

Original, multiple, re-composition, art-in-the-style-of, replica, reproduction, production and related terms (32)

This text supplements section 32 in my book: Hans Abbing, *The Changing Social Economy of Art, Are the Arts becoming Less Exclusive?* (Palgrave Macmillan 2019) DOI 10.1007/978-3-030-21668-9.

- The recurring term “period of serious art” refers to a period from circa 1880 to 1980, a period in which the art of the elite was supposed to be serious while popular art was thought to be mere entertainment. In the book I argue that this period is well passed its zenith but has an aftermath which lasts to the present day.
- I use the term “serious art” instead of “high art” with its positive as well as negative connotation. For the last decades I also use the term “established art”.
- Numbers between brackets refer to the numbered sections in the book.

Anna is the alter ego of the author.

ORIGINAL, MULTIPLE, RE-COMPOSITION, ART-IN-THE-STYLE-OF, REPLICA, REPRODUCTION, PRODUCTION AND RELATED TERMS. In the chapters *Authentic Art and Artists* and *Distrust of Commerce* I argue that the visual and serious music art-worlds tend to blow up the aura of originals while putting down (re)productions in larger series. Correspondences and differences between the mentioned concepts matter for a study of the social economy of art. I define and explain them in this additional text. My definitions are largely based on those of academics. In common parlance the terms are sometimes used in other senses. Students are advised to read this text. Others may scan or skip the text and, if necessary, return to it later.

An original artwork or *original* is the work of art as created by a creative artist; he takes responsibility for the work. Works like a painting, or the copies of a *multiple*, like an etching, or the copies of a score, script and choreography are originals. Each of the performances of a score, script and choreography appears to be a re-produced original, but is a true original. As the philosopher Nelson Goodman argues a performance is both an instance of an original artwork and an original in its own right.ⁱ The conductor or director has a creative input. They are creative artists, and as such take responsibility for the newly created artwork, the performance. It is an expressive authentic work of both the author and the conductor and director.

I do not use the term original in other senses. (In practice the term is used in other ways as well. For instance, a work of an amateur that is very creative may well be praised for being “original” and for that reason be called an original work. Or a work by Picasso may be called an original work because it is authentic in the sense of not being made by another artist. But in this book, I only use the term original as described above.)

Replicas are exact copies of a work *in the same medium* as that of the original. They may have been produced by the artist who created the original, or produced under his supervision, but they can also be copies made by others without his consent. (Given copy-right law they sometimes are illegal copies.) Around 2000 many hand-made replicas of well-known paintings are produced in China and sold in Western countries to, among others, hotels and restaurants. The market for this kind of paintings is very large.ⁱⁱ

Aside: earlier the term replica only referred to exact copies made by the artist who also made the original as well as copies made under his supervision. But nowadays, unauthorized precisely detailed copies of a work are also called replicas.

Reproductions are exact copies of an original work *in another medium*. A sound recording of a performance and a reproduction on paper of a painting are examples.

Productions differ from reproductions; they are originals. A single painting is a production as are multiples and series of performances. The series size of multiples can be small or large. Sometimes there is a natural limit as in the case of much graphic. —After circa 10 prints the plate of a dry-point etching can no longer be used.— Sometimes there is no maximum as in the case of photo's films and poster-art. Digitally produced (popular) music is a production and not a reproduction.

Many reproductions and most productions in larger series are not manually produced, but technically or mechanically produced. (Walter Benjamin who uses speaks of mechanical reproduction does not distinguish between mechanical productions and reproductions, but in the book I show that the distinction matters, among others, for a discussion of the aura of artworks.ⁱⁱⁱ [37])

(Aside: In the book I regularly refer *live art* and *not-live art*. There originals, whether an object, like a painting and etching, or a performance, are "live" art, and reproductions and larger scale productions are "*not-live*" art, even though the latter are originals. The art in museums is largely "live" art.)

Because most recordings of live and studio performances —including those of classical music— are manipulated before they are published, the line between a reproduction and a production is often not clear. In this the intention of the engineers can make a difference.

In classical music the intention is usually to create a recording that as much as possible is experienced as similar to that of a live performance as possible. The engineers want to make so-called "*real music*". (*Having been sound-woman for a pop group, Anna was amazed to hear from Robin —a friend being employed by a classical music label to manipulate recordings— how much manipulation occurs in the production process of classical music. She learned, among others, that pitch correction was earlier applied in the classical studio (already in the 60s) than in the pop music studio, and that the application of the often maligned Autotune technology is common in the processing of serious music and in particularly in opera. Moreover, be it still rarely, autotune is now also used during some live performances. Justin Bieber is not alone. But, unlike in popular music, a creative use of autotune during live performances is still absent in serious music.*)

In popular music in creating recordings the intention is most often to make a new original, that is, a reworking, a different arrangement or re-composition. Most popular music "recordings" are clearly re-compositions and as such originals. Usually the main popular artist who performs the music takes responsibility for the recording, but not necessarily. Often the recording is the result of a collaboration between the artist and a producer, who is in fact also a creative artist. (Moreover, quite often now the production for the distributed sound-media precedes the live performed piece.)

Re-compositions are artworks by living and dead artists that are based on existing artworks while having been created by an artist with the aim of producing a new original artwork. A recent example of a serious music re-composition is Max Richter's *Four Seasons*. *Covers* in popular music are almost always re-compositions. An interesting common form of re-compositions are *re-makes* in film.)

Finally, two more categories of originals exist which are no reproductions. They matter for a discussion of mainstream art in web-text wt23. First this is, what I call, *art-in-the-style-of*. It refers to an original artwork in which the *overall* style is that of works in a certain existing or earlier style. This can be popular art as serious art. Sometimes it is inferior-art as in the case of paintings in the style of Picasso and of 17th century landscape paintings. They are popular in galleries/shops and open-air art markets, where inferior-art is sold. A special form of art-in-the-style-of exist in the popular arts, which is taboo in the arts. This is *retro art* or *recycled art* [23].

Second, my term *imitation art* refers to originals containing content and style elements of artworks by living and dead artists but without being a replica. —An example par excellence of imitation art are the presently circulating free imitations of Damien Hirst's *Spin Skull Painting* and of his skull prints.— These two kinds of art are common. Imitation art was common before the serious art-period, especially in painting, but is now taboo in the arts. In popular music such taboo does not or hardly exist in [23]. (Most serious realist and, so-called, imitational art do not fall in my category of imitation art.)

Literature

Benjamin, W. (1969). The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. In *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. New York: Schocken books.

Goodman, N. (1954). *Languages of Art, an Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

ⁱ (Goodman, 1954)

ⁱⁱ Cf. <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-village-60-worlds-paintings-future-jeopardy> (retrieved 12-08-2018). In the article no evidence is presented of the stated 60 percent of oil paintings being produced in China, but the percentage is anyway high.

ⁱⁱⁱ (Benjamin, 1969)