

The Redo Of The Artworks

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Abstract

Artists and designers frequently return to existing images, objects, techniques, and traditions. A “redo” may involve restoration, reconstruction, copying, appropriation, parody, adaptation, remix, re-performance, or the translation of an earlier work into a different material or social context. These practices are not equivalent. Conservation seeks to stabilize and interpret an object responsibly, while artistic appropriation may deliberately transform meaning. This paper examines the redo of artworks through art history, fashion and textile practice, museum conservation, copyright, cultural ownership, and digital technology. It argues that originality should not be understood as creation without precedent. Creative work develops through citation, repetition, learning, and revision, but ethical interpretation requires transparency about sources, attention to power, and respect for cultural significance. The paper analyzes tapestry, knitting, crochet, lace, quilting, beading, resist dyeing, and digital reproduction as processes through which old forms acquire new meanings. It also discusses the difference between inspiration and exploitation, especially when designers use Indigenous, sacred, or marginalized cultural expressions. A successful redo does not merely decorate an existing work. It establishes a visible and critically responsible relationship among the source, the new maker, the material process, and the contemporary audience.

Introduction

The claim that “everything has already been done” appears regularly in discussions of art and design. It reflects anxiety that contemporary makers work within a world already filled with images, styles, and objects. Yet artists have always learned by copying, revising, translating, and competing with earlier work. Renaissance painters reinterpreted classical forms; modernists transformed non-European objects; fashion designers repeatedly revive silhouettes and techniques; digital artists sample and recombine existing media.

The word *redo* is useful but imprecise. It may describe repairing a damaged painting, recreating a lost installation, adapting a motif to clothing, or deliberately challenging the authority of a famous image. Ethical and aesthetic judgment depends on which practice is occurring.

This paper argues that the redo should be understood as a relationship rather than a secondary object. The new work relates to a source, but that relationship may involve preservation, criticism, homage, commercial extraction, or cultural dialogue. Analysis should therefore examine intention, method, attribution, material change, historical context, and power.

Originality as Transformation

Modern culture often treats originality as complete novelty. Art history shows a different pattern. Artists develop within traditions that provide techniques, subjects, genres, and visual languages. Even rejection depends on what is being rejected.

Walter Benjamin's (1936/2008) essay on mechanical reproduction considers how reproduction changes the authority and presence of an artwork. Reproductions expand access but alter the relationship to the unique object. In a digital environment, this process accelerates because images circulate, change scale, lose captions, and become raw material for new creation. (Benjamin, 2008)

A redo can therefore be original through selection, transformation, and argument. The important question is not whether an influence exists but what the new work does with it. A direct copy presented as independent invention conceals its relation; a thoughtful adaptation makes that relation part of the meaning.

Copying as Education

Copying has long served as artistic training. Students reproduce masterworks to study composition, color, proportion, brushwork, carving, or textile structure. The goal is not to deceive but to understand through making.

Educational copies should be identified as studies and distinguished from originals. Museums and academies have historically supported copying under controlled conditions. Digital access now allows students to study high-resolution images, although screen reproduction cannot fully communicate texture, scale, weight, and surface.

Copying becomes creative when the maker begins to recognize decisions within the source and develops alternatives. The exercise can reveal that an apparently natural image is the result of constructed choices.

Restoration, Conservation, and Reconstruction

Conservation concerns the care of cultural property. Conservators investigate materials, condition, history, and significance before intervention. The objective is generally to slow deterioration and preserve access while respecting evidence.

Restoration may reduce the visual impact of damage or return an object toward a known earlier state. Reconstruction recreates missing elements or, in some cases, an entire work from documentation. These processes contain interpretation. A conservator must decide how much loss to fill, whether additions should be visible, and which historical state deserves priority. (Brandi, 2005)

Professional ethics emphasize documentation, minimal necessary intervention, compatible materials, and reversibility or retreatability where possible. The International Council of Museums treats conservation as a professional responsibility involving cultural context, not cosmetic improvement. A restored artwork should not be made to look simply “new” if that appearance erases age, use, or historical modification. (International Council of Museums, 2017)

Appropriation, Quotation, and Parody

Appropriation art deliberately incorporates existing imagery or objects. The act may question authorship, commodity value, gender, race, advertising, or institutional power. Quotation makes an identifiable reference, while parody uses imitation to create critical or comic distance.

Meaning depends on transformation and context. Marcel Duchamp’s use of a mass-produced urinal as *Fountain* changed the status of the object by relocating and naming it. Later artists have reproduced canonical paintings to question who is represented and who controls art history.

Appropriation is controversial because artistic critique can coexist with unequal benefit. A powerful artist or fashion company may gain prestige by using forms developed by a marginalized community without permission, credit, or compensation. The defense that “all art borrows” does not address differences in ownership and power.

Textile Techniques as Historical Archives

Textiles contain knowledge of labor, technology, gender, trade, ecology, and community. Tapestry, knitting, crochet, lace, quilting, beading, and dyeing are not merely decorative methods. They record ways of organizing material and social relationships.

A contemporary designer who returns to a textile technique may preserve endangered knowledge, create employment, or reveal overlooked labor. The same project may become exploitative if artisans are treated as anonymous suppliers while the designer receives authorship.

Analyzing a textile redo should therefore include who performed the work, where materials came from, how knowledge was transmitted, and how economic value was distributed.

Tapestry and Narrative Reinterpretation

Tapestry is produced by weaving colored weft threads to create an image or pattern. Historically, large tapestries communicated religious, political, and dynastic narratives while providing insulation and portable prestige.

Contemporary artists use tapestry to reconsider digital images, popular culture, war, migration, and

personal memory. Translating a photograph or screen image into woven form slows the image and makes labor visible. Pixels and woven units can create a conceptual connection between digital and textile structures.

A redo in tapestry changes scale, texture, time, and use. The subject may remain recognizable, but the method changes how viewers understand it. The work no longer functions only as a copy; it becomes an argument about material and attention.

Knitting, Crochet, and Lace

Knitting and crochet construct fabric through loops rather than interlaced warp and weft. Lace creates open structures through thread manipulation. These techniques have often been associated with domestic feminine labor and therefore excluded from definitions of major art.

Contemporary artists use them to challenge the division between art and craft. Enlarged knitted forms, public yarn installations, and sculptural crochet transform familiar practices. The redo may involve taking a domestic pattern and changing scale or context so that invisible labor becomes public.

Designers should distinguish shared techniques from protected cultural designs. A basic stitch may circulate widely, while a ceremonial pattern may carry community-specific meaning.

Quilting and Fabric Piecing

Quilting joins layers of fabric through stitching, while piecing assembles smaller sections into a larger surface. Quilts can preserve clothing fragments, family history, community aesthetics, and political messages.

Reusing fabric makes the redo literal: earlier materials become part of a new composition. The source remains physically present. Contemporary art quilts may reinterpret traditional blocks, maps, photographs, or protest imagery.

The history of quilting also demonstrates why attribution matters. Museums and markets have sometimes celebrated anonymous folk creativity while failing to record the names and circumstances of women, Black makers, and working-class communities. A responsible contemporary reference should acknowledge those histories.

Beading and Cultural Significance

Beading can communicate identity, status, spirituality, kinship, and historical experience. Materials and patterns may be specific to Indigenous nations or regional communities. Commercial fashion

often borrows beadwork because it is visually distinctive.

Ethical collaboration requires more than employing a generic “tribal” description. Designers should identify the tradition accurately, seek appropriate permission, work with community artists, provide authorship and compensation, and avoid sacred or restricted designs.

The redo becomes a respectful collaboration when the originating community participates in meaning and benefit. It becomes appropriation when culture is extracted as surface style. (Scafidi, 2005; Young, 2008)

Resist Dyeing and the Movement of Technique

Resist dyeing prevents color from reaching selected areas through wax, binding, folding, stitching, or paste. Batik, tie-dye, shibori, adire, and other methods emerged in specific cultural and technological contexts.

Techniques travel through trade, colonization, migration, education, and fashion. A contemporary redo can reveal these histories rather than presenting the method as a trend without origin. Material research should consider fiber, dye, water, labor, and environmental impact.

Industrial printing may imitate the appearance of handmade resist dyeing without its process. This distinction matters because visual resemblance does not preserve craft knowledge or sustain artisans.

Fashion Designers and the Archive

Fashion repeatedly revisits historical silhouettes, artworks, and craft. Designers may quote paintings, museum collections, religious imagery, or earlier garments. The runway provides a new context in which references become part of branding and seasonal storytelling.

Giles Deacon, known for dramatic illustration, sculptural form, and historical reference, demonstrates how fashion can combine archive and contemporary construction. Analysis should not stop at identifying resemblance. It should examine how material, body, movement, and audience change the source.

Fashion’s rapid commercial cycle creates ethical pressure. A craft requiring weeks of labor may be reduced to a printed imitation. Collaboration and transparent sourcing can resist this tendency, but marketing should not exaggerate social benefit.

Digital Redo and Artificial Intelligence

Digital tools make it possible to scan, restore, remix, animate, and generate variations of artworks. These technologies expand access and can support conservation research. Three-dimensional models may document objects, while virtual reconstructions can illustrate lost architecture.

Generative artificial intelligence creates new concerns because models learn from large collections of existing images. The output may resemble artists' styles without consent or attribution. A prompt-based image can conceal the labor and source material that made the model possible.

Digital work should document the tools and source relationship. When reconstruction includes uncertain elements, uncertainty should be visible rather than hidden behind photorealism.

Copyright, Moral Rights, and the Public Domain

Copyright grants limited rights over original expression, while exceptions may permit criticism, parody, scholarship, or transformative use depending on jurisdiction. Public-domain status removes some copyright restrictions but does not eliminate ethical responsibilities.

Moral rights may protect attribution and integrity. Museums may also control access to physical objects or reproductions. Indigenous cultural expressions raise issues that conventional individual copyright does not adequately address because knowledge may be collective, intergenerational, and governed by customary law.

Artists should obtain legal advice for specific projects. Ethical practice should exceed the minimum required by law when communities and vulnerable creators are involved.

A Framework for Evaluating an Artwork Redo

Question	Why it matters
What is the source, and is it identified?	Attribution allows viewers to understand the relationship
What has been transformed?	Material, scale, function, context, and meaning determine originality
Is the project conservation or new creation?	The practices carry different ethical and evidentiary claims

Question	Why it matters
Who owns or governs the cultural knowledge?	Legal availability may not equal cultural permission
Who performed the labor and receives value?	Authorship and compensation reveal power relationships
Are interventions documented?	Documentation protects historical understanding
What environmental costs arise?	Materials, dyes, energy, and waste are part of the work's ethics
Does the redo create a critical relationship?	Transformation should contribute more than visual novelty

Conclusion

The redo of artwork is not evidence that creativity has ended. It is one of the principal ways art develops. Artists learn through copies, conservators interpret damaged objects, designers reactivate techniques, and contemporary makers challenge earlier images through appropriation and parody.

Because redoing establishes a relationship, it also creates responsibilities. Sources should be visible, conservation decisions documented, craft labor credited, and cultural knowledge treated with respect. The most serious ethical problems occur when a powerful maker presents another community's work as raw material without history or benefit.

Originality should therefore be evaluated through transformation and accountability rather than isolation. A meaningful redo changes how the source can be seen while allowing the source to remain legible. It makes time, process, and position part of the artwork. When these relationships are handled critically, the redo can preserve knowledge, challenge inherited canons, and create forms that are genuinely new because they understand what came before.

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