

## APPROPRIATION

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### CULTURAL APPROPRIATION WITHIN ILLUSTRATION

March 25, 2015 | [dbrownhozjan](#) | [adaptation](#), [appropriation](#), [Authenticity](#), [Cultural Exchange](#), [Globalization](#), [homogenization](#), [Identity](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

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**Abstract:** *This article explores the historical lineage of appropriation and how that relates to technology and modern issues within illustration dealing with cultural appropriation of imagery, work and culture.*

**Keywords:** *Appropriation, Globalization, Homogenization, Internet, Cultural Exchange, Identity, Illustration*

Illustrators take on a much wider role when it comes to image production compared to those in the past due to globalization and technologies such as the internet. It enables a space for a global cultural exchange and accumulation of both information and imagery. We are now beginning to see a generation that has grown up with this technology from birth where they do not see any boundaries separating cultures and become increasingly more difficult to understand and navigate what becomes cultural appropriation or just simply culture.

In order to understand appropriation within illustration today, it is important to understand what is being culturally appropriated and what that means. In the field of illustration cultural appropriation is referring to taking imagery from other cultures which are nonnative to the illustrator. Most commonly this would be referring to cultural and historical iconography, stories, characters, style and mark making. Many of these would be found within their myths, art works of all medium and iconic symbolism. Another issue that arises is that majority of the images come from countries that are not of Western society. Appropriation is a sensitive topic when dealing with these issues because historically European colonialism has a long history of taking and appropriating from other countries forcefully and had profited immensely. As illustrators who appropriate from other cultures, we do so with this privilege of history where there are still generations of people who remember. At the same time, it appears that appropriation of the European style whether it is Classical from Romans/Greeks or the Renaissance/Impressionism is not of a big issue because European culture historically has been perceived as the dominant culture which was used as a tool of colonialism (Hansen, Jonsson, 447).

Appropriation is not a new subject when discussing art production. This topic always appears to re-emerge with the introduction and incorporation of a new technology and as different countries start to explore territories further away from their home (Hansen, Jonsson, 442). The discovery and trade establishments between new countries would also further influence countries cultures as they start to exchange not only information but cultural products (Mosk, 166). These, however, over time become integrated into local culture as their own even though there is resistance in the beginning due to the fear of losing their identity as well as the initial exchanges was forced upon by European countries wanting to colonize and eliminating the local people, both physically and mentally (Hansen, Jonsson). An example of this would be the trade ties between Asia and Africa with Western Europe during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Asian and African countries began to adopt Western cultural influences into their lives which also ultimately affected the art style and production methods. The entire Meiji Era in Japan as well as many African colonies is an example of this (Mosk). At the same time Europe was heavily being influenced by all the new countries they were able to come in contact with due to improved technology within transportation and navigation.

With technology opening new routes which were once not accessible the tradition of a wider tattoo culture started to emerge which resembles closely to how the internet culture is affecting illustrators. With new cultural exposure and accessible trade routes, tattoo artists had to create and illustrate styles of other cultures they were coming in contact with as their clients were now not just their local population but also those from other countries who wanted tattoos in the style and iconography of their home country and the country that they are visiting (Marti, 6). These tattoo artists had to learn to be versatile and create different cultural imagery which over time merged together to form completely new styles which incorporated different styles of coloring, shading, line work, subject matter and iconography from all the different cultural backgrounds their clients would come from (Marti).

Within the recent years of art history, appropriation became a popular topic when Pop Art started to emerge in the 1950's, where they would appropriate works/imagery from popular culture. The issue also involved means of artistic production because artists such as Andy Warhol would create works from already existing images and photographs of popular culture (Fig. 1)

instead of recreating the images himself. A more recent example is Damien Hirst who has been known for appropriating other artist's works as his own (Fig. 2)

Fig. 2: *The Physical Impossibility of Death  
in the Mind of Someone Living* - Damien  
Hirst - 1991

. What becomes interesting is that we see some works that start to appropriate other artworks that are appropriations of other cultures. By being double removed from the original content does that still mean as illustrators we are still tied to it? Similarly to what the internet culture is becoming, popular culture was the only exposure to other cultures the new generations had which then influences their means of production. When looking back however we view these Pop Art artists as standards within art history and have entered the realm of 'the canon' where their works are considered classic, iconic and recognized as excellent works.

So then is it just a matter of time? One must not forget that the modern internet structure is very young and still at its infancy. We have to remember that television took at least fifty years after conception before the Pop Art artists utilized it to their practice. We are currently thirty years into the conception of the personal computer and only twenty years into the conception of the internet in which the modern structure has only been established for only five years (Mougenot). As we are fairly new and in the beginning stages of a new technological system, there are still many uncertainties and time in which to develop into something much larger and much like how historically in the past, new connections between different cultures and people will create tension, it eventually integrated with one another and became part of history. It is up to us to figure out how smoothly or strongly the resistance to this integration will become.

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## THE LANGUAGE OF STORIES

**Abstract:** This article studies the progression of stories and how they survive the ages and why. Investigating the durability of these stories, the article states why they remain in society and how they change throughout the times to suit the needs of the current peoples. Most importantly, this article discusses the time stamp these reinvented tales become for each generation that reinvents them.

**Keywords:** fable, interpretation, adaptation, perspective, language

Many fairy tales have exuded a resilience to time and through many reiterations managed to thrive in even our modern society. They survive the centuries because peoples have a resounding need for the efforts or devices of the story (Forsyth). The themes and morals still hold relevance to the culture, therefore it continues to be passed on. Stories die when people cannot relate or hold meaning within the tale anymore. However, each story never remain quite the same. These stories change over times, constantly wearing away and being put back together. Oral tradition and interpretation create a multi layered and adaptive space for these tales to grow and adjust to modern society. Illustrators and storytellers use these tales as a common structure, a foundation to build a modern context and perspective on. By doing this, they reinvigorate an old tale and create a historical profile for the current culture.

These stories and myths have a strong connection with the culture they circulate within. They act as a mirror, reflecting the needs of a society within the events and moral standards presented within the story. Each era and culture tell these stories differently, each tailored to the issues and goals of that current public sphere. "Myths evolve over time and each retelling or re-enactment of a myth may be subtly different from the previous one. It is a mistake to think of them as a constant, for one of the strengths of myths is their flexibility" (Philip 24). Like any progression of evolution, there are stories who do not make the cut. Some lose relevance or are lost over time. The nature of such stories is a constant, always adapting as to survive the trials of time. They depend on the inventive nature of art or oral storytelling to keep them alive and thriving (Zipes 2-3). The ones that have survived have now become a staple in our modern culture.

Since these myths are so long lasting and recirculated, they create a common language amongst the public. A majority of people are exposed to these concepts and stories throughout their lives at some point. The stories have set themselves into the culture and are readily referenced and called upon as common knowledge. With this basis of a common groundwork, a structure for illustrators and modern storytellers have been built. This leaves room for artists to reinvent and add their own symbols and imagery upon the existing tales.



Fables by Bill Willingham

The comic book series *Fables* is a prime example of modern perspective on fairy tales. Created by Bill Willingham, *Fables* uses classic fairy tale characters such as Snow White and the Big Bad Wolf, but places them all in the modern setting of a community in New York City. They must face the issues presented by their past fairy tale lives and move on to live in the present, dealing with consequences of actions and learning to take care of themselves as a society. Willingham felt it important to focus on the problems of our own actions, and understanding that everything has an effect on what happens next in the story. These very ideas are stressed in society, the urge to think before you do. The series mimics the lessons needed to be learned by current society, and many of the events even follow real issues and events that need to be addressed.

Another example of addressing issues can be found in many popular media remakes of the same stories. Disney's *Frozen*, for example, takes its inspiration from the Hans Christian Anderson story *The Snow Queen*, and although it is a loose interpretation (Lee). While some of the themes may stay the same, the modern film shows a response to modern day issues such as feminism with the actions of the two sisters. It takes its inspiration from the story and interprets for the needs of a modern society. This shows that artist then has the responsibility to develop a perspective unique to the modern eye.

A culture that is defined by its mythology often shapes its myths to form a type of self-portrait of its peoples, showing their values, beliefs, and concerns. Myths express the spiritual and intellectual life of people, and the content of these myths is central to understanding how the people think. (Philip 14)

Philip understands the responsibility of myths in acting as a represented of who we are and what we face at this point of time. A reflection of the current state and the issues currently faced within society. This shows the reflective value of these stories and their power to address issues in society.

Fairy tales and fables have become a groundwork for many stories and themes expressed in our current society. Using that common language, illustrators and storytellers alike have been able to reinvent and investigate the true significance behind these stories. With their durability and malleability, artists have the space to grant these stories a modern perspective and attempt to create a dialogue around the issues that society currently faces. These stories become more than just wives tales, they become a universal platform for social commentary and act as a photograph of contemporary humanity.

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## IMITATION IN THE ARTS

March 24, 2015 | [dbrownhozjan](#) | [appropriation](#), [forgery](#), [imitation](#), [keywords](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

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**Abstract:** *As the size of imagery influence develops throughout the digital and physical realms, we must understand the boundaries between stealing and appropriately borrowing from each other's styles, techniques, and ideas in art. Within this article, I will discuss the methods in which we can avoid copying others and strive to generate something unique in a world saturated with imagery. I provide key examples of artists who have imitated successfully and those who have not and committed forgery.*

**Keywords:** *imitation, forgery, appropriation*

As illustrators in a world oversaturated by imagery, we are constantly borrowing ideas from others. Idea and image theft have become more complicated simply because nowadays, everyone acts in some form of imitation. Aristotle notes, we are always imitating, and this behavior comes innately to us ever since birth (Lucas). As artists, we rely on tradition for guidance and inherently choose to mimic the artists who attain success (Lunn 20). Within this article, I will consider the ways in which we can steer away from merely copying others and strive to generate something unique, or embrace the world of influence and steal appropriately. I will be referencing Henry Lunn's (1859-1939) article, *Imitation* and Antoon Van Den Braembussche's, *Thinking Art*, which both examine the constructs of imagery influence in history. I will also offer examples of artists who have imitated aptly, like Andy Warhol (1928-1987), and those who have performed forgery. I aspire not to provide one simple conclusion but to bring about further discussion and questions in relation to the topic. Therefore, we aim to answer the question, how can we present original and innovative ideas with an overload of artistic influence in the modern day?

First, we must look at the role of imitation throughout history and how it is established in today's culture and arts. Art is a recreation of reality, to create the actuality 'anew'. In the Renaissance and Baroque periods, imitating your masters was the way an apprentice learned to draw or paint and was presented as an artistic challenge (Braembussche 21). While in today's culture, there is an abundant amount of inspiration that the importance of idolizing names is more significant than the genuine art. It is important to make these cultural distinctions in order to gain a better understanding of stylistic imitation and begin to delineate how it has been altered throughout different contexts in history. So, why has the imitation of a style become something not commonly accepted and when is it applicable to do so in an art practice?

We ought to look at our incentives as artists to imitate in a different manner than those of earlier eras. By this, I mean that we must choose to use that inspiration in an appropriate matter. One must find a balance between innovation and imitation. Within "Tradition and Individual Talent", T.S. Eliot proclaims that instead of looking at how unique a piece of art (or poem) is, we need rather to look at how the artist has added tradition and incorporated past techniques (43). This statement asserts that art is always of the past and present, no matter what time or age there will always be an influence. Andy Warhol is an apt example of imitation, as he did so by mimicking commercialism and even after his decease he still acts as an imitator within popular culture. His famous pop culture past is even still present as seen in the "The Warhol: D.I.Y. POP" application available for iPhone users, which turns any picture into an 'Andy Warhol silkscreen' (fig. 1). Warhol has gained a lot of criticality

because of the informal way his art is easily distorted. Why is Warhol's work praised and easily manipulated more often than other credited artists? I deem that there is a persuasive myth that surrounds Warhol's art that has become an academic construct because we can acquire familiarity with it. The context of the art that is presented is what makes the piece original or not (Braembussche 61). So, as artists can we draw a line between being influenced by and stealing from other creative art or ideas in the present day? By looking at Warhol's fame, do we want to borrow from each other?

Stealing an illustrator's style is different than practicing their technique. In varying contexts, artists can practice others techniques, however, to avoid stealing a style they must apply it back to their practice. An example could be learning how one illustrator paints facial features, however instead of directly copying that method one must include features of that technique into their habits. In our time, artists use the same techniques as their previous mentors or influences. However, the appropriated factor derives from the original concept of an artwork and the parallel that arises from the initial artist. Even the same object could be considered being different each time you see it because the circumstances surrounding the viewing have changed (Berger).

Pablo Picasso famously quoted, "Good artists copy, great artists steal." Artists who dare to imitate must be aware that credit has to be given to the original if their art bears similarities. It is alleged that great artists take from original art but create something completely of their own, where no credit needs to be given. As an example, we will discuss the case between Julia Pott, a highly acclaimed illustrator and animator and Maxine Carsboul, a student who blatantly stole the style and concepts of Pott's illustrations. This can be seen in Pott's pillow design, *Big Bear* (fig. 2) and Carsboul's imitation (fig. 3). In this case, Carsboul exemplified forgery, creating and selling works of art without proper credit. This style of Julia Pott's illustrations is also seen in works of Sandra Dieckmann (fig. 4) and Lu Green (fig. 5), both professional illustrators. The anthropomorphic use of bears in sweaters is conceptually and stylistically similar in each; they all perform a style of textured mark making and are wearing patterned clothing. In this case, it does not matter who the first influence was, my question is how can all the artists get away with the similar illustrations and still make profits from them? Is it fair to say that it might be because they have graduated to a professional level of illustration, like the other famous artists have done and if they can get away with it, can we consider them to be 'great artists'?

There is such a large community full of presumed artists and illustrators who are all trying to do the same thing, produce art and make a living. Within the twenty-first century, we fathom imitation in art differently than artists did in the Renaissance period. We must form a balance between innovation and imitation for others to be intrigued by an artwork. We have briefly looked at the influence of Warhol and the way in which artists like Julia Pott and Sandra Dieckmann can be successful with shared concepts and styles. There is no way to unravel these questions entirely, but only to compare them to your practice and think about the ability imitation may or may not have on your art. However, more questions stem from the answers; is the age of imitation fleeting and are we going into a new stage of repetition and uniformity? What happens next?

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Fig. 1



*The Warhol: D.I.Y. POP*. Computer software. Vers. 3.0. Apple, 23 Feb. 2015. Web. 18 Mar. 2015. < <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/the-warhol-d.i.y.-pop/id442963936?mt=8>>.

Fig. 2



*Knitted Bear.* By Julia Pott. <[www.juliapott.com](http://www.juliapott.com)>.

**Fig. 3**



*No title.* By Maxine Carsboul. <<http://youthoughtwewouldntnotice.com/blog3/tag/maxine-carsboul/>&gt;.

**Fig. 4**



*Bear Sleigh.* By Sandra Dieckmann. <<http://www.sandradieckmann.com/etsy/85256368>&gt;.

**Fig. 5**



*No title.* By Lu Green. <<http://lugreen-illustration.com/Postcards>&gt;.



# KEYWORDS

March 24, 2015 | [dbrownhozjan](#) | [allegory](#), [anthropocentrism](#), [anthropomorphism](#), [appropriation](#), [folk art](#), [folklore](#), [Globalization](#), [mythology](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

**Anthropomorphism:** is the attribution of human form or other characteristics to anything other than a human being. Examples include animals with human characteristics in myths and folk tales, or even ascribing human emotions or motives to natural forces such as storms or hurricanes.

**Anthropocentrism:** is the belief that human beings are the central or most significant species on the planet or the assessment of reality through an exclusively human perspective. An alternative viewpoint is bio centrism, an ethical stance that asserts the value of non-human life in nature.

**Children's Books:** Books that educate or are provided to children for entertainment. In the case of the article, children's books alludes to picture books that are primarily for children ages two to ten.

**Mythology:** often refers to the collected body of stories of a group of people that are told to explain their nature, history, and customs.

**Folklore:** is related to mythology, but has a somewhat broader scope: folklore can consist of legends, music, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular beliefs, fairy tales, and customs.

**Folk Art:** is an ambiguous term, but encompasses art produced by an indigenous culture or by peasants or laboring tradespeople. Generally, it is utilitarian and decorative rather than being purely aesthetic.

**Forgery:** is the process of making, adapting, or imitating objects or documents with the intent to earn profit by selling the work.

**Globalization:** is the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas and other aspects of culture.

**Allegory:** is, as a literary device, an extended metaphor. Allegories are common throughout mythology and folklore.

**Appropriation:** in the arts refers to using pre-existing objects or images with little to no changes applied to them. Cultural appropriation is the borrowing or theft of an element of cultural expression of one group by another.



## APPROPRIATION AND ETHICAL ARTISTIC PRACTICE

March 24, 2015 | [dbrownhozjan](#) | [appropriation](#), [Cultural Exchange](#), [Style](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

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**Abstract:** *This article attempts to question the relevance of appropriation- stylistic and cultural- in an artistic practice, and discuss how the role of an illustrator changed over time by looking at the work of an appropriation artist, and commercial illustrators in order to evaluate the ethical responsibilities of a contemporary artist professional.*

**Keywords:** *Appropriation, Style, Exchange, Culture*

Being in an art school, the term "appropriation" is talked about a lot, and may arise in any discipline. The meaning, however, may wobble between artistic appropriation and cultural appropriation, and it is important to know the difference. Artistic appropriation (the term would be applied to visual art in this instance) has played significant role in the art world, particularly in the era of modernism, for instance the works of Andy Warhol.

Appropriation artists, according to Beth Gersh-Nesic, an art historian, "want the viewer to recognize the images they copy, and they hope that the viewer will bring all of his/her original associations with the image to the artist's new context, be it a painting, a sculpture, a collage, a combine or an entire installation". For example: Yasumasa Morimura's in his work *Daughter of Art History (Theater B)*, (fig 1) 1990, deliberately borrows from aesthetics and subject matter of an earlier famous impressionist painting by Edouard Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergere*, 1882, (fig 2) in order to create new life and meaning for the painting and consequently challenge the viewer. This type of appropriation is common and acceptable in artistic practice. Cultural appropriation on the other hand is a whole different, sensitive field.

Since the expansion of virtual space and globalization, the topic became even more complex. The question of power becomes prevalent in the



Fig. 1. Yasumasa Morimura, *Daughter of Art History*, 1990.



Fig. 2. Edouard Manet, *A Bar at the Foies-Bergere*, 1882.

discussion of this issue. Is it ethical for artists representing dominant culture to borrow and incorporate cultural elements of marginalized groups? Jarune Uwujaren in her article *The Difference Between Cultural Exchange and Cultural Appropriation*, discusses an example of a respectful cultural exchange rather than appropriation, describing the time her sister's groom, "who happened to be white", was invited to change into traditional Nigerian clothes during the ceremony. ("The Difference Between Cultural Exchange and Cultural") Reading about this, a logical conclusion can be drawn that taking part in other cultures is not a crime in itself, however breaking into foreign cultures disrespectfully and 'without invitation' or a reason is problematic and offensive to representatives of these cultures. Appropriation then becomes a game of privilege: no cultural exchange can happen if one of the sides is being

pushed aside and 'othered'.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Keeping in mind the tension of unethical appropriation, let us consider the role of an illustrator today. Is it fair to argue that contemporary illustrators and artists in general, due to the availability of information, become more and more aware of sensitive issues such as racism, and hence are able to quickly reflect on their moral decisions while making work. These two posters (fig.3) (fig 4), are an example of poster illustrations from 1900 and 1939. In a way, they 'enhance' the American entertainment industry of the time,

but aren't the sources of this questionable entertainment themselves. Illustrators simply represented and quite literally reflected that thing which needed to be advertised or 'enhanced' visually.

Undeniably over time, since more (online and off-line) information and education became available to the public, the conceptual ground for illustration field grew. Contemporary illustration takes on many different approaches such as use of symbolism, visual puns etc. Of course, artists and illustrators being in a privileged, powerful position, still run into different types of problems, such as appropriation, with which I have opened the discussion. What especially separates illustrators from artists of other disciplines, is the importance of having a distinct visual style. For instance, Yuko Shimizu's work (fig.5) is instantly recognizable by her specific use of line, digital colour, expressiveness and hints of surrealism that brought her recognition and popularity. Of course, most visual artists have something by which their artwork may be recognized (ex: Kandinsky's painting or Jeff Koons' sculptures), however in the world of illustration the style is treated like a commodity, meaning that it is specifically emphasized and desirable, whereas in the second case experimentation is encouraged (unless the artist's goal is to create desirable objects that are appealing to the public), and 'style' is a secondary phenomenon that may or may not occur. Considering the amount of images that everybody is exposed to in the digital age, it is fair to argue that stylistic appropriation becomes an issue for illustrators. In some cases, unintentional stylistic appropriation may occur, since so much 'visual garbage' is constantly circulating through physical space and the Internet. In such cases, legal issues may arise, which puts even more pressure on graphic artists. There are also cases when a currently trending style is currently being appropriated or mimicked by illustrators to make the work more marketable, despite the lack of ethics in such a method. To bring the discussion back to cultural appropriation. I will argue, that even though visual graphic artists are exposed to more 'visual garbage' and entangled in the legal issues of stylistic and thematic appropriation, the amount of information available also makes it easier for them to make appropriate choices when it comes to issues like cultural appropriation. In other words, illustrators are able to educate themselves and appropriate visual elements of ethnic cultures respectfully when they absolutely have to. This means that instead of merely reducing the public to 'exotic' relics by mimicking the art but neglecting the humanity those of marginalized groups, an artist can deal with visual appropriation in a respectful way. This may include acknowledging ethnicity, giving credit, actively communicating and learning from representatives of such groups, researching through literature. Although appropriation is unavoidably going to happen in the digital age, it is important for illustrators to be aware of what they want to be communicating to the public. Essentially, appropriation has to be based on mutuality, respect, and knowledge.



Fig. 5 Yuko Shimizu, *AIDS education poster*, 2009.

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Images in order of appearance:

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PDF | Cultural appropriation is often mentioned but undertheorized in critical rhetorical and media studies. Defined as the use of a culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture, cultural appropriation can be placed into 4 categories involve the operation of two distinct cultures within an individual or a group or the. fusion of aspects of each into a single culture and identity. Although some children in. Cultural appropriation, often framed as cultural misappropriation, is sometimes portrayed as harmful and is claimed to be a violation of the collective intellectual property rights of the originating culture." And, according to Everyday Feminism, the foundation of cultural appropriation is: "A deeper understanding of cultural appropriation also refers to a particular power dynamic in which members of a dominant culture take elements from a culture of

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Cultural appreciation and cultural exchange are vital parts of any culture. Borrowing is not inherently bad. However, it becomes a problem when "appreciation" becomes fetishization, when "exchange" is one-sided, or when cultures are reduced to a single stereotype. Cultural appropriation is complicated, which is all the more reason we need to be talking about it. Dr. Kelly H. Chong, professor and chairperson in the department of sociology at the University of Kansas, spoke to Bustle over email about what cultural appropriation is and the consequences it can have. The consequences of cultural appropriation can have insidious implications regardless of the intentions of the appropriator. Cultural appropriation, at times also phrased cultural misappropriation, is the adoption of elements of one culture by members of another culture. This can be controversial when members of a dominant culture appropriate from disadvantaged minority cultures. According to critics of the practice, cultural appropriation differs from acculturation, assimilation, or equal cultural exchange in that this appropriation is a form of colonialism: cultural elements are copied from a minority culture by members