, within each field, the degree to which they must change or expand original material can also vary.

While there are occasional issues of visual plagiarism amongst art and design students, this is not regarded as a major issue by academic staff in the way it is in text based student work. Students in the arts want to be different, do not want to be considered a copyist.

Academic staff in art and design have the advantage of setting up projects whose development they follow step-by-step. Therefore, if a student must first sketch out an idea, or start with a source and develop an idea from it, or create a mood board, they can be guided away from imitation and copying through questions and suggestion by the tutor. The nature of this close monitoring means that unrecognised, inappropriate use of the work of others is less likely to happen. It is normally not acceptable to produce a finished product that has not been through this monitoring procedure.

The course teams also clearly indicated that students need to be informed of the difference between academic expectations (when they are learning) and national and international design expectations. For example, students who travel to China, might well see photographic, fashion and design copies sold openly; in Dubai, interior design students might see direct knock-offs of famous interiors. These must be discussed or students will believe that they too can create copies. Students need to understand the

different levels of design that might be expected of them in their own country (if it is not Dubai or China) and they need to know about professional standards, copyright organisations or national regulatory bodies that mediate disputes about ownership. Further, they need to know how the university has even less tolerance for copying since degrees are awarded on the understanding that they are assessing the student's own work and that students are in higher education to develop their own, singular vision.

Materials to use with students

Checklist of issues to discuss with students:

- o Statement on the tradition of artistic creation

- o What "originality" means in the field

- o Ways in which source materials can be elaborated, used, in the discipline (see bulleted lists below as examples)

- o What is regarded as common currency in the field and so available to all to use without attribution. That being regarded as common currency will vary across time and culture.

- o Peer discussion and group debriefing of activities that demonstrate the difference between copying and interpretive/original vision

- o The difference between academic, commercial and public expectations and regulations

A . LCC Photography

Statement on the tradition of artistic creation:

Artists create out of a long tradition of building on what is already in the world and then seeing and making something new of it. Its, therefore, acceptable/ unavoidable to use other people's work as a **starting** point for your creative vision, but you must move it forward in some way. For example, you might be inspired or impressed by another photographer's composition, setting, technique; you might want to create pictures "like that," but unless you add to that photographer's vision your own way of interpreting the effect you admire, you are merely copying (plagiarising). While copying a technique may be part of your learning and creative process, your finished photographs must develop and move forward what someone else has already done. You can do this by changing in some way that has a unique effect:

- Content
- Meaning
- Lighting
- Feeling
- Context
- Juxtaposition

- References (changing, expanding, adding or subtracting)

One way to determine whether you have built on others' work or merely created a copy is to examine for yourself and then explain to others how your work differs from the referenced work. Your teachers will want you to be able to explain

1. Why you developed the referenced work in this way?
2. Who/what has influenced your work?
3. How have you changed/built upon those references?
4. Or to what effect and why have you referenced others' works in yours?

Activities:

1. Use readings to discuss with students issues of construction, appropriation and copying: e.g., Bourdieu, Duchamp, postmodern strategies on framing, staging and appropriating. The LCC BA Photography booklist of readings is given in Appendix 2

2. Put students in groups and give them three different models that piggy-back on existing cultural texts (e.g., Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger); ask students either to:

a. discuss and comment on what these photographers did (and how? And maybe why?) to move their work beyond the referenced text.

b. discuss how they might move these photographers' work one step more without being derivative.

The idea is to let this discussion happen in a small group of students where they are safe to talk among themselves (i.e. a non-assessed activity). Those who like to skate close to the edge of derivation might be challenged further by their peers. They would all learn from the discussion.

B . LCC Interior Design

Statement on the tradition of artistic creation

Artists create out of a long tradition of building on what is already in the world and then seeing and making something new of it. Therefore it is acceptable/ unavoidable to use other people's work as a **starting** point for your creative vision, but you must move it forward in some way. For example, you might be inspired or impressed by another designer's use of materials, patterns, layout, colour scheme; you might want to create a room "like that," you may want to develop your ideas within a current fashion e.g. minimalist and use of sustainable materials, but unless you add to that designer's vision your own way of interpreting the effect you admire, you are merely copying (plagiarising).

Another way to think about a design idea comes from designers: they often claim that they start with a theme or idea out of which their design grows. For example, a recent show by Dior, was inspired by that designer's collection of paintings. The resulting designs referenced materials, shapes and colours of actual paintings by Monet, Dali and Renoir. Since Dior also is designing small hotels now, it would not be surprising to see this inspiration appear in lobbies and rooms.

While copying a process or design may be part of a learning and developing your creative process, your finished interiors must either elaborate an idea or develop and move forward what someone else has done. You can do this by changing in some way that has a unique effect:

- Scale
- Colour(s)
- Juxtaposition of styles
- Content
- Meaning
- Lighting
- Feeling
- Materials
- Placement

Activities:

1 . Give each student three, same-sized, rectangular foam boards and ask then to create a space using only the boards as materials (and cutting/shaping tools). This shows students how a vision can be individual even though one has the same materials.

2. a) Take students on a local or international trip. Give them disposable cameras and take them to a point in the city. They must then travel back to hotel from that point, recording the journey visually with a camera. Each student can put together a collage narrative of that journey. Using these, several activities can be conducted.

- Discuss what each person brings to a space, how each sees something different and it is that difference that makes their vision unique.
- Discuss the narrative of their collages, relate it to the "story" a room tells, the feeling it evokes through colour and juxtaposition.
- Ask students to build their own design vocabulary [what are they drawn to] by examining their collages. Emphasise that this exemplifies how people can be on the same journey but emerge with different visions.

2. b Take students to the starting point in the city again. This time they go back through the journey and sketch it; compare these with their previous narrative.
- How are these the same/different?
- How do the sketch and collage reference each other?
- How does each student's collage/sketch reference others? Is that copying?

3. Ask students to buy six photographs of familiar and accessible tourist shots of a city then reproduce the view in a photograph of their own.
- This can be a lesson in looking at the myths behind design photos students may use, and, therefore, the need to re-vision a source.
- Students can also examine how lighting, materials, etc. might serve to change the effect in each photo and, therefore, in rooms they may build on or change in their own work.

C . LCC Surface Design

Statement on the tradition of artistic creation

Artists create out of a long tradition of building on what is already in the world and then seeing and making something new of it. Therefore it is acceptable/ unavoidable to use other people's work as a **starting** point for your creative vision, but you must move it forward in some way. For example, you might be inspired or impressed by another designer's use of materials, patterns, subject matter, use of colour; you might want to create an artefact "like that," e.g. you might want to get 'a Japanese feel' to the design but unless you add to that designer's vision your own way of interpreting the effect you admire, you are merely copying (plagiarising). Another example is where you repeatedly use the ideas of others to make a point e.g. you want your work to have a 1970s theme. In this case you need to ensure that you justify this through explicit explanation and referencing the ideas used.

Another way to think about a design idea comes from designers: they often claim that they start with a theme or idea out of which their design grows. For example, there are ceramics that use Wedgwood images but in a very different way through use of partial image or distorting the image in some way. There are also ceramics which copy the concept but not the execution e.g. copying the idea of Wedgwood cameos but producing own work from it. Within this context it is important that students understand the integrity of a piece of work and that to copy an image or pattern from one context and use in another requires thought and artistic understanding e.g. the artist Bridget Riley was horrified when her paintings were reproduced as dress fabric.

While copying a process or design may be part of learning and developing your creative process, your finished artefacts must either elaborate an idea or develop and move forward what someone else has done. You can do this by changing in some way that has a unique effect:
- Scale
- Shape
- Colour(s)
- Juxtaposition of styles
- Content
- Meaning
- Fabric
- Pattern and motif
- Repeat pattern
- Feeling
- Materials
- Placement
- Proportions

Activities:

Activity 1

Ask students to chose a motif/pattern and then deconstruct it using the aspects in the list above. They should use their sketchbooks to analyse how it is constructed, grid it up and analyse why it works in its current proportions and position and how it makes sense for that particular object. They should then decide which aspect of the motif/pattern they want to incorporate into their own work and attempt to capture the essence of this using as few aspects from the original as possible.

Activity 2

Ask students to choose a famous artist and produce a piece of work that responds to their work. There should be no resemblance to the original work but there should be some resonance of style, content, technique or atmosphere.

Activity 3

Give students each an envelope with two visuals and three words and ask them to produce a piece of work. These act as triggers and this illustrates to students the importance of unique response.

D . YSJ Design Practice (focus on textiles and CAD)

Statement on the tradition of artistic creation

When using digital tooling it is common practice, within smaller design/edit companies, to take catwalk concepts/moods from a digital file source and 'move the designs on'. This is done by initiating a scanned design and then digitally designing over the top. It has been known that designers would walk into high street of any 'in vogue' boutique and by taking digital photographic shots of fabrics shown in store they could then download imagery and overlay this with a new colour way or a new texture to then 'move the designs on' and remodel the design of the fabric/garment/wall dressing etc. This is usually done by small companies who want rapid manufacturing turn around and to cut drafting costs.

Checklist of issues to discuss with students:

The manipulation of **appropriate** visual materials can suggest a direct use of visual materials in possible design patterning/forming initiation, and so inform the scale of appropriation in the following ways :
- **Note** appropriately or inform correctly on tangible schemes/process of design evolutions by adding:
  - a book reference
  - paragraph
  - magazine tear
  - reference to artists/designers exhibit catalogues

Inappropriate visual manipulations result from actually using a possible technique without changing the context

  - creating material and process technique which is lifted but not evolved
  - infringing on copyrights by over-working 'found' designs

Activity 1

Without mentioning copyright or plagiarism, give all the students a Monsoon/or any fabric swatch. Ask them to digitally explode (unpack) the fabric patterning – so to re-colour the design, or change the angle of repeat drop. Then ask the students to begin using just an outline of a motif, or begin a design by using the essence of the fabric mood they have created.

Activity 2

Once the students have 'played' with the design, set up three tables. One table is marked new design, one table is marked plagiarised and one marked infringed copyrights. Ask students to
- put their work on the table they think is correct for their work.
- ask the group to move the work around as they see fit.
- justify the decisions they have made.
- compare the views they have with the views that Monsoon's legal team might take.

E . YSJ Contemporary Fine Art Practice

Statement on the tradition of artistic production

The production of art takes place at an intersection between culture, history, the social, subjectivity and the history of art. One of the difficulties students encounter is how to take on the practice of another artist(s)/culture and transform it to make it their own to produce something new. It is acceptable to use other people's work as a starting point for your own creative vision, but you must negotiate and transform the vocabularies that it presents to differentiate it in some way. For example, you might find a particular artist, aesthetic or process compelling. For some reason this work engaged you. Your job, via careful research is to find out why, what was it that got you 'hooked' on that work. Once you have answered this question your next task is to consider the ways in which you could draw on that practice to develop and use this 'hook' as a way to progress your own art practice.

A useful starting point for understanding sourcing/referencing/ appropriation is to is to at the ways in which artists discuss the role of existing practice in their work. See references below. You can build on the work of others by changing the work/process in some way that has a unique approach:

- Selection
- Setting
- Transformation
- Context
- Process
- Materials

- Intention
- Repositioning

Activities

Activity 1

Show the students the artist Tracey Moffat's film entitled "LOVE" (2003). This is a video made in collaboration with Gary Hillberg, that consists of a series of vignettes from Hollywood films over the course of the last 60 years on the theme of love. This film is viewed as an original artwork. Ask the students to discuss the extent to which they agree or disagree with the view that this is Moffatt's own work. Ask them to justify and explain their views.

Activity 2

Show students Judy Chicago's 'The Dinner Party' (1974-1979) and Sam Taylor Wood's 'Wrecked (1996). Both of these pieces reference Leonardo Da Vinci's 'Last Supper'. Ask the students to explore the nature and complexity of this referencing. In what ways can these works of art be understood as original?

Activity 3

Ask students to select the work of an artist whose work they find compelling and complete the following:
- What creative practices (painting, film, drawing, sculpture, photography, digital/scripto visual media) inform/are referenced in the work?
- How does the artist transform these creative sources to make these themes their own?
- Does this transformation imply/comment on/critique a social meaning?
- Does this transformation imply/comment on/critique a historical meaning?
- Does this transformation imply/comment on/critique an ideological meaning?

Discussion

Those we worked with assume their students understand the creative terminology of their artistic field, but they are likewise concerned that students adopt their own visual grammar/vocabulary. Therefore, the need for discussion of terminology and technique, as interpreted by the students, seems a necessary step in developing students' critical and creative eye. However, art and design staff have multiple opportunities to work one to one with their students, to watch the evolution of their students' processes, to look at students' course work and compare it to their developing vocabulary. Since art and design staff acknowledge from the beginning that students will be copying to perfect technique or process, and that their goal is to move that process towards a personal expression, it seems that plagiarism has not become epidemic as it has in text areas.

The other issue that continually emerged as one that precludes plagiarism in art and design is student motivation: students want to be original. Their work is previewed by other students and reviewed by academic staff: students do not want to be recognised as good copyists, as having no original idea, or as being too (or merely) derivative. This powerful motivator—developing a personal voice for a respected audience of peers—is not as present when most students create text.

Yet working from sources, adding to a knowledge-base or process, creating one's own voice/vocabulary and presenting for a discourse community is exactly what texts should be understood to do. Unfortunately, students seem to think that "borrowing" words is legitimate since they are merely being asked in many text based assignments to repeat what others have already said. Indeed, since someone else has said it all, how could they have anything to add? Text based assignments, often done alone, with no feedback to guide and with the only audience being the tutor, can provide low motivation for students.

Conclusion
Two elements emerged in these interviews:

- Issues of copying and appropriation need to be discussed with students
- Projects need to be broken down so that formative feedback and guidance can be provided so as to steer students towards developing their own vocabulary.

While those interviewed were organised in discipline specific groups, the resulting checklist and activities can be adapted across art, design and media in higher education and even more widely in disciplines that use both text and visual means of communication.   For example, as is true of visual projects, writing tasks might be set in steps: submit a list of annotated sources; write a summary of the findings and the idea to be pursued; submit a shorter piece of writing to which the tutor responds and provides guidance. Another aspect of student production of visual work is that the set assignment encourages the individual and idiosyncratic. There is an expectation that what students will produce from the same stimulus material will differ widely. Part of this is due to a focus on primary research, which has to be evidenced and from original material rather than the work of others, and the encouragement of innovative solutions. Again text based subjects might be able to learn from these ways of working.

Further Questions/Research

The initial research could be expanded to more art and design disciplines in more institutions. It would also be beneficial to use the same series of question on a mixed group of art and design disciplines and also on a mixed group of art and design and text based academic staff.

We could further investigate the relationship between visual and textual production and plagiarism from the students' point of view: How do visual arts students define text based plagiarism? Do they see a relationship between the two (why or why not?) Do students believe there is a similar amount of plagiarising in the practice work as there seems to be in text based? What do they consider "plagiarising" in each arena?

How do teaching staff in text based disciplines account for art and design staff's view of plagiarism? Can they see parallel issues? Are there ways in which text based staff might draw on art and design experience to re-think how they are talking about plagiarism to students? To rethink the feedback and intervention they might provide? To restructure the projects they set?

Appendix 1

Prompt list for meetings with course teams

- What , if anything, do you already tell your students about plagiarism in non-text parts of the course?

- Are there commercial copyright laws in this area?

- Do they include manageable principles?

- To what extent should they apply within HE?

- What counts as common knowledge in your area?

- If they are plagiarism issues in your area do these apply to angle on content as well as content?

- In your area does the concept of plagiarisng technique exist?

- Does deliberate appropriation have a role in your discipline?

- What is the appropriation is really obvious so that anyone would know?

- How much manipulation of the appropriated material is required?

- How are appropriations and influences referenced in your area?

- Are there differences between the principles around copyright (outside world) and plagiarism (within HE)?

Appendix 2

LCC UAL BA Photography
Appropriation/ Postproduction (Visual Plagiarism) Reading References
Selected Readings for Research:

The selections included with this brief included descriptions of cultural events, social issues, art practices and philosophical themes related to the **areas of research relevant to this brief.** These readings can be **referred to in your proposal and/ or assessment**. The language or vocabulary of some of these selections may be helpful for you as you **prepare your presentation in tutorials or for assessment**. You may also find some of this information useful for your research in other elements of the BA programme.

Readings (in order):

De Certau, Michel. The Practice of Everyday Life. Berkley: University of California Press, 1984 (pp.xxi-xiv)

Baudelaire, Charles. "Take a Bath of Multitude."
http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clweb00-1/komins00.html

Bourriaud, Nicolas. Postproduction. New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2002 (pp.23-33).

Barthes, Roland. Image-Music-Text. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977 (pp. 155-164). See also Wallis,

Brian (ed.) Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation. New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984 (pp. 169-174).

Baudrillard, Jean. "The Hyper-Realism of Simulation." In Harrison and Wood (eds). Art in Theory;1900-2000. London: Blackwell, 1999 (pp. 1018-1020)

O,Neill, Phelim. "Warhol's Dandies." The Guardian Guide; March 10-16, 2007 (pp.8-10).

Burgin, Victor. "Situational Aesthetics." In Harrison and Wood (eds). Art in Theory; 1900-2000. London: Blackwell, 1999 (pp. 894-896).

Kruger, Barbara. "Taking Pictures." In Harrison and Wood (eds). Art in Theory; 1900-2000. London: Blackwell, 1999 (pp. 1041-2).

Crimp, Douglas. "Pictures." October, no. 8 (Spring 1979): 75-88. See also Wallis, Brian (ed.) Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation. New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984 (pp.175-187).

Miller, Paul (aka DJ Spooky). Rhythm Science. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2005 (pp. 31-54).

YSJ BA Contemporary Fine Art Practice- some suggested readings

Duve, T. De 1998 Kant After Duchamp Cambridge: MIT Press Ltd

Jameson, 'Postmodernism: Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,' in New Left Review 146, July-August 1984, pp.53-92. reprinted in his
book of the same title 1991. extracts are available online at
http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/jameson.htm

Krauss, R: 1986 The Originality Of The Avant-Garde And Other
Modernist Myths. Cambridge: MIT Press Ltd,

Stiles, K. & Selz, P. 1996 (eds), Theories & Documents of
Contemporary Art - A Sourcebook of Artists. USA: University of California Press

Appendix 3

The following staff took part in our discussions:

LCC:
Jess Baines
Jonathon Baker
Beverley Caruthers
Joy Gregory
Ellen Hanceri
Matthew Hawkins
Veronica Hendry
Julie James
Craig Smith
Lucy Souttar
Ian Willmott

YSJ:
Lisa Benton
Duncan Brooks
Jane Charlton
Vanessa Corby
Helen Turner