A HISTORICAL APPROACH TO ORIGINALITY AND REPLICATION IN VISUAL ART

by

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This paper takes the reader through several foundational movements in defining originality and replication in visual art, beginning with the gilded age in Europe, continuing through modernism and postmodernism, and ending with the digital age. The notions of originality and replication have always seemed to be at odds with one another, with movements favoring one over the other, but never coupling the two as essential to a meaningful artistic practice.

The advancements in technology and shifts in societal values demonstrate how the originality and replication shape one another and in turn shape the art movements of the time. Through investigating key artists within and between each movement, the texts of art critics and historians, and how these writings relate to legislation and the standards of what the art experience should be, a more comprehensive perspective develops about how humans related to the original and the copy. Today, in the digital age, artists must wrestle with how they create during a time period where each image has an almost endless string of images trailing behind them; this paper seeks to offer clarity and direction for how visual artistic practices can still be original in a time where the prestige of the original is fading.

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Introduction

Throughout history there seems to be a strange fascination that artists of all forms have about both replicating works of art that have come before and creating original pieces not founded in anything that came before. On one hand the creation of the copy requires a close investigation of the piece of work being copied and thorough knowledge of the techniques applied. It is a study of both the artist and artwork, taking into account the nuances of what makes it an original. The original on the other hand is traditionally known as a complete deviation from the methods used in replication. To create an original piece, it must not be rooted in any image that came before; it needs to be a departure from the familiar and an arrival at something entirely new. These two ways of creating that seem to be at odds with one another have fallen in and out of popularity with art movements, shifts in technology, and changes in societal attitudes, and today, art has reached new heights with new mediums emerging all the time, more images being shared all the time, and an increased number of people seeking to be artists. At a time when it's more difficult than ever to separate the original from its never-ending string of copies, the question arrises of how artists in the digital age should create. While critics, historians, philosophers, artists, and bystanders alike have their preferences when it comes to what makes a successful piece of art, there is no one answer about which artistic practice--one based in replication or one based in originality--offers more merits. Rather, the two are both essential to the growth of the individual artist, with one teaching how to think in new ways and inspire innovation while the other looks towards the knowledge of the past and conditions us to recognize and learn about the original. However, the terms "replication" and "originality" are extremely ambiguous in their definitions, and for the vast majority an intuitive definition of each might be adopted in order to make sense of them. A thorough investigation of these ideas is necessary in order to understand how both originality and replication relate to the current state of the art world.

The Original

What makes originality such a complex term is that artists, philosophers, and art critics alike all have a different definition for it, and the standardized definition in many dictionaries lacks some of the nuances needed when applying it to artwork. In addition, the definition has changed as the demand for original artworks gained and lost popularity. The terms "original" or "originality" are typically synonymous with words like new, individual, authentic, novel, etc; it's the point from which other works are based on, and according to some, the original itself is without an image or object you can relate it to. Art critic Rosalind Krauss mentions the culture of the original that has been constructed in art practices not rooted in replication, and the avant garde communities that emerged during Modernism were enthralled by the notion of original pieces of work. For these artists, originality is a cry to make new things, a rejection of tradition, and an origin point. In simpler terms, it is "ground zero" itself; it is "a birth" without anything coming before (Krauss 6). According to these artists, a work is not original if it relates to something previously or if its ideas are based formerly. In addition, originality seems to be linked with desirability and value--something that replication art is far removed from. Artists of the avant-garde see originality as their right as an artist, using themselves as the origin point from which the artwork flows (Krauss 9). The self is attached to the work, it's an example of how the artist itself is original, unique, and novel. British philosopher Frank Sibley holds a similar sentiment in how he defines originality, relating it to the word "novelty" as something that is "uncopied, unplagiarized, [the artist's] own invention, etc." (Van Camp 248). Like the artists of the avant garde, he agrees that the relationship an artist has to the piece is a part of what makes it original. However, this idea of originality is both limiting and somewhat archaic because it excludes how the term is changing as the mediums from which art can be created continue to expand in the digital space. It places importance upon the artist itself, coupling the artist with their artwork, but when the artist and artwork are placed side by side, all other pieces created by the artist are in some way

related to one another, paradoxically no longer making them original according to the traditional definition an original being novel and unlike anything else.

Some argue that originality as we know it has begun to or has disappeared altogether; namely Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes who have written many pieces about appropriation art and art ownership deny this definition of originality. Rather than being a birth from which other pieces stem, the definition of originality must be reinvented to account for the technological advancements that have emerged making it easier than ever to replicate pieces of work (Van Camp 248). Barthes is vehemently opposed to the idea of the artist itself being the origin point from which originality flows; instead, in his essay "The Death of the Author" (in this case the word author can be replaced with artist) he explains that "to give [an artwork] an [artist] is to impose a limit on that [artwork], to furnish it with a final signified, to close the [piece]." (147). In this sense, the attachment of an artist to a piece constricts the possible meanings that can be derived; it isn't the artist that matters, it is the artwork. The artist is simply the medium from which the artwork can come into creation. He argues that the space of art/texts is an elaborate collection of pieces, "none of them original… drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 146). According to Barthes, the artist's work is never original, it is an imitation of something that came before; these pieces can be blended in new ways, but never can they themselves be original works. Other appropriation artists like Sherrie Levine echo this sentiment, arguing that originality has died out. They argue that it is impossible to find an image and not be able to link it back to a previous one, and that there is no hope for making original pieces anymore. Especially in today's technological age, this disappearance of originality seems more and more popular as we are bombarded with millions of images on a daily basis. Pictures have become more abundant than ever, and the reality is that it's very difficult to find artworks that don't relate to something that came before.

This essay seeks to examine what originality is in an age where there are recognizable images everywhere. At the same time there are more people calling

themselves artists than there have ever been, and it has become far easier to make artwork because buying supplies is no longer necessary as long as you have some sort of technological agent at your disposal. New pieces are being created all the time on photoshop, procreate, illustrator, etc., but "new" does not necessarily mean that these works are "original" in their nature. Therefore, what does it mean to make an original art piece in a world where artists take inspiration from the countless images at their exposure? Is it possible to create an original piece in the midst of digitization?

The Copy

On the other end of the spectrum we have the concepts of "copy," "replication," and "repetition." While originality and replication are both part of aesthetic creation, the latter is often stripped of its value and seen as the inferior of the two artistic practices. It is to look closely at the artworks, techniques, and practices that came before and to create it again either in exact likeness or in a reinvented way. These pieces are often discredited in their aesthetic value because they lack the same essence of novelty or singularity attributed to original pieces. The existence of copyright law is further proof of the importance placed on originality and the disregard of repetition in the creation of new works. A further in depth look at how copyright law functions in the art world will be examined later on in this paper to explain the dynamic between originality and repetition in legislation. However, while traditionally copying is seen as the lesser mode of communication, as art movements shifted from modernism to postmodernism, more and more artists, writers, and critics are seeing the value that can come from this repetitive practice. They have also identified the paradoxes that come with calling some pieces original and denying others that same originality. Even before the emergence of modernist practices that condemned repetition, during the 1700s in Europe, apprenticeship was an essential part of gaining the tools and techniques necessary for almost every occupation, artists especially (Wallis 832). To copy was to accumulate skill sets, to learn to see, and to understand how other artists thought about their

process. Even before apprenticeships, during classical antiquity, Roman Art was known for its replications of the Greek pieces that came before, and a similar dynamic emerged that valorized Greek art and condemned Roman art (Gazda 6). Replication has always been a foundation from which artists can build upon, and today's world is no exception.

While repetition fell out of popularity during modernism, postmodernism reinvigorated copying in artistic practice. Artists like Sherrie Levine, Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, etc. based their art on appropriation as the foundation of their careers, and there have been many texts arguing for the originality of their repetitive works (Van Camp 250). The idea that imitation itself is unique to each artist is an idea art historian Ernst Grombrich expands upon in many of his works. He argues that "there is no innocent eye. The eye comes always ancient to its work, obsessed by its own past and by old and new insinuations of the ear, nose, tongue, fingers, heart, and brain… Not only how but what it sees is regulated by need and prejudice" (Goodman 20). This observation illustrates how the way an artist sees is unique to each artist's ability to use their senses, and that their experiences over time shape the way their eye perceives what they are viewing. Therefore, it can be argued that each replication of an artwork contains elements of originality because they are seeing something in a biased way that is distinct to themself. The way that the piece is interpreted relies on the personal experience and senses of the artist, and this repetition allows the artist to further refine their way of seeing. As Grombrich says, "the observer is likely to interfere with what he observes" making repetition is such an essential part of learning to make artwork (Grombrich 139). Within schooling, the use of references and explicit copying have always been a method to learning. It is through using the work of others and learning how they develop and use techniques that an "original" style can develop. Historically, the copy has always been a foundation to art. Pablo Picasso borrowed from Chardin, Coubet, Corot, Ingres, and El Greco; Pollock borrowed from Picasso; Newman borrowed from Mondrian; Rothko borrowed from Matisse (Phelan 5). However, for these artists to attain their own personal style, they had to stop mimicking Picassos and

start making their own works. Replication is a jumping off point from which an artist's career begins. Both originality and repetition are essential sides of the same coin, yet one has been consistently undervalued and the other praised.

I argue that in repetition it's possible to find originality, and in artistic practices where originality is paramount it's almost always possible to find something that the original links back to. These two incredibly complex ideas cannot exist without one another, and the rise and fall of popularity in each illustrates how repetition and originality are parts of how human beings see and understand the world. Artists are the ones who create these physical and digital representations, art critics and historians decipher the significance behind these pieces and declare them as either originals or copies, but for the average viewer without any context, using their ability to perceive and view alone, these pieces can exist as both originals and replications at the same time. Pablo Picasso, his contemporaries, and the generations that came before and after use existing artwork and popular culture to create their pieces (Van Camp 247). To assign some pieces as original and others as forgeries continues the power dynamic that places originality above repetition in an artistic practice, and as it becomes easier to replicate pieces in the digital space this devalues the work of many contemporary artists. It's important to reinvent the way we see originality and replication to support a world in which images are all around us all the time. "The most neutral eye and the most biased are merely sophisticated in different ways"; it's not a matter of which interprets better, it's a matter of how they each interpret what they see (Goodman 22). This is unique to everyone.

Apprenticeships and Guilds in Gilded Age Europe

In order to have a greater understanding of the context that has led us to the current art world and to better comprehend the attitudes towards the terms of originality and replication, it's important to go back in time a few hundred years. Specifically, during the Gilded Age in Europe and the crossover in colonial America. At this moment in time, from around 1660 to 1837, most aspiring artists were apprenticed in a trade where they were trained until they went on to join a studio where they continued their own artistic practice (Ayres ix). At the completion of their apprenticeship they would have had to make a "masterpiece" in order to end their training and begin their own career in their craft. The gilded age adopted many of the characteristics and regulations that medieval guilds used to create their own system of apprenticeships; while popular during the 17th and 18th century, guild and apprenticeships eventually went out of style as a result of industrialization, consumerism, and the emerging preference for artists to make ready-made pieces could be purchased and enjoyed by the masses right away (Ayres 11).

While apprenticeships existed in most fields including, shoemaking, blacksmithing, carpentry, plumbing etc., this paper will focus on the more traditional visual art forms of painting and drawing. During this time frame, the word craft "signified a trade or calling… Often it is true, he had gone through an apprenticeship to the manual side of his craft, and this fact was of greatest importance as it brought manual labour under the influence of the professional spirit" (Ayres 28). These craftsmen who joined guilds were typically privileged men who required the assistance of their parent or guardian to finance the master taking them on as an apprentice, and if they were compensated for their work at all they would be paid below-market wages (Wallis 836). Each master would have around two to three apprentices starting at roughly the age of fourteen, and when it came to the subject matter of what these apprentices produced, they were often instructed to complete menial tasks and observe

the workshop before being allowed to use the tools to copy the masters, make portraits of the elite, and adopt the style of those who came before. The principle behind apprenticeships was the idea that "seeing how to make or do something was far more effective than a multitude of words" (Ayres 44). Through this replication and a close study of the environment they worked, apprentices would later be able to include their own innovation in their works, until finally they were able to submit a masterpiece to the guild in order to showcase their level of skill and either be granted or denied the mark of being able to continue their own practice outside of the guild (Ayres 66).

In time, these guilds would disappear as the connection between the craft and the guild was diluted. It became more common for the eldest son to study under their father and join the family trade instead, and many would circumvent the seven year of apprenticeship by paying a large fee. The power dynamic between the guild masters and apprentices was also evident as the former had more leisure time and money (during the summer months apprentices would work over 100 hours given the excess daylight), creating a dynamic most recognizable as a form of early capitalism (Ayres 37). The guilds had transformed by the late eighteenth century, using cheap labor in order to propel the industrialization of Britain; no longer were they about the mastery of a trade. However, the fundamental idea behind these guilds was to study and train until the apprentice was deemed ready to create their own works. Apprenticeships required tacit knowledge--or knowledge implied without being stated--such as imitation, observation, modeling, and experience (Wallis 847). This allowed for information that was difficult to articulate to be passed on without being stated explicitly. They would repeat and copy until they were granted the ability to make "original" pieces. Even during the 1600s the power dynamic between replication and originality existed. Repetition was necessary in acquiring skill, but it was a means to an end, rather than its own practice. Nonetheless, without this careful observation of others, apprentices would have never had learned what was needed to produce their own "masterpieces." It was only through the adoption of techniques and styles that an original piece came into creation.

Modernism, the Printing Press, and Industrialization in the U.S.

With the emergence of industrialization that ended the guilds of Europe, artists in the United States were experiencing a similar predicament in grappling with emerging consumerism mass-markets in the 19th and 20th century (Burns 2). It was at this point in time that the printing press had reached and been popularized in the states bringing rise to mass produced books, magazines, newspapers, and illustrated journals; by 1905, twenty monthly magazines with around 100,000 copies were in circulation reaching more than 5.5 Americans (Burns 6). For the first time artists could reach a larger audience than ever before, and this transformation changed what artists were in the public eye. They were generators of media, had new ways to market their work, and could replicate their art in a way that was never before experienced. The printed image proliferated throughout American society, and led to the popularization of a new profession: the art critic. There were art critics of all types: the self proclaimed, art critics who were artists themselves, and those from educational backgrounds all trying to influence what was considered high and good art. These names included Clarence Cook, Henry James, William Dean Howells, John La Farge, Will H. Low, William Howe Downs, and Charles Henry Caffin, to name a few (Burns 7). Because the art critic was a relatively new thing, they had to create their credentials, ideologies, and educate the common people on what made certain pieces masterpieces and others not. One of these qualifications being subjective expression or--in other words--originality.

However, the depth of influence that these art critics and artists had upon society was far greater than just producing and critiquing successful art. Like the teachers, social workers, entertainers, psychologists, writers, and advertisers of the time, they were creators of culture; they had a role in reducing class conflict between the industrial working class and the capitalist class (Gazda 45). It was their duty to make a harmonious cultural system that hid capitalism's destructive tendencies that always fell disproportionately on those least equipped to deal with a monopolistic society. In this sense it was the duty of artists to mask the growing social divide; as author W. Ray

Crozier says, "rather than ask what artists are 'really like 'we should ask what are the social conventions for what it is to be an artist?" (Burns 17). Artists had to think more than ever before about how their subject matter would impact and relate to an industrialized society, and at the same time there was more liberty in how quickly their art and messages could spread. Instead of forming guilds like their predecessors in Europe, these artists formed societies based on their expertise and interests including the Art Student League in New York, The American Watercolor Society, The New York Etching Club, The Society of American Painters in Pastel, etc (Burns 28). These rival groups had their own agendas to push, and this is where the separation between art critics and artists forms in artistic culture and in terms of what produces valuable art. Despite the "cult of originality" that had emerged with modernism, industrialization had also created a counterpoint to the traditional expectation that art had to be original, as artists were expected to inspire conformity at the same time (Krauss 5). The expectations of being a good artist and creating good art were inherently opposite one another. On one hand to be a good artist you were expected to assist in creating a culture that promoted assimilation, but to create good art you were expected to make art pieces that were the exact opposite: individualistic, original, groundbreaking, and never before seen. Because of these counter expectations, it's argued that "industrialization has separated us from the handmade object and its maker" (Ayres 29). They needed to be two separate things in order for each to be successful in their purpose.

The ideas behind what learning techniques produced the best artists were also changing. As previously mentioned, many American artists would mimic their European counterpoints, traveling to Europe--especially Paris--to study in school under European instructors before returning to the states to produce their own works (Hobbs 41). However, as art critic Ellis T. Clarke put it during the Universal Exposition of 1900, "American artists go to Europe… and are not strong enough to resist the dominating influence of their masters in after-work" creating pieces that were un-American, reflecting the ideals and temperament of Europe more than their own country

(Burns 41). This caused the adoption of thought that real art could not be taught at all; training was failing in teaching American artists how to produce the American art that was expected of them. It is for this reason that during the 1900s very few American painters were said to produce truly original and authentic pieces of artwork. They were simply making imitations that inspired worse imitations. Historian Henry Adams wrote that these art students learned "just enough of professional methods to disgust one with one's own limitations. The professional artist is a fraud of the worst kind in that respect," and philosopher Henry Rutgers Marshall echoed a similar sentiment advising that a true artist is "a listener for inspiration to which he should yield himself unreservedly, almost passively" that it was impossible for a stroke of genius to come via "deliberate effort or by any sort of intellectual process" (Burns 42). This way of thinking was completely opposite to that of the gilded age that argued original works only came from a careful study of the knowledge and masters that came before. Instead, the true artist was a liberated individual, a vessel that created themself through the art flowing through. They transcended learning, and if they were truly destined to create a masterful work it would come to them naturally and be a creation of their own ability.

The Case of George Inness

While the vast majority of artists in the states during the 19th and early 20th century were said to produce only works that replicated the sentiments and ideals of those in Europe, there were two particular artists said to create original pieces: Winslow Homer and George Inness. These two were said to have been authentic individualists that acquired their knowledge through nature, and for this reason their work was venerated and praised. But what was it that made their artwork so different from their contemporaries of the time like Will Low and Thomas Wilmer Dewing that were condemned to only create imitations, and why was imitation once again seen as something so utterly inappropriate in the creation of successful art? Perhaps the best

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way to understand one of these artists, George Inness, and what separated him as an authentic, original artist is through the writings of his son, George Inness Jr. who writes about his father's career from his foundational years into his later ones where he's recognized for his art. His story is not especially uncommon for artists; he failed in school and was kicked out, "like many a genius before him, the tortured and provincial methods of schoolmasters cramped his imagination and forced him into more original developments" (Inness 8). He was an idealist through and through, and upon seeing a man painting in a field during his youth George Inness decided then and there that he wanted to do the same thing: paint the world around him--clouds, trees, sunsets, storms, etc.--and capture their essence.

Inness started his artist education in New York at the studio of Régis Gignoux who was a local French artist, and did not have the same experience of studying in Paris as nearly all of his contemporaries did (Inness 13). However, while he learned the nuances of composition and color, the fact that he was painting as others were painting and "not as he felt, as he wished to paint" left each piece without the spirit of what he saw in them; they were "inspired with none of the movement and vitality that he felt instinctively when he looked abroad a forest and farm land, mountain, river, and sky." (Inness 14). In this sense, Inness is aligned with the idea that art is an intuitive experience, and while one can study what others have done, the highest form of art comes from within. George Inness later went on to work at his own studio where he struggled to stay afloat, relying on his brothers to purchase his drawings and paintings (Inness 18). He was criticized for not adhering to the guidelines already in place for how to successfully create landscape paintings, and his contempt for the commercial part of life made it difficult for him to gain a reputation among a rapidly changing, industrial United States. It wasn't until Ogen Haggerty, a recognized auctioneer of NY, spotted him painting in a town square one day (which was unheard of during the 19th century) that Inness 'career really took off; Haggerty bought his painting and sent him abroad to study the masters in Italy and France (Inness 19). There, he absorbed the

techniques and styles of those that came before, and returned to live in Medfield, Massachusetts where he began gaining recognition for his work (Inness 45). While Inness studied the work of his contemporaries and predecessors, believing Rousseau, Daubigny, and Corot as some of the best landscape painters, his education served to "awaken his own dormant emotions, which brought forth an expression entirely individualized" (Inness 28, 30). Through studying others, Inness was able to learn color theory, how each brush worked, and what made an enthralling landscape piece, but his works were some of the only ones that were considered original during modernism. His artwork was extremely purposeful, and as his son recounted, in the successful portion of his career, George Innes Sr. rarely painted directly from nature and would instead study the landscape he wanted to paint for days before finally being struck by a wave of inspiration and creating the composition from memory (Inness 45). His career took an unconventional route both in his education and in how his own ideals played a part in the art he wanted to create. As he himself stated, "the true use of art is, first, to cultivate the artist's own spiritual nature, and second, to enter as a factor in general civilization. And the increase of these effects depends on the purity of the artist's motive in the pursuit of art… of course no man's motive can be absolutely pure and single. His environment affects him. But the true artistic impulse is divine." (Inness 17). Art was akin to God in the mind of George Inness, and perhaps it was this inclination towards divine art that helped him establish his own style and create what the avant garde artists and art critics of modernism deemed original.

The Case of Thomas Wilmer Dewing

When comparing the experience and reputation of George Inness to someone like Thomas Wilmer Dewing who created pieces during the 1800s as well, there's an obvious separation in how their notoriety built. Dewing was condemned for his work as it did not fit in with the constructs and definitions that modernism had applied to

"successful" pieces of work. While he was initially praised for his color harmonies and dream-like paintings, his style quickly fell out of favor because it did not align with the values of modern art. Interestingly enough, Dewing's mindset towards following the guidelines laid out by art critics and other artists is very similar to that of George Inness; he was not interested in the "printed word about art" and "far fetched aesthetic theories," and continued with his artistic practice (Hobbs 5). However, unlike Inness, Dewing consistently painted female figures in his pieces located in sparsely decorated rooms and drew inspiration from many of the masters that came before, including eighteenth and nineteenth century French art, Dutch artists, Asian art, and his colonial American contemporaries (Hobbs 6). His work was something that was separate from himself, and it has been said many times by his contemporaries that Dewing's outward appearance did not match the artwork that he created. His choice to paint feminine figures in graceful ways stemmed from his artistic calling to paint beautifully, and his disregard for the critiques that came his way propelled him to continue this practice. In essence, "while the modernists, therefore, strove for an idiosyncratic expression that was self-revealing, Dewing separated his art from his personality allowing it instead to become an objectification of his own epicureanism and love of beauty" (Hobbs 6). In addition, Dewing studied in Paris at the Académie Julian, and he chose to keep in mind all of the paintings and techniques that he encountered when he joined the Society of American Artists in 1878 (Hobbs 18). Initially, his work was praised by critics and painters alike, that his "drawing [was] perfect," and a "beautiful allegorical conception" (Hobbs 20, 21). Then suddenly these compliments were turned on their head as critics no longer understood his art saying, "No. No. Mr. Dewing, this will not do…" "What is it? You ask. I don't know. Somebody asked Mr. Dewing himself, and he did not know" (Hobbs 23, 24). The attitudes that critics and artists had constructed during modernism initially favored Dewing before casting his work aside as meaningless, repetitive, and unoriginal. However, today he is revered once more and enjoyed for the delicate beauty of his drawings and paintings. The value attached to his work is dependent on the

attitudes of the viewers as is true for all artists, and the fact that it fluctuates with the positive attitudes towards originality further reinforces that artwork's value is connected to our own perceptions. While both Dewing and Inness painted and drew to the beat of their own drums, the influence of the European masters coupled Dewing's traditional education and the modernist attitudes of the time condemned the artist towards the end of his career. The dynamic between originality and repetition in Dewing's case points towards the paradox that exists when critics expect artists to get a traditional education studying in Paris and at the same time expect these artists to create "American" art. The advanced skills needed to create certain artworks and the expectation for artists to have their work come purely from themself (the vessel) favors the practices of those like Inness and condemns those like Dewing. For this reason, a generation of modernist artists' works were swept under the blanket of unoriginality if they didn't fit the mold of what critics considered high art--constructs that were fundamentally based on opinion.

Elaine Sturtevant

Nonetheless, just as the viewpoint on what a successful artist's career looked like changed between the gilded age and modernism, another shift began to emerge in the 1960s United States. One especially important artist who rejected the notions of originality and helped with the movement towards the realm of postmodernism long before appropriation art reached its peak was Elaine Sturtevant (1924-2014). Starting in the 1964, her artistic career stemmed from adopting the styles of her contemporaries and recreating their works with no obvious differences. Sturtevant's work during her early career was especially criticized as it favored recreating something old as opposed to making something new; in this sense, it wasn't her artwork itself that was innovative, rather it was the techniques she adopted and the creation of an artistic practice that inspected authorship and the nature of the image itself. The spotlight first really landed on Sturtevant in 1965 during her first solo exhibition in New York in which she displayed her versions of art from Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, and Frank Stella (Bagley 5). Sturtevant described these pieces as "repetitions" as opposed to mere copies because they were created completely from memory and she spent a large portion of time studying the techniques of these modern artists. She broke down each piece structurally, identifying what made the images what they were. Unfortunately, there were not many who saw this exploration in a positive light, as critics waved off her exhibition as a collection of forgeries. It wasn't until the 1980s that her art was reexamined with the emergence of more and more appropriation artists who rejected the pedestal originality had been placed upon (Pobric 3). Her art was ahead of its time, and luckily Sturtevant had no expectations for how her work would be received, later writing "to be a great artist is the least interesting thing I can think of" (Pobric 1).

What makes Sturtevant's early artwork so fascinating was not that it demonstrated how certain pieces of work could be replicated in near-exact likeness, rather it was a structural analysis of the methods others used to create their process. It

got other artists to question what was it about their own work that made it unique to them (or not), and this caused a wide variety of reactions. Warhol who didn't seem to care one way or another about the artwork she reproduced willingly gave Sturtevant supplies for her to recreate his Marilyn Monroe series (Bagley 6). On the other hand when she reproduced "The Store" by Claes Oldenburg in 1967--a collection of sculptures based on household items--and placed it a few blocks away from the original exhibition, his reaction was not a positive one. Oldenburg's reaction is a curious one because he had been in favor of her replications when they had nothing to do with his own work. In addition, his art dealer, Leo Castelli, ended up buying some of Sturtevant's pieces just so that he could destroy them (Bagley 6). As Peter Eleey, MOMA curator, put it, "in order to achieve what she was interested in, [Sturtevant] would essentially be giving up everything you were told as an artist that you needed to succeed—a recognizable style, et cetera… She's somebody who basically adopts style as a medium, and in order to do that she assumed the guise of the artists around her. This is an incredibly powerful and threatening thing to take on" (Phelan 6). Artists like Oldenburg can be said to have been threatened by her practice, while those like Warhol just didn't care, and for the vast majority of critics her works were seen as meaningless copies. The lack of support from the art world and the incessant misinterpretations caused Sturtevant to go hiatus for a little over a decade from 1974-1986; Sutrtevant herself stated, "no matter how I articulated what I was doing, in people's minds it was a copy—period… and you know, if someone continues to call something something, it eventually becomes that something" (Bagley 9). Yet again copy has a negative connotation surrounding it, lacking vision and value, and reducing her work to a single word.

Sturtevant ended her hiatus with a show at White Columns in New York where she reproduced works from Marcel Duchamp, Roy Lichtenstein, and Joseph Beuys (Bagley 9). It was also at this moment of time that appropriation art had become more popular with the rise of postmodernism and the emergence of other appropriation artists

like Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince (Bagley 10). Nonetheless, Sturtevant's replications would not sell, and for about 12 shows no one bought a single piece; it took years before her work finally began receiving the acknowledgement and attention it deserved (Bagley 11). Museums and collectors finally began interpreting her pieces as she intended, hosting her exhibitions, and praising her replications. It is also during her later years that Sturtevant began creating video-art that included repetitions of ad-campaigns and works heavily based in found footage. Sturtevant's career and the view towards it changed dramatically with the emergence of new technologies; with the rise of the internet--a space that has repetition so heavily ingrained into it--the popularity of her work also rose. It was as though the veil had been pulled from her spectators eyes, and the clutches that originality had on the art world loosened. The late 20th century looked very different from the start of it, and the attitudes towards art reflected this change. Images flooded the everyday in the form of advertisements, artwork, internet posts, etc. and conversation about the value of repetition and replication was emerging. Sturtevant's original artistic practice based on making unoriginal works was ahead of its time, identifying philosophical notions of repetition and appropriation in a way never before seen. However, it's unfortunate that at the moment when her work was most requested and revered, her body could no longer keep up with the demand of the public. Sturtevant Passed on May 7, 2014, however, her last exhibition occurred on February 22, 2015 entitled, "Sturtevant: Double Trouble" at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (Pobric 5). With a newfound reputation praising her exploration of style, authorship, and the limits of originality this exhibition was a success as it featured her Warhols, Jasper Johns, and Joseph Beuys. No longer were they reduced to mere copies, and instead seen for how the channeled the original image and artist.

Postmodernism

While Sturtevant was one of the first to explore appropriation art before the term had been coined, there have been many who came afterwards, critiquing the rigid viewpoint that modernism had laid out beforehand. These were the artists of postmodernism and the appropriation artists, producing the vast majority of their works from around 1970 to 1990. This movement was a direct reaction against the prescriptive ideals of modernism, and it wrestled with the ever-growing flood of images in the everyday. It is during this period that originality finds itself rejected in a somewhat public eye. These appropriation and neo-conceptual artists aestheticized the advertising and media of the mid 20th century, breaking the conventions of art subject matter (Greenberg 5). Pop artists celebrated consumerism in their work and created iconographic images influenced and inspired by advertising (Mamiya 8). They modeled everyday household items, photographed merchandise, painted mass-produced products, and created a movement that transformed commodities into pieces of artwork; from cleaning products and pet accessories to vacuum cleaners and tupperware they depicted the widely available and extensively seen. It knocked original content from its pedestal, and raised questions about what art should represent and depict. When the everyday item is created and repeated in art, the idea of the "masterpiece is grouped with a never ending stream of serial images. These images were replicated, transformed, and borrowed, mirroring the consumer culture of the United States; furthermore, the erasure of identity in many postmodernist works rejects the idea of creative authorship. The artist as a vessel from which you could understand their "genius" was no more, and the deletion of signatures on trademarked products mimics a society that forgets the name of an individual while easily identifying brands and logos. However, appropriation within art was not a new idea as is demonstrated by Elaine Sturtevant, and this idea spans even further back.

The appropriation of found objects dates back to the famous *Fountain* (1917) by Marcel Duchamp in which a manufactured urinal is displayed on a wall, but what makes Duchamp's piece differ from the work of appropriation artists is he transformed and gave the urinal new life (ie: a fountain) (Greenburg 6). The appropriation artists pictured objects for what they were: commodities, merchandise, and household items. The line between art and the everyday image is blurred, destroyed even. The cycling process of replication became heavily ingrained, as is demonstrated by *Simulations* by Hans Haake in which a work by Haim Steinbach is replicated, and Steinbach's work was itself a replication as well (Greenburg 6). Sherrie Levine repainted the masters and remade public domain pieces by Henri Matisse, Piet Mondrian, and Ilya Chasnik; her technique was similar to that of Sturtevant, replicating the technical and mechanical processes of each and duplicating "their perceived gestural spontaneity" (Greenberg 15). In the same way the art subject matter was leveled to include original pieces on the same plane as appropriated ones, this form of replication erodes away the uniqueness attributed to the masters 'processes. Both Levine and Sturtevant copied many male artists, shattering the roles designated to the masculine and feminine aesthetic as well (Van Camp 247). Postmodernism takes qualities that make the masterpiece so revered--namely originality and creativity--and disappear them in the face of derivative work.

Nonetheless, this begs the question of whether appropriated art is devoid of creativity and originality or not. Is the creation of a movement that incites audiences to perceive art in a new way not grounded in originality in some way? Are these pieces that replicate mass-produced products, photograph photographs, and repaint the masters not new ways of seeing the old? They reimagine what subject matter art can be about, expand the boundaries of artistic practices, and generally invite artists to continue exploring what art is. In addition, the merit of these works is demonstrated by the fact that postmodernist pieces were displayed in galleries, critically recognized by art historians, and bought by collectors (Greenberg 7). However, in regards to the attitude of the law towards postmodernism and appropriation art, unfavorable is putting it

lightly. While the Copyright Act has been around since 1790, the most recent revision to the act occurred in 1976, making it fall within the bounds of postmodernism (U.S. Copyright Office). It was during this time that some key rulings occurred, changing the law and condemning artistic practices rooted in replication.

Copyright Law and Postmodernism

The Copyright Act of 1976 is the same one in operation today during the digital age, and to summarize it in extremely simple terms, its purpose is to protect original works, and for the sake of this paper I will be focusing on the legislation regarding "pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works" or "two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of fine, graphic, and applied art, photographs, prints and art reproductions" (U.S. Copyright Office). Copyright law works to separate original works from derivative ones, reinforcing the power dynamic between originality and replication, rewarding some artists while condemning others. It's important to note that within copyright law is an extensive list of definitions, confining art and terms revolving around art into a rigid structure of what is and isn't acceptable. In order to protect authorship, terms are defined to enforce the regulations and create order, but art is usually not one sided, taking shape through varying methods, movements, and ideals. According to the law, a piece of art can only be copyrighted if it is original, excluding readymade art and appropriation art, and if it is not a basic component of cultural production, limiting the protection of minimalist and conceptual art (Barron 369).

A "work of visual art" is defined as "a painting, drawing, print, [photograph], or sculpture, existing in a single copy, in a limited edition of 200 copies or fewer that are signed and consecutively numbered by the author" and it does not include "any poster, map, globe, chart, technical drawing, diagram, model, applied art, motion picture… merchandising item or advertising, promotional, descriptive, covering, or packaging material or container" (U.S. Copyright Office). Already, the confines or

copyright law does not pertain to the mass-produced, the everyday, and the replicated, excluding them from the definition of "art." Copyright Law combines art--an ever changing, non-static genre that encompasses image, sculpture, architecture, writing, and music--and couples it with legislation--a rigid system that defines these practices within the bounds of their technical processes. However, that is not to say that Copyright does not have its merits because it was originally created as a guideline intended to protect artists. Section 106A "Rights of certain authors to attribution and integrity" states:

> "the author of a work of visual art shall have the right to claim authorship of that work…, prevent the use of his or her name as the author of any work of visual art which he or she did not create…, shall have the right to prevent the use of his or her name as the author of the work of visual art in the event of a distortion, mutilation, or other modification of the work which would be prejudicial to his or her honor or reputation… and shall have the right to prevent any intentional distortion, mutilation, or other modification of that work which would be prejudicial to his or her honor or reputation, and any intentional distortion, mutilation, or modification of that work is a violation of that right, and to prevent any destruction of a work of recognized stature, and any intentional or grossly negligent destruction of that work is a violation of that right" (U.S. Copyright Office).

The exception to this clause is section 107, the fair use clause:

> "The fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords or by any other means specified by that section, for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright. In determining whether the use made of a work in any particular case is a fair use the factors to be considered shall include— (1) the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a

commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes; (2) the nature of the copyrighted work; (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. Copyright protection subsists, in accordance with this title, in original works of authorship fixed in any tangible medium of expression, now known or later developed, from which they can be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated, either directly or with the aid of a machine or device. In no case does copyright protection for an original work of authorship extend to any idea, procedure, process, system, method of operation, concept, principle, or discovery, regardless of the form in which it is described, explained, illustrated, or embodied in such work."

To summarize, the artwork and artist are protected from others claiming ownership of work that does not belong to them and from the "distortion, mutilation, or modification" of a piece, as long as it falls into copyright's guidelines for what qualifies as an original visual piece of art. It gives the copyright owner "the exclusive right to reproduce the copyrighted work and to prepare derivative works based upon the copyrighted work," no one else (U.S Copyright Office). In addition, Section 102 states, "in order to be acceptable as a pictorial, graphic, or sculptural work, the work must embody some creative authorship in its delineation or form", meaning creativity is foundational to copyright's definition of true art (U.S. Copyright Office). When it comes to postmodernism and its relationship to copyright law, a complex web seems to unfurl, collecting and protecting certain artists while disregarding others altogether. As Anne Barron puts it, "copyright's critics have been anxious to identify that realm of creative endeavor which is negated or denied by Romantic ideology, and to show how copyright law reinforces the exclusive and exclusionary status of the individual genius" (368). Appropriation art qualifies as the creative realm challenging Copyright Law and

the ideals that Modernism had built; these artists stopped using signatures, copied others, and revolted against the traditional viewpoint of high art. The movement itself deconstructs "the primacy of originality as a definitional tool in defining works of art, the integrity of the masterpiece, and the line between mischievous copying and artistic breakthrough (Greenberg 14). However, the creativity and originality needed to challenge what came before does not afford protection over these pieces. Copyright law--founded in the viewpoint that art must be original--and postmodernism do not mix well. Due to various rulings that occurred during the decades in and around postmodernism, there are cases that serve as precedents eliminating protection over replicated work, disregarding them as pieces that don't qualify as art.

One such case study is Rogers v. Koons (1992) in which photographer Art Rogers sued artist Jeff Koons for infringing upon the copyright of one of his photographs entitled "Puppies" (Greenberg 24). This photograph is of a couple smiling as they hold eight puppies between the two of them; Koons went on to create a sculpture of this piece called "String of Puppies", transforming the expressions, medium, scale, and color scheme associated with Rogers 'photo. This case was settled in court and has served as a precedent for many other court cases when it comes to Copyright Law and Fair Use. Koons used the "fair use" defense, but court ruling decided that all four factors of fair use (the purpose and character of the use, the nature of the copyrighted work, the amount or substantiality of the portion used, and the effect of the use on the potential market for or value of the work) were in favor of Rogers. Essentially, the court ruled that Koons had appropriated the "original expression" of Rogers 'photograph and that the aesthetic appeal of the two pieces were identical (Greenberg 25). The highly subjective nature of this case is what makes it so dangerous within the art world. The court stated "it is not therefore the idea of a couple with eight small puppies seated on a bench that is protected, but rather Rogers's expression of this idea--as caught in the placement, in the particular light, and in the expressions of the subjects--that gives the photograph its charming and unique character, that is to say,

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makes it original and copyrightable" (Greenberg 27). This case has been brought up time and time again making the argument that Koons transformation of "Puppies" disappears all of the aspects that make Rogers 'photo original. Instead, you are left with an eerie sculpture void of any of the charm and heartfelt expression of Rogers 'photo. Even though the two are so different, and that many critics have said Koons 'sculpture qualifies as valid satire or parody, the court ruled "Koons 'claim that his infringement of Rogers 'work is fair use solely because he is acting within an artistic tradition of commenting upon the commonplace… cannot be accepted" (Greenberg 29). This quotation is a direct example of how the courts, which are not well versed in aesthetics and art, call the shots, discrediting postmodernist artists and anyone who has a practice rooted in replication. It is not the role of the court to act as an art critic, pronouncing what qualifies as original expression and what falls short, especially when these criticisms are largely subjective and constructed with the movements of the time. Therefore, in order to create a law that protects and rewards all artists for their creative endeavors and inspires newer artistic modes, the conventions of originality and creativity must be redefined and reimagined in a world saturated with images. While postmodernism and the appropriation artists were the first wave that challenged the Copyright Act's standards for originality, repetitive art practices and the abundance of copies is ever growing with the internet offering the world on a screen.

When trying to decipher how a piece would fit into the bounds of copyright law, the argument can be made that appropriated and replicated work still has the aforementioned creativity and originality necessary to protect their pieces. They "appeal to a public" due to the positive response of art critics, galleries, and historians, yet do not enjoy the protection of copyright status (U.S. Copyright Office). Appropriated and replicated work that challenges the status quo, illustrates the fact that artists such as Elaine Sturtevant and Sherrie Levine don't care about making "original" pieces at all. If the calling to be an artist, to be a vessel, does not necessitate the calling to create traditionally defined original art, why exclude an entire generation of artists dedicated

to reimagining original pieces. While Levine herself claims that her works are not original, they still have qualities in and of themselves that are an origin point. Even her examples of masterpieces that she copied played with scale or medium (using oil instead of watercolor), transforming the image that preceded it, and it cannot be denied that these pieces flowed from herself, no one else. These works would qualify for copyright's definition of "works of visual art" due to their novelty of being limited edition and the addition of her signature. Even her photographic replications in which she would photograph photos of photos or paintings are inherently her creation especially since she never claims ownership over the preexisting image. One such example is when she rephotographed the reproductions of a series of nudes taken by Edward Weston; while her work is indistinguishable from Evans 'work (aside from Levine's title: "After Walker Evans"), they are transformed into Sherrie Levine's reenactment of Evans 'process and practice (Greenberg 21). She signed and exhibited them with, for it's the fact that these pieces are copies telling a story of multiple artists that makes them so transformative and critical of art standards. The sanctification of original work is no more when indistinguishable replications are made in abundance from many different sources. Copyright Law is an effort to help protect the creative endeavors of artists and protect the value of their work, and these replicated works are equal to pieces not relating to any known image in their creative expression. The creativity and originality requirements of copyright and the inconsistent definition of what qualifies as a substantial variation so as not to make it derivative creates a rift between protected and unprotected forms of originality. It is impossible to quantify what is necessary or what must be added or removed for a piece to be original, yet copyright seeks to do just that.

There is a difference between artists and copiers. Because Copyright protects artwork from being maliciously copied for the sake of personal gain or money, it's important to notice the distinction between artists like Elaine Sturtevant and non-artists. To have an artistic practice so heavily rooted in replication and copying other people is

no easy endeavor; the inequality of the law, criticism of historians and the public, and general dismissal of repetitive work is evidence of that. These artists have nothing to gain from reproducing works aside from their own calling to disrupt the status quo and question the artist ideals that emerged prior. These attitudes have always been a fluid thing, and the artwork matches what the artists want to convey about society. They are more than ill-doing copiers, and the very connotations of that description is part of the problem with how some artists are rewarded and others not for creating new works. Fundamentally, the legal term for art in copyright law is a list of names given to the known and recognized mediums of art such as graphic works, photographs, paintings, and sculptures; this excludes installation art, body art, performance art, video art, mixed media art, etc. The aim of copyright to structure art within confines of what the legislation perceives as art, is most likely worlds apart from how the artists view their own work.

The Digital Age and the Internet

Up until this point, this essay has explored apprenticeships and masterpieces during the gilded age, individualism and originality that was paramount during modernism, and the way postmodernism turned these ideas on their head. However, as is mentioned briefly above, the current state of art today encapsulates far more mediums, techniques, and conceptual ideas as much of the art world has moved online into the digital realm. Digital tools like Photoshop, Illustrator, Blender, Procreate, and Picsart have transformed what an artist can be. As long as they have access to a computer, tablet, or electronic device, artists can create art wherever they want; they are no longer limited to the physical space where a dependency on paints, canvas, pencils, turpentine, etc. exists. In addition, non-artists can share photos at a rate that exceeds expectations. Trillions of images are shared a day, in the exact likeness of the image that came before, creating an image culture based on repetition, seeing things again, and linking them back to something else. This is the internet of Web 2.0, "an umbrella term… that has been used to address the diversity of technical means enabling Internet users to participate, exchange, link, map, upload, post, edit, and comment—all in all, to engage in social creation online" (Goriunova 10). Its predecessor, Web 1.0 was mostly static, read-only, html-based websites, far different from the internet we know now with its real time updates, interaction based sites, and content that necessitates participation (Goriunova 11). Because of this shift, the museum and gallery space are being transformed because exact replications can exist everywhere and anywhere. The internet disseminates the art, and these images are available at any time as long as you have access to the digital space. Therefore, our associations with the art have begun to link back to the replicated image rather than with the original.

The consequences of this shift can be seen in all facets of society; we have become a culture of images. Endlessly scrolling through social media in search of interesting photos, reposting what we enjoy, relating these images back to another

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image and another and another. Oliva Frost says in response to this current predicament, "as more and more material becomes available in digital form across the Internet, the digital surrogate may well become an increasingly common form of our experience of objects… When users are more accustomed to seeing digital representations than originals in museums, users may view the images as artifacts having their own intrinsic value rather than as imperfect surrogates to be compared against the original" (Schweibenz 11). Associations with the Mona Lisa take the form of movie references, t-shirts, hand bags, etc; she exists within the context of mass marketing and commodification now, an icon that can be seen anywhere, on anything, infinitely scaled up or down from her small canvas in the Louvre. As Jean Baudrillard writes in his book "Simulacra and Simulation," we are now living in a society of symbols and signs (2). He writes that these signs and symbols are not based in reality at all; they have changed from "reflections of a profound reality" to images that have "no relation to any reality whatsoever," making the world we live in now a simulation of reality (Baudrillard 6). The simulacra, in this sense, is a trace of copies that goes so far back that it no longer is based in anything at all; it no longer has an original to relate to. This has created a society saturated by icons, symbols, and images that have lost their meaning, and this once again points towards concepts that digital artists have to wrestle with when making art. The internet and the world wide web has created a space to share and bring us closer to the images we enjoy; it is transforming the "electric circuitry" of the West because "the contained, the distinct, the separate--[the] Western legacy--is being replaced by the flowing, the unified, the fused." (Heffernan 24). The individualistic ideals and the desire for uniqueness that defined modernism has been forever altered by the digital space where connection takes precedence. The relationship between the technical, the aesthetic, and the cultural becomes evident when something as ubiquitous and widespread as the internet takes hold; "each of these domains folds into the other and is fed back on itself; every layer informs embeds, and models the others, distributing their particular power patterns throughout societal systems and their blurry zones of transfer"

(Goriunova 22). In the case of art, it "extracts, discovers, relates, reverses, and displaces," and in the digital age, where art can be everywhere and of everything, it clouds over the prestige of the original (Gorinuova 50). This takes the form of users embracing the culture of the copy to satisfy their desire to be near the object, regardless of the fact that it is not the original.

The Perfect Copy

When considering the limits of the human eye on top of the advancements in production techniques and technology, the notion of the "perfect copy" emerges. Put simply, it's a replication that is true to the original in every possible way so that--when using the naked eye--it's impossible to tell the difference between the two. As Werner Pommerehne and Martin Grancia put it, "a perfect reproduction should be understood as a copy that is totally true to the original, but not made by an artist" (238). Essentially, their argument is that a perfect copy cannot be made by an artist because it's impossible for a replication made by human hands--subject to human biases and personal perspectives--to be an exact representation of the original. It's inevitable for aesthetic differences to occur from human hands. In their study, they sent out 500 questionnaires to employees of the University of Saarland, the Art Museum of Saarland, and random subjects of Saarland to analyze their willingness to pay for reproductions (Pommerehne 239-245). While their findings are inconclusive due to the limited sample size and the vast variation in definitions regarding aesthetics, their hypothesis still stands that "a perfect reproduction may function as a substitute for an original work of art in respect to aesthetic considerations" (Pommerhenne 247). A copy is only perfect if it mimics the original exactly. Even the most careful of eyes is rendered useless in the face of these perfect reproductions. With the creation of printers, scanners, copy and paste, reposting, etc. an endless string of perfect copies has become available (as defined by Pommerehne and Granica). While these pieces of work no longer directly come from

human hands, mechanical reproduction has helped us transform the novelty and uniqueness of originals. A perfect copy, offering the same aesthetic values as the original, can exist on a bedroom wall, as wallpaper, in a coffee shop; the art can expand beyond those who see it in a museum or gallery.

The argument that these perfect reproductions can offer the same aesthetic values as the original diametrically opposes everything that makes the original pedestalled. If you place the original next to its perfect reproduction and you can no longer decipher which is which, and the same aesthetic experience comes from both, the copy and the original become the same. As Goodman writes, "the hardheaded question why there is any aesthetic difference between a deceptive forgery and an original work challenges a basic premiss on which the very functions of collector, museum, and art historian depend. A philosopher of art caught without an answer to this question is at least as badly off as a curator of paintings caught taking a Van Meegeren for a Vermeer" (99). Meegeren was considered one of the foremost art forgers of the 20th century, copying Vermeer and Baburen, and having his forgeries mistaken for originals. However, as W. E. Kenneck writes in response, "A painting's being a forgery is a property that determines how it is to be looked at, and is thereby an aesthetic property of it; in which case a picture's being an innocent copy is also a property that determines how it is to be looked at, and is thereby an aesthetic property of it (3). One argues that the aesthetic difference between an original and a perfect copy is not there while the other argues both an original, a copy, and a forged piece all have different aesthetics. I am inclined to link these two perspectives with the viewpoints of Pommerehne and Granica, that a piece is a perfect copy only when it is mechanically or technologically produced in the exact likeness of the original. However, the aesthetic differences between the two are only rendered obsolete when the perfect and the original are side by side and you cannot differentiate which is which. In that instance, the difference between the original and the copy disappears, and you are left with two identical paintings. However, when the viewer is aware they are looking at a replication or an

original, the two aesthetic experiences are very different. Nevertheless, the sanctity of the original has been lost in the face of the ability to create infinite perfect copies.

This is where Walter Benjamin's words--cited time and time again from artists, critics, and historians--offer a viewpoint essential to the discussion of the perfect copy and its relationship and consequences to the original. He brings up the notion of an art piece's aura, claiming that in even the most perfect copies, there lacks "its unique existence in a particular place… the history to which the work has been subject" (21). Whether it's the traces of places it has been before, changes to its physical structure, restorations, etc. these things are unique to the original, translating to its physical form and creating the aura that Benjamin mentions. The process of mechanical and digital reproduction tampers with the authenticity of art, "the quintessence of all that is transmissible in it from its origin on, ranging from its physical duration to the historical testimony relating to it" (Benjamin 22). The historical weight of a perfect copy does not exist because it has not experienced the same lifespan as the original; it lacks an aura. Even when all other aspects between the copy and the original are moot, the intangible essence of the piece can only be experienced when the viewer is in the same physical space as the original object. However, the digital and technological age has created an image rich culture that combats the authority of the object. As Benjamin states, "the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to reach the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualizes that which is reproduced" (22). Despite being written in 1935, Benjamin's writing predicts and summarizes humanity's current predicament of being drowned with trillions of images on the internet, on billboards, outside, inside, online, etc. They are everywhere you look, and as technology continues to expand, the aura of the original decays. The "strange tissue of space and time" in an object vanishes with common culture's emphasis towards technological reproduction (Benjamin 23). The desire of current society to close the distance between themselves and the object strips

away what makes it unique and novel by multiplying it hundreds, thousands, and millions of times.

Perfect replications can be printed and sold, displayed in public settings, and found online, while the original hangs upon the wall of the museum. The very existence of the numerous perfect copies distorts the aura of the original because the association is no longer with the original, it lies with the viewer's experience with the replication. The original is the jumping off point from which perfect copies are created, endlessly, but the aura remains with the original, though it may be weakened by the multiplicity of its copies. Even if "the memories related to the original are recreated by the reproduction," the knowledge that what you are viewing is a copy, made from technology, distorts the authenticity and novelty of the piece (Schweibenz 16). Only when the two are placed side by side, and you don't know which is which, does the aura become uncertain of where it should fall; the original or the perfect copy?

There is the case of a painting without an original. One such example is Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" in which originality and replication in art is highlighted. The famous painting was created on the wall of the dining area in the Milan cloister Santa Maria delle Grazie and deteriorated quickly as a result of the humidity and Leonardo's untested oil painting technique (Schweibenz 11). Before it was lost forever, the painting was recreated numerous times in the form of engravings, other paintings, and prints; this moment is the first recorded time a masterpiece is replicated and shared immediately after its creation (Schweibenz 11). As time passed the original had become too withered for it to be copied directly and other replications were used as references instead. Notably, Johann Wolfgang Goethe used a reproduction by Raphael Morghen when he wrote "Observations on Leonardo da Vinci's celebrated picture of the Last Supper" instead of the original which he had also seen; In fact, Morghen's reproduction was a reproduction of Teodoro Matteini, which was a reproduction attributed to Leonardo's pupil Marco D'Oggiono (Schweibenz 11). The copies were copied, and the art of replication is seriously considered for the first time. The

replications were favored instead of the masterpiece, and this points to how the copies influenced the perceptions about the masterpiece. The aura of the original lives on in the form of the multiplicity of copies, but the original wall painted by Leonardo da Vinci is no longer needed to experience that. The copies were able to preserve his masterpiece, the memory, and the aura of it. The reproductions gave wisdom about what the original once was. Long before the internet, replications have had the power to shape our knowledge about the original work, and now, replications are the standard for what the average art experience is.

Digital Art and its Marketplace

The original has to combat with the perfect copy, and the real has to combat with the virtual. The ease, availability, and endless possibilities of the internet makes it easy to get lost in the vortex of data and images. Social media, VR, video games, movies, TV shows, etc. they all fight for our attention to make a profit; therefore, it makes sense that digital artists are also pushing for newer modes of monetizing their work. This takes the form of commissions, non-fungible tokens, digital prints, etc. The modes of creation and commodification online are as widespread as the softwares that exists to make them. They take shape in both high-end and affordable forms, as is the case with the world offline. One such actualization of the digital marketplace is through the blockchain. In this case, the desire for monetization, or perhaps the resurrection of the original in a new space, has created the notion of limited edition digital art. When putting digital art--something that can usually be shared endlessly via screenshots, downloads, and copy/paste--into the context of something that is limited edition, it" is drawn into an economic realm where it becomes a good that can be bought, sold and exchanged. What we often don't realize is that so many markets, if not all, ride on artificial scarcity… Limited editions of [the] unlimited…[seek] to commodify and rarefy digital culture" (O'Dwyer). The internet's way of creating artificial scarcity is

through cryptographic tech and the blockchain. The digital assets created from the blockchain are known as non-fungible tokens or NFTs, and their place on the chain is what makes each image legitimate or 'unique 'among many others (Chohen 2). Typically, assets on the blockchain take the form of cryptocurrency, but the realm of what can exist there has expanded to include digital pieces of art as well. While I am no expert on NFTs, cryptography, or the blockchain, fundamentally, this creates a marketplace for luxury digital art pieces. Originally, objects in the virtual realm were "thought to be difficult in terms of proving their uniqueness and distinguishability so that they could be considered 'non-fungible '[because] code is code: 1s and 0s would be recreated and therefore fungible, at least to a large extent." (Chohen 2). However, with innovations in blockchain technology, NFTs can now exist with their codes encrypted; they are uploaded onto an NFT auction market, and anyone can purchase them with enough cryptocurrency (Chohen 3). They have exponentially increased the amount of money artists can get paid. One piece entitled, "The First 5000 Days" by artist Beeple netted $69.3 million dollars, breaking the record for an item auctioned in 2021 (Chohen 2). The NFT world is a premium art marketplace online, substituting physical originals for limited edition digital images and selling them for extraordinary prices in exchange for acquiring their uniqueness. However, the artist can still retain copyright ownership over the work and create more NFTs based on that image if they choose after it has been sold, meaning the buyer doesn't necessarily have possession of the digital file. This is also the concern with non-fungible tokens; theoretically, anyone could upload a piece of art as an NFT without being the actual artist. This opens up doorways for fraud both by those sharing reproductions of the NFTs and the possibility of users posing as the original artist. The digital marketplace is a strange place, creating scarcity by giving artworks encrypted codes in place of a signature. By placing them in a remote, exclusive section of the internet, an online gallery is created where the owner can view their bought NFT. However, many are perplexed by those who spend exorbitant amounts of money for a digital image--something that's typically wide spread and easy

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to take a screenshot of. Furthermore, the digital art itself is trapped within the monitor's dimensions, unable to occupy the same physical space as the viewer unless it is printed; therefore, no longer making it non-fungible.

Limited edition digital art and its marketplace is an incredibly complex network filled with nuances of crypto, notions of how copyright law should protect digital art, and the desire for "scarce" digital objects. And on the other end of the spectrum are digital artists who create digital art as a medium for their art to become physical. While the piece itself might take shape online using brushes from photoshop that mimic watercolor or oil paints, when it is printed and takes physical form, the image gets new life. In addition, the very process of making those digital art pieces is heavily rooted in replication. Everyone has the same default settings, brushes, and tools in their Creative Cloud, and many of these tools act as shortcuts in the art process. Copy and paste, the lasso tool, the digital grid: they all serve as repetitive tools that help digital artists edit and refine their work. The technology has created never before seen possibilities for artists, and the seemingly infinite references at our disposal is both awe inspiring and intimidating. Freelance work, commission artists, designers, etc. digital art flourishes online even without an encrypted code that makes the pieces unique. These works are designed to be shared, printed, and enjoyed by many, emphasizing the value of art practices rooted in replication. In a sense, it's impossible to remove digital artwork from replication because much of the software is based upon physical modes of creating and viewing art.

The fact of the matter is that the digital imitates the physical. The internet which connects users has created a marketplace for art that is specific to its medium. In addition, they have created both high and low priced items using the perceived scarcity of NFTs and an abundance of other digital art forms to mimic what museums do in the physical. Those willing to pay large sums at auctions for the sake of a 'unique 'digital file imitate the behavior of buying pieces at galleries to enjoy in their home. And those who enjoy a digital image posted to Instagram can like, screenshot, support the artist if

they desire, and in turn increase the popularity of that image so that more can enjoy it. This also mimics how art is enjoyed in the physical through word of mouth and shared experiences. One key difference between the physical and the digital marketplace is the speed at which these interactions occur. Because there is also a seemingly infinite flow of images, artworks are easily liked and swiped past before they are replaced by the next image. The instant gratification of the internet has changed our relationship to images. As O'Dwyer puts it, "every act of digital circulation is also an act of reproduction, my enjoyment of a GIF or an MP3 file does little to inhibit someone else's. In fact, we can go so far as to say that digital goods are to some extent 'anti-rival', as their economic and cultural value often increases in accordance with their widespread distribution and circulation." The network shapes the way art is experienced, and the digital realm has generalized copying, photoshopping, remixing and recycling. The art of the digital age has adapted, learned, and grown with the technology; it also critiques the current state of art, commenting on the economic and aesthetic status of artwork in the face of digitization. It undermines the foundations in which originality and authenticity are founded on, creates digital artifacts that cannot be found anywhere else, and at the same time occupies the space of not being a commodity at all and instead exists as something to be shared and enjoyed.

Conclusion

Art education today is a combination of all of the movements, knowledge, and attitudes that came before and still linger. Growing up in a society where repeated images are everywhere and constantly being renewed and repeated while the clutches of romantic and modernist ideals still urge artists to produce original artwork. What this traditional mode of thinking does not take into account is the extreme societal shift the internet and digitization has brought about. The world also lives online in the digital space, and it proliferates the number of replications that exist. As Greenberg writes, "in truth, in literature, in science and in art, there are, and can be, few, if any, which, in an abstract sense, are strictly new and original throughout," everything "must necessarily borrow, and use much which was well known and used before" (8). As time passes and there are more images of images and as it becomes more difficult to link images back to an original artwork, this statement grows ever truer. Artists are in a predicament where it's impossible to create a piece without borrowing from others, where that takes the form of photoshop, direct replication, or accidental repetition. And as French writer Pascal Quignard writes, perhaps it's within our human nature to seek images behind other images almost compulsively (Phelan 12). If so, then it is no wonder we have reached this point in artwork where the trace of images can string back hundreds and thousands of times. Artist Sturtevant seemed aware of this trajectory even back in the 60s, and while she didn't have access to digital technology, she created with this mode of thinking; she sought to understand why humanity is drawn to the copy. Her philosophy was that "originality is too limiting," and in a world where society expects original work despite the relevance and necessity of replication, originality is binding (Pobric 1). Had she been creating only a few decades later, perhaps her work would have been revered in a way that it wasn't during her lifetime, however, that also might have made her work less impactful. As Peter Eleey wrote, "she occupies a sacred position in the history of art, arriving both before and after her time. She was… the first

postmodern artist and, in retrospect, she was also the last" (Pobric 4). Her work offers a requiem for modernist ideals about originality; today we are left with an endless stream of ideas and images based on older ones, this images stay with us and influence us. One of Sturtevant's declarations was to "remake, reuse, reassemble, recombine, that's the way to go!"

This is what artists of the digital age can draw from; while it can be discouraging to live in a competitive society where there is an oversaturation of images being cycled through everyday and where the novelty of the original is fading, there is still value in the copy. The copy is essential to society and to sharing in the digital space. The structure of art itself also tends to begin with replication. When first learning to begin an artistic career, it's essential to draw from the wellspring of knowledge and images that exist and are available online. No longer does one have to go to Europe to see the work of the "masters" (though one can if they desire). Copies are a resource to be used and repeated again. Both originality and replication are intricately woven together, and it's irresponsible to draw the dialogue about the two away from one another. Fundamentally, the dialogue about art, originality, and replication is constructed by the preferences of society, meaning we don't know what art will look like ten, twenty, or one hundred years from now. "Art that challenges and explodes established understandings of what may be termed a work of art will not initially (or potentially ever) gain the recognition of the public" (Greenberg 7). However, this has never discouraged artists from creating altogether, nor has it for any other field of study for that matter. Originality and replication are universal ideals that shape the perceptions of the sciences, arts, literature, etc; the digital age has more closely linked the original with its copies, making it more difficult to distinguish the two. Nonetheless, original modes of thinking and creating are emerging all the time as technology advances and new possibilities become available.

Even the works of Sturtevant in their near exact likeness to the originals inspired new ways of seeing what authentic art can be; therefore, as long as artists continue the pursuit of challenging their viewers to see society, art, and aesthetics in new ways the originality will never truly die.

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