

Banff Centre Plagiarism Warning

THE OFFICES OF
D. A. GUERRE, ESQ.

To whom it may concern:

Our offices have been asked to present a memorandum regarding what Banff Centre officials view as an alarming rise in the number of reported instances of plagiarism. Apparently too many individuals have been taking Picasso's observation "Good artists copy. Great artists steal." to heart, without the requisite perspective to understand they are but mid-career artists, albeit promising ones.

To avoid further controversy -- and especially litigious disagreements -- all resident artists are requested to read and observe the following guidelines.

Three Simple Steps to Avoiding Plagiarism Prosecution

I. Avoid Single Sources

If, to use the parlance of young artists, "ripping off" ideas is an integral part of your aesthetic, avoid doing so from only a single source. The ambitious artist will do well to remember the words of Wilson Mizner: "If you steal from one person it's plagiarism; if you steal from several it's called research."

II. Employ Creative Semantics

Many expensive court cases could have been avoided altogether by the judicious employment of the right words and phrases. Should you choose, for example, to execute a piece that was old news when Andy Warhol made his tenth version of it, you may be assured of an adequate defense if you title the piece "Homage to Warhol." Alternately, you may choose to keep your original title and simply add the words "after Warhol."

The clever artist may also want to employ the prefixes "de-" and "re-" in describing her/his work. If the artist frequently employs popular -- one might dare say trendy -- contemporary art terminology such as "decontextualizing" or "reappropriating," opposing counsel would find it difficult if not impossible to successfully argue that the resulting works were in fact plagiarized.

III. Claim Precedence.

When all other tactics fail, claim you are the plagiarized, not the plagiarist. This approach works well for debating the originality of contemporary works, and is irrelevant for historical work in which the copyright has, in all likelihood, already expired.

Please do not hesitate to contact our offices if you have any questions. And finally, remember this: being successful means not getting found out. Have a creative summer!

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