

RA

Borrowing

Appropriation, quotation,
sampling and copying

Royal
Academy
of Arts

attRAct resources
Produced by RA Learning

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Borrowing

Introduction

The culture of learning from the work of other artists has a long history. During the **Renaissance**, for example, artists learned their skills by copying from the great Classical artists and teachers who came before them, sometimes making exact replicas in order to unpick and absorb the same techniques.

Similarly, students attending the RA Schools in the 18th and 19th centuries were taught to copy and quote from the RA's collections of paintings, engravings, book illustrations, **casts** and statues, many of which are themselves copies of Renaissance masterpieces.

But borrowing ideas, quoting, and copying are strategies adopted by contemporary artists, writers, and poets too. Collaborators Jake and Dinos Chapman have added their own touch to artworks by Francisco Goya, poet Bernadette Mayer's List of Journal Ideas includes the prompt 'Rewrite someone else's writing. Experiment with theft and plagiarism.', Tracey Emin RA created a video piece filmed at the same Oslo jetty that was the location of many of Munch's works, and musicians and producers often **sample** other songs in their own.

Borrowing ideas and copying images, sounds, or quotes is actually an accepted approach in the journey towards the production of art, but direct **appropriation** of images and styles is also often really useful.

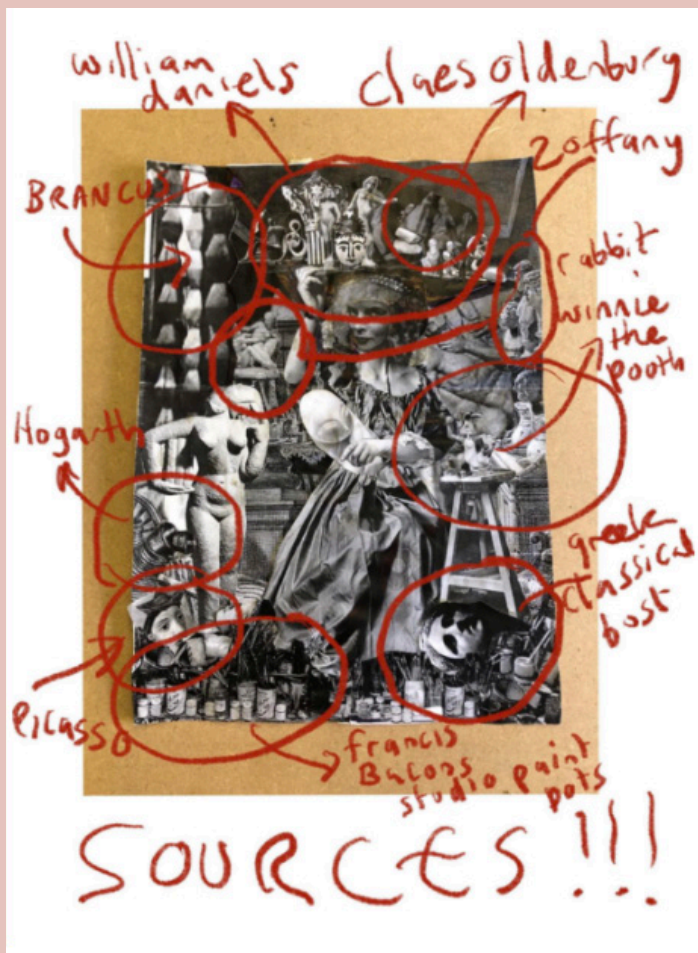


J. J. "Reynolds pinx"

Blake. sc.



1



2



3

Examples

As an example of how contemporary artists use historical work to come up with new ideas, on the opposite page are three images.

The first image is William Daniels' *Self-Portrait with Casts: The Image Seller*, a 19th century painting that inspired Mark Hampson, Head of Fine Art Processes in the RA Schools, to create an artwork. The second image is a collage that he created to begin mapping out and thinking about a potential artwork in response to the original, which also borrows from a number of other artist's work, and the third image is the final piece.

He began by creating a collage using photocopies of images taken from a variety of online resources, magazine graphics, picture book illustrations and his own drawings to create a compositional guide based on the original Victorian painting. This intermediate process allowed him to map out and visualise the final piece.

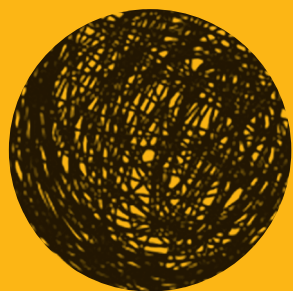
As you can see, the collage response and the final piece are multi-layered, detailed images that borrow from many different styles, periods and languages.

1 William Daniels, *Self-portrait with Casts (The Image Seller)*, c. 1850. Oil on canvas. Katrin Bellinger Collection.

2 Mark Hampson, *Study for The Sculptress (The Image Seller)*, 2016. Photocopy collage and pencil.

3 Mark Hampson, *The Sculptress (The Image Seller)*, 2016. Acrylic paint, ink, pencil crayon and chalks on board.

Activity



Choose one artwork from the RA's collection in the galleries or online as your starting point and then pilfer the world of art to create your own composition. Fusing a diverse range of images borrowed from whatever sources interest you, you can interpret your original image in your own style.

Not sure how or where to start?

If you're struggling to start, you might like to consider these questions:

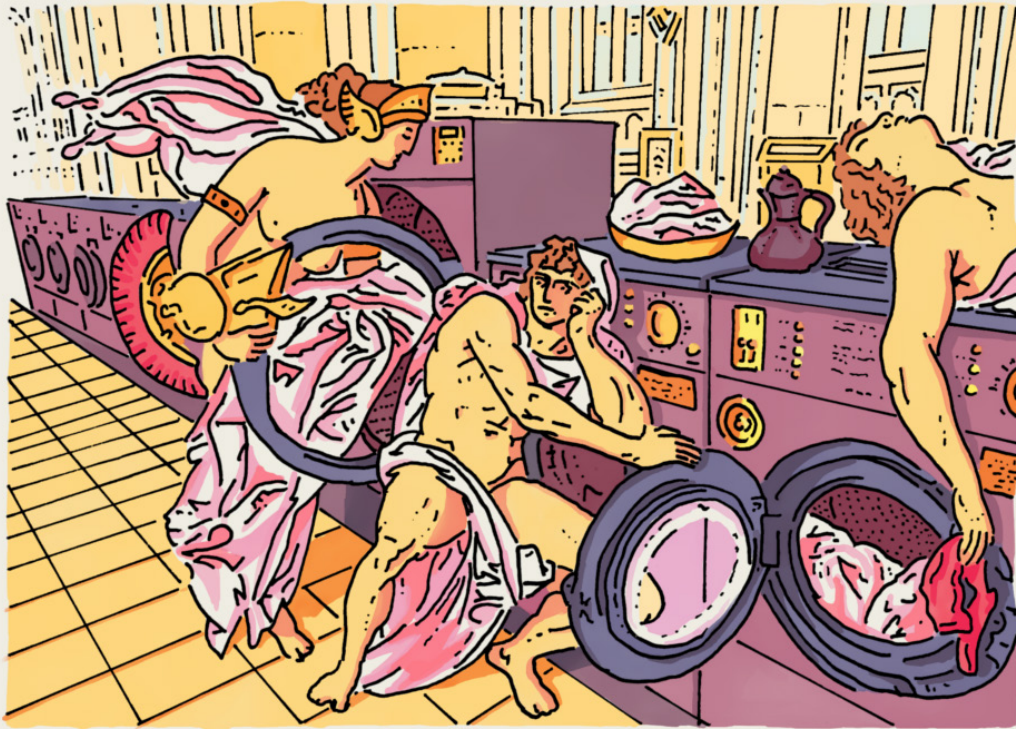
- Will you start with a collage? If so, will you use an online programme or an app to make your collage or will you cut and paste with scissors and glue?
- How many time periods and styles will you include in your piece?
- How will you find your inspiration? Will you focus on works from the Royal Academy collection or could you use google, packaging, posters, magazines, book illustrations, flyers, and newspapers too?

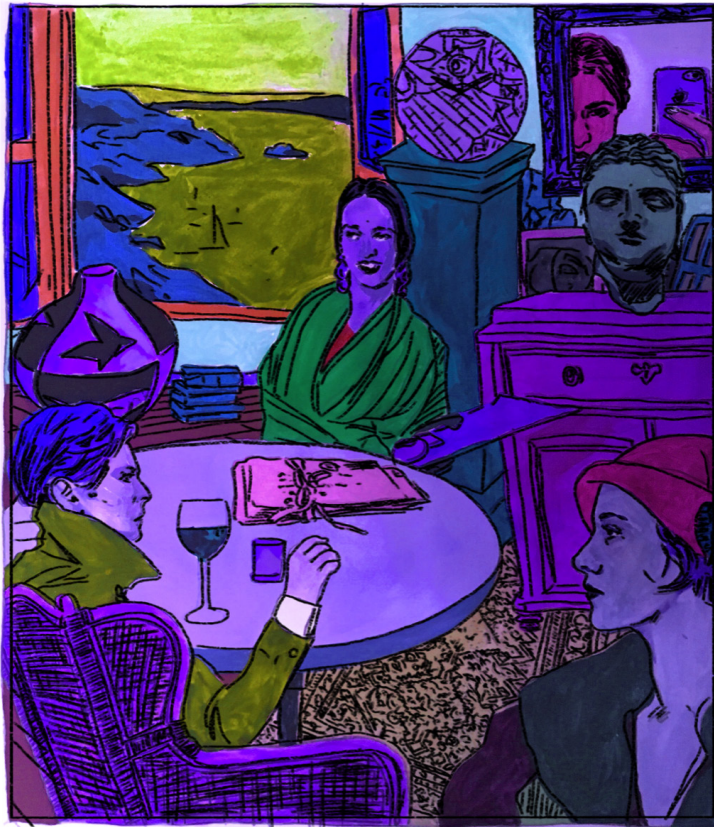


Accompanying artworks and cover image created by **Aparna Mitra, Jane Wu, Joseph Hornsby** and **Lily Tyler** during an online workshop in 2020 led by **Mark Hampson**, Head of Fine Art Processes for the RA Schools as part of the attRAct programme, a free year-long programme for young people aged 15–19.









Glossary

Appropriation in visual arts, describes how artists borrow, recycle, and reuse aspects of other, often but not necessarily historical, works of art. The French artist Marcel Duchamp is well known for this.

Casts are reproductions of notable monuments and sculptures from around the world. These reproductions were made using plaster moulds because they enabled students and admirers the opportunity to study accurate copies of important works of art. Drawing from casts of classical sculptures is how many of the student artists at the Royal Academy began their training. Students don't train by drawing plaster casts anymore, but you can still find a lot of them in our collection.

Collage is the name for the artwork and technique in which ephemera such as receipts, newspaper clippings, and photographs are arranged and assembled on another surface such as paper, canvas, or board.

Renaissance is a word meaning 'rebirth' in French. It relates to an era in Europe from the 14th to 16th century during which artists and scholars began to investigate classical literature, art, and learning with renewed interest. The works of artists like Michelangelo, Leonardo and Raphael are considered epitomes of the period.

A **Sample** is a portion of a song, piece of music, or recording reused in another recording. Jazz musicians in the early part of the 20th century often paid respect to their peers by including snippets of melodies or hooks from their compositions in their live performances. Sampling was also an important aspect of musique concrète, an experimental type of music composition that used techniques like looping, splicing, and the manipulation of pre-recorded samples. Sampling is an integral part of hip hop music, in which funk and soul records were sampled and rapped over.