

Authorship, referencing, copyright

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The first edition of this book, published in 2020, contained the following list of “questions to help you get started”:

- “- What is the topic you are researching?
- Why do you wish to explore this topic?
- How is this topic related to your discipline [...]?
- What do you hope to find out?”¹

This was based on the work of a colleague. In 2017, Merel Boers, thesis coach at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (KABK) created a class assignment with a list of four “what”, “why” and “how” questions to explain how research abstracts work. Her two-page hand-out ends with the following list of questions to guide the writing of a preliminary abstract:

- “1. What subject or subject field are you interested in?
2. Why do you want to explore this subject?
3. What do you want to find out about this subject?
4. How might you go about finding this out/exploring this subject?”²

Merel Boers, Füsün Türetken and the author of this book jointly taught that KABK theory class. Füsün Türetken introduced Kanda and Hayashi’s X Ray portrait, Studio Folder’s *Italian Limes*, Harun Farocki’s *Parallel* and Metahaven’s *Captives of the Clouds* to the class. These examples also appear in this book.

As is obvious when comparing the two question lists above, the first edition of this book lacked credits where they were due. Or, more precisely: it lacked citation references and sufficient acknowledgments. This, of course, is all the more embarrassing in a book that teaches research.

But perhaps most embarrassing is how easily this could have been avoided: simply by adding quotations, footnotes and citation references to the sources.

This example also demonstrates the partly opposite cultures of sourcing, referencing, crediting and using third-party work in the arts versus academic research. To sum up those differences:

- in research and scholarship, everything - all work done by others - may principally be reused, as long as it is done in the form of a citation, with complete attribution and a reference to the source. Conversely, one needs to meticulously acknowledge and reference even the tiniest bit of information taken from somewhere else. This includes, for example, everything taken from the Internet and social media, even something someone casually said in a private conversation, or - as in our own case - unpublished course and project materials.
This obligation does, of course, not exist when those materials were taken from other sources themselves. Then, professional research ethics requires you to look up, study

1 (Vis, 2020, 116).

2 Merel Boers, *Thesis class, writing assignment 3: beta-abstract*, p. 2, KABK Den Haag, 2017

and reference that original source.

- in the arts, by contrast, a lot of materials cannot be reused in one's own work because of copyright, trademarks or design rights (also called "intellectual property"). But when materials are being reused, attribution tends to be looser.

For example: cubist, Dadaist, pop art and punk collages do not footnote their sources. When Kurt Schwitters created his own version of Dada, "Merz", he cut out the word from the logo of the German Commerzbank without asking the bank for permission, although - working as an advertising graphic designer to pay his bills - he knew all about trademarks.

When arts practice and academic research converge in artistic research, their two different cultures of reusing other people's work can collide. Often, no best practice does yet exist for this. But neither is there an 'artistic license' for sloppy sourcing, referencing and attributing in artistic research. At least when you collaborate, as an artist, with academic researchers, you need to comply to academic standards of source attribution.



A work that investigates copyright and attribution through artistic research is Cornelia Sollfrank's "Legal Perspective" (2004). In the late 1990s, Sollfrank commissioned several computer programmers to write "net.art generators" for her website, online apps that created algorithmic collages of images found in the web based on user-entered search terms. As an artist-researcher, she was less interested in the computer-generated images or the automation of collage than in the uses and cultural ramifications of the generator. She soon found out that people used one generator for new color and shape variations of Andy Warhol's *Flowers* painting (1964), simply by putting the words "Warhol" and "flowers" into its text field.

When invited by a gallery for a solo exhibition, Sollfrank proposed to print these generated images on large canvases and sign them with her name. Fearing a copyright lawsuit by the Andy Warhol Foundation, the gallery rejected her proposal. And as it turned out, the

copyright of Warhol's *Flowers* was a complicated issue itself, since they were based on a photograph by the American nature photographer Patricia Caulfield. Caulfield sued Warhol in 1966 and obtained royalty payments from him.

For her gallery show, Sollfrank interviewed four intellectual property lawyers asking them who, according to their expert judgment, was the legal author and copyright owner of the flower pictures generated by the net.art generator: Patricia Caulfield, Andy Warhol, Cornelia Sollfrank, the programmer of the generator, the computer program, or its users. Most of them came to different conclusions. The gallery exhibition consisted of four video monitors with their talking heads.

Sollfrank uses artistic research to question authorship and intellectual property. In more conventional works like this book, attribution is simply a matter of fair practice. And even in work that doesn't involve generators and algorithms, references can get easily lost and result in sloppy or missing attributions. This often happens when individual work originated in a collaborative project, in workshops or in teaching materials, and was developed from one's collected notes of this project. The lesson to be learned - also by us as the "authors" of this book - is to rigorously scrutinize your work before publication. It might be less "your" work than you had thought.