

# Copyleft

‘At least half of the words uttered in everyday circumstances have been already uttered by others.’ Michail Bachtin

In the era of technical reproduction, the meaning of the original is defined by its copy, which is not always only a mapping and imitation, but it is also the processing and preservation of the existing content. The concept of the original is connected with innovation and development and we should therefore protect a unique work by granting it a license. On the other hand, exaggerated ownership leads to the monopolisation of the market, is a source of capital accumulation and may also block creative activities. ‘If we do not provide creators with any protection of their rights, they may lack motivation to invest time and energy in creating art, but too reactionary property rights also lead to deadlock’<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, forms of artistic expression that are constructed from fragments of other artists’ works may disappear. This applies, above all, to collages, pastiches and parodies in visual art and literature. License restrictions on copyright affect the change of cultural landscape and sampled music in particular<sup>2</sup>. If this restrictive property right had been formerly in force, we would probably never see ‘L.H.O.O.Q. (Gioconda)’ by Marcel Duchamp. It is difficult to imagine the inability to quote in literature, considering the

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<sup>1</sup> Michael A. Heller, Columbia Law School

<sup>2</sup> Sampled songs of bands Beastie Boys and Public Enemy cannot be presented publicly.  
[https://www.alternet.org/2004/06/how\\_copyright\\_law\\_changed\\_hip\\_hop/](https://www.alternet.org/2004/06/how_copyright_law_changed_hip_hop/)

works of Cervantes, Mindaugas and Rabelais – writers who parodied existing literary themes.

Originality and uniqueness in art are not individual. 'A being – a face, a gesture, an event – is special when, without resembling *any* other, it resembles *all* the others'<sup>3</sup>. The sense of creativity is not only manifested in individual expression; it also depends on the opening of the space in which the creating subject constantly disappears. Emphasising uniqueness by licensing art creates a hierarchical system in which prestige is achieved through marketing strategies.

This favours the emergence of legal monopolies and social polarisation. Privileged areas are developed, imposing the rules of the commodity market, the importance of which is built through the use of economically less developed areas. Patent corporations emerge and use licenses to block economic development. Monopoly increases the value of the product, thus reducing access to it.

The exhibition entitled *Copyleft* features works critically related to the subject of copyright licensing as well as public content reproduction and copying.

Daniel Koniusz presents his 'Untitled (RA, MA, DG, DA, CA)' object, which is a material remix consisting of five marble plates covered with molten vinyl obtained from about sixty albums of analogue licensed music publishing houses (Deutsche Grammophon, RCA, Columbia, Muza, Decca ). **Radosław Włodarski** treats his musical mix as a form of artistic expression, thus giving consent to its public presentation. Artistic group '**Galeria Niewielka**' (Maciej Kurak, Max Skorwider) presents a project entitled 'Unrecognised' – a copy of Magdalena Abakanowicz's work and a film about its appropriation.

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<sup>3</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, New York: Zone Books, 2007, p. 59.

**Urszula Szkuclarek** builds aesthetic objects – bombs based on regulations found on the internet. As part of the action known as *art for everyone*, **Grzegorz Myćka** distributes 105 copies of his poster. As copyrights cease to exist within 70 years of the creator's death, we present a copy of the work 'L.H.O.O.Q. (Gioconda)' by Marcel Duchamp and a reproduction of the sign 'Do not let them rob you' by **Wilhelm Sasnal**.