



TEMPTATIONS OF REPLICA

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*Repetitio est mater studiorum.*¹
Cassiodor (458 – 580 AD)

Given that the business-minded counterpart to this text illustrates the legally binding fiduciary responsibilities on the art market's transactional advisors, this academic-oriented document will analyze what could be an intrinsic "fiduciary duty" that relies in the artist himself. To explain, when an artist gains international recognition, translated into demand for his work, his artistic integrity might be compromised. Maintaining his currently celebrated style could limit his creative evolution. Are the artists selling themselves out to the market when they replicate artworks as they gain recognition?

The greatness of Jackson Pollock's dripping paintings lies in having developed one of the most radical abstract styles in the history of modern art, one which detaches line from color, redefines the categories of drawing and painting, and finds new means to describe pictorial scope. His style took the western art world by storm: standards of harmony and beauty were split apart and reorganized in a grand symphony of swirling lines, crashing splashes of color and rough, powerful compositions of formlessness and infinite spaces. At the height of his most productive period in 1950, Pollock, buoyed by ambition, claimed "I am nature" in response of Hans Hofmann's advice to paint from nature.² In response, the abstractionist painter replied: "Ah, but if you only work from inside you will repeat yourself."



Photograph of Jackson Pollock

What Hofmann knew was that inevitably, sustained innovation in art requires that the artist disengage his own ambition and success in order to have

¹ (The repetition is the mother of study/learning.)

² Hans Hofmann (1880–1966) is one of the most important figures of postwar American art. Celebrated for his exuberant, color-filled canvases, and renowned as an influential teacher for generations of artists—first in his native Germany, then in New York and Provincetown—Hofmann played a pivotal role in the development of Abstract Expressionism. Please refer to: "The Artist." *Hans Hofmann*. Web. 2 Sept. 2015. <http://www.hanshofmann.org/about/>.



creative evolution. In fact, this conversation scared Pollock as much as his own perpetual state of inner chaos. However, given the essence of his painting methods and the patronage influences of the likes of Peggy Guggenheim, repetition was inevitable. The artist himself would often speak of his fear of style repetition, self-imitation and failing to be authentic. After this period, Pollock dramatically fell into self-crisis, panic and eventually, death. An article in *Life* magazine shows how Pollock continued to struggle to produce new art.³ His creative needs increased, along with his uncertainty about himself and the tension of his precarious self-coherence as an artist.

It could be argued that Pollock's case is an iconic example of an artist's breach of integrity to his own work. When an artist fails to meet "fiduciary duty" in the benefit of genuineness, fame and recognition, he strains and compromises the art's honesty. The artist's creativity can be tied too closely to his admiration by others, popularity and success in the marketplace. These circumstances can block the artist's vision in pursuance of ambition. Self-censorship limits imaginative freedom and the artist's appetite for inventive dynamism.

However, it is important to differentiate the artist's style and technique from self-plagiarism. Artists like Rothko and José María Velasco might be considered as emblems of a specific artistic movement. They perfected their style instead of compromising their artistic evolution by replicating themselves. Javier Lumbreras, CEO of Artemundi argues that the *sine qua non* conditions of a masterpiece are two: innovation and consistency. "The masterpiece appears when it is innovative and it entails great coherence and aesthetic unity, in other words consistency."⁴ Over four hundred studies of the painting *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* exemplify this notion. Picasso's persistence for innovation sought a repetitive commitment to a masterpiece that would be preserved for perpetuity.⁵

We have touched on the issue of the damage caused by the artist's lack of artistic integrity upon himself. But, is there such thing as a "fiduciary duty" of the artists towards the artistic community? Some might argue that the social responsibility of the artist is to improve the public's taste, assuming that the artist has better appreciation to start off with. Artistic integrity by definition excludes pandering, as it requires commitment to some standard of excellence other than the public's applause.

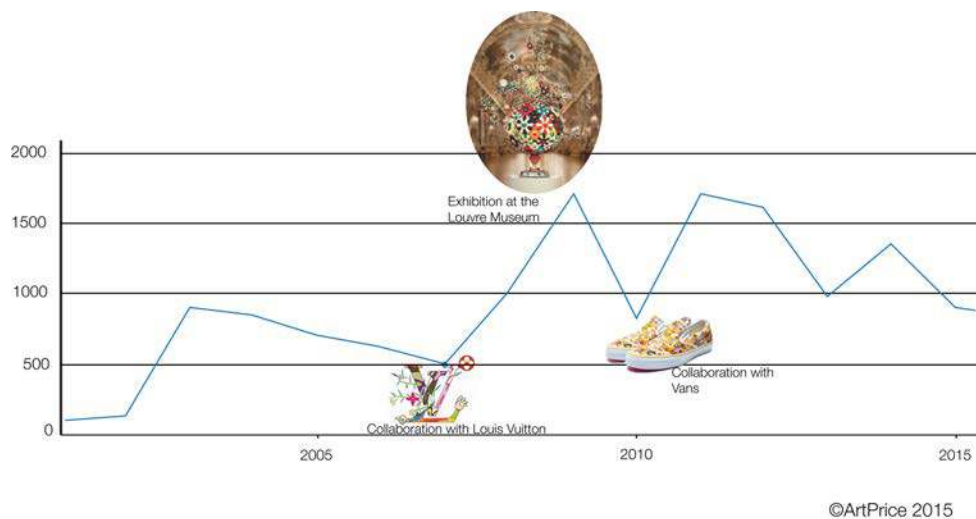
³ "Jackson Pollock: Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?" *Life Magazine*, 8 Aug. 1949. Web. 2 Sept. 2015.
<http://www.theslideprojector.com/pdffiles/art1/pollockarticle.pdf>.

⁴ Lumbreras, Javier. "What is a masterpiece?" *The Art of Collecting Art*. Fomento Cultural Banamex, 2011. p. 65

⁵ See: Lumbreras, Javier. "What is a masterpiece?" *The Art of Collecting Art*. Fomento Cultural Banamex, 2011. p. 65-70

Otherwise, the artist might become a servile puppet of the critic. Foucault said that “the artist should devote all his energy and creative freedom to produce a single object and not a banal and predictable duplicate. The work is loved, desired or intended with the intensity of the unrepeatable.”⁶ That is to say, the artist should not be dominated by the critique’s discernment, but perhaps should act upon it (if acceptance is intended).

The true investment risk of an artist’s betraying the “fiduciary duty” might be seen, for example, in Takashi Murakami’s pricing evolution within the art market. Even though the average value of this artist has increased 786%, instability has hit (as can be seen in the graph below) each time the artist has committed “treason” to artistic integrity.⁷ For example, the steep drop in 2007 signals the installation of Louis Vuitton’s 1,000-square-foot pop-up store offering \$960 Louis Vuitton/Murakami handbags, releasing an unabashed commercialist core of buyers at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. The conservative art market condemned this excessively mercenary approach, and its disapproval was shown in the subsequent average value of the artist’s work. When the artist decided to participate with the footwear brand Vans in 2010, his work devaluated 51.1%. Despite the fact that these commercial alliances represented huge profits to Murakami, the art industry “obligated” the artist to, in exchange, create outstanding exhibitions, like the one in Versailles in 2009, to redeem himself.



6 Castro, Rodrigo. "Foucault Y El Cuidado De La Libertad." Google Books. LOM Ediciones, 2008. Web. 2 Sept. 2015.

[https://books.google.com.mx/books?id=Tf3'TIzEotLQC&pg=PA389&clpg=PA389&dq=libertad creativa del artista&source=bl&ots=DeYvJ9qosJ&sig=JhM2n7xQOs2aYir4kphGtrVQzco&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CEYQ6AEwBWovChMI9Paqr_nYxwIVAXiSch17MgUo#v=onepage&q=libertad creativa del%2](https://books.google.com.mx/books?id=Tf3'TIzEotLQC&pg=PA389&clpg=PA389&dq=libertad+creativa+del+artista&source=bl&ots=DeYvJ9qosJ&sig=JhM2n7xQOs2aYir4kphGtrVQzco&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CEYQ6AEwBWovChMI9Paqr_nYxwIVAXiSch17MgUo#v=onepage&q=libertad+creativa+del%2) p. 389.

7 According to Artprice. Please refer to: "Evolution of Takashi MURAKAMI's Market." Artprice. Web. 2 Sept. 2015.

<http://www.artprice.com/artist/144846/takashi-murakami/index?currency=154>.

Furthermore, “Mr. Dob”, the alter ego of Murakami, is the clearest example of the artist’s constant temptation of replica. In 1993, this self-portrait had a circular head with two ears; the letter D was inscribed in his left ear and the letter B in the right ear.



The face was O-shaped, thus making his name legible. With “Mr. Dob”, Murakami sought to create an icon, which, while authentically Japanese, would have universal appeal. However, this character has been used in so many artworks, that the Japanese artist has been accused of exploiting this image in more than 2000 “original” creations. For example, the artwork *Me and Double-DOB* was originally sold for \$12,000 USCy in 2008. Six years afterwards “Mr. Dob” motive “burned”. This same artwork was auctioned at a hammer price of \$3,800 USCy

Mr. DOB artworks by Takashi Murakami at Phillips Auction House.⁸ The fluctuating price in this artwork reflects the rejection from the art community, by confronting the excessive use of replicas in Murakami’s art.

While artists could be distinguished from other actors in society (for example politicians, legislators, educators, and scientists) by the fact that they are their own test tube, their own laboratory, they work according to the art market’s rigorous rules, however unstated these may be. Succumbing to the temptation of replica in order to gain fame and money can be quite attractive, but by honoring the “fiduciary duty” owed to true art’s integrity and genuineness, the artist is in fact better contributing to the art market, the collectors and his own creative growth.

⁸ "Me and Double-DOB by Takashi MURAKAMI." *Takashi MURAKAMI. Art Price.* Web. 3 Sept. 2015. http://www.artprice.com/artist/144846/takashi-murakami/lot/pasts/8008331/me-and-double-dob?p=1&indicator=1&year_from=2012&year_to=2013&search=dob



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