

Mix and Mash, take it, change it

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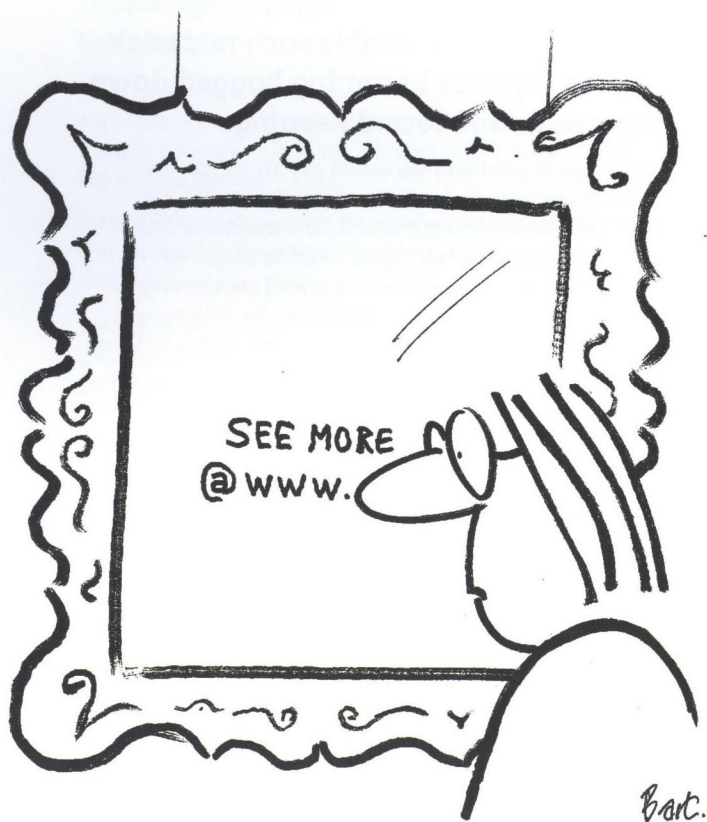
one time. New sampling techniques had to be developed with detailed recording of data.

The response of many universities was to set up, often within libraries, units to manage this digital information. The University of Adelaide set up the Digital Resources Management Centre which scanned materials and made them available both via the library catalogue and links in our online teaching interface MyUni.

In the last two years, this has progressed further. Software (in our case Equella) has become available whereby one digital teaching object can be made available in a collection (Online Content) and it can be linked to by lecturers for their MyUni teaching programmes. We can limit availability to specific classes, thus reducing the exposure of the article and the resultant CAL survey numbers. It is hoped that this will keep CAL payments by universities to a reasonable level.

In terms of visual images, as the situation seems less clear-cut, the University advises lecturers to fully cite the source of artistic works and provide each image with a copyright notice. ©

Margaret Hosking is Art History Librarian, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide.



mix and mash take it change it

The terms remix or mashup refer to recombinatory practices across different artforms. The terms are rooted in music, and they were probably first used about the release in 2004 of the *Grey Album* by Danger Mouse, which mixed the Beatles' *White Album* and Metallica's *Black Album*.

A mashup is what it sounds like. You mash together at least two songs. Inevitably, you get a comic and/or a simultaneous jukebox sort of effect, in a mode where you're synthesising lots of different sources all at once.

If we start looking at this art historically, we see that while we may not have had the technology to create mashups like this before, the idea of syncretism, of marrying multiple sources, and using them for different purposes, goes back a long way. If we just take one of the threads – the musical thread – we go well back beyond the 80s and 90s, into the 70s with tape sampling and the 50s and 60s, to the French movement that valorised found sounds – *musique concrète*. And prior to that, at the turn of the century the Dadaists and Futurists both employed similar kinds of practices, and certainly very similar approaches.

Max Ernst was into the idea of using mass media imagery, mass ephemera, and putting unusual juxtapositions together in a collage. It's obvious to see how it's only one more step into moving image work, and of course Ernst did make quite a number of experimental films.

In film and video there are a lot of different ways of repurposing moving images and certainly different academic approaches to it. So you can get something that's just a homage where you're using someone's material, or you're inspired by it. You can also actually physically collage materials. Don't ask me what the difference between collage and montage is, because no one in experimental film agrees on anything. It's 'the nerve of cinema', as Eisenstein says, and it happens in the postproduction editing process.

There's the compilation documentary, which was a major form, especially in the 20th century, often related to another Soviet filmmaker, Esther Shub, who brought together new films out of existing film material. It's only really a step from that into the other genre which is found footage film – a massive genre in avant-garde film, often facilitated as much by poverty, convenience, or opportunity as by pure artistic intentionality.

A famous film of this genre is *Very Nice, Very Nice* (1961) by the Canadian Arthur Lipsett. Today people certainly do still talk about found footage film, but we're starting to see a version of the discourse emerge around the idea of open source filmmaking. It's not just film production; distribution and exhibition are all going this way. The new media theorist who's recently taken a deeper historical view on this is Lev Manovich who's been talking about remixing taking place on a 'remixability' continuum.

A quick tour of that continuum from the point of view of someone who's hopelessly biased towards artists' film and video would start with someone like the American surrealist artist Joseph Cornell with what are known as the Cornell boxes – glass-fronted assemblages often using a lot of different found objects, in the tradition of the Readymade.

What people don't usually know is that Cornell's also a very highly regarded avant-garde film maker who applied the same approach he used in his sculptural assemblages to the moving image. This mode is also called camera-less film. He never once picked up a camera: just used lengths of film, cutting, and splicing them back together, as a sculpture. Cornell's effectively mixed the found footage in the same way he might mix found, received or gifted objects in a shadow box – but with the unfolding dimension of *time*.

In his *The Children's Party* trilogy, there's some slowed-down material and there are some images that he's found, which he holds on screen just long enough for you to think about what it is you're seeing, for instance an image from a children's pageant of a young girl in the role of Lady Godiva on horseback, with very long shining hair. You can see the framing and there's nothing suspect or 'pedo' about it. But he is trying to make you feel a little uncomfortable, a little bit aware in a way that was for me when I revisited the film, slightly uncanny, certainly in the contemporary debate about representing children.

But the big film, the one that people always talk about with Cornell, is *Rose Hobart*. If you are ever looking for a celluloid ancestor for the remix, I think it's here in this film. Basically he takes a Hollywood B-film, an obscure steamy pot-boiler called *East of Borneo* from 1931. It happens to feature this sexy actress called Rose Hobart in the lead, and Cornell just cut out all his favourite scenes, which seem to consist of midshots of beautiful Rose looking all romantic and misty, and brought them all together to make *Rose Hobart*. So it's an early fan video, maybe with just a few creepy stalker – or Stalker-esque undertones, but also a brilliant example of this recombinatory approach that is a direct manifestation or outgrowth of the artist's assemblage practice.

Some other examples drawn from the canon of avant-garde experimental artist film are by Bruce Conner who died last year, a really amazing San Francisco artist who famously incorporated a lot of found footage into his films; and Stan VanDerBeek, who started as a collage artist working across different forms of moving images and became one of the early pioneers of computer-generated and video art. He moved into the sphere of expanded cinema which is experiencing something of a resurgence at the moment – the multiplication and use of many different projections and many different image sources, often with a live element.

A number of contemporary film artists are revisiting this particular form in live audiovisual performance. Vicki Bennett performs the expanded piece *People Like Us* around the world, using things like found industrial footage, stock footage or government films in a new context.

The film *RiP: A Remix Manifesto* is currently screening on a limited distribution release. It is a tour through some of the ideas of open source cinema, while itself being an open source cinema document. It features a rather awesome band called Girl Talk, and there is an image from the film burnt into the lawn. What the film brings up – and this brings me back to mashups – is fundamental ties to the internet, and therefore globality and digital nativity. But it's also about a shift to thinking about the world as an archive, a playground, a warehouse, a smorgasbord or a skip. Or, as some people say in this film, an over-rich ecology in the sense that we don't need to make any more images. There are too many out there already. What we should be doing is reusing the ones that are there. These, obviously, are not new ideas. Paul Winkler is an experimental filmmaker who uses techniques like this. The video artist Emile Zile has done similar sort of things in performance.

I believe we're on a collision course between some really quite different world views.

What is evident in the world of young people working with a remix culture is that despite the wonderful idealism of Creative Commons in relation to permissions, there is a valorisation of theft, vandalism and appropriation. People talk about copyfighting – being copyfighters and anti-copyright. To these people the idea of text as property is a joke. Text is just a source. There's no such thing as original creation. There's only copying and pasting and derivation. There is a shift from even talking about, or thinking about artworks and materials. They're thinking about things existing purely as data, or information, or files. And in relation to publishing it's obviously going to present certain... constraints.



Yet again we're hearing the death of the author proclaimed and a new kind of foregrounding of the ideas of attribution and recognition. How are we to respond to work which contests ideas of authorship? If the work has been widely shown, marketed and sold as a commodity in the art market, and/or consumed by audiences like any other media spectacle, there is a kind of interesting hypocrisy going on.

But maybe even more importantly, there may have already been a paradigm shift which we are not ready to recognise, which is in the minds of not just Generation Y, but every generation after them – a shift in the conception of who the artist or author is, away from being a primary original genius towards a content generator from whose work other people create tertiary artworks in an essentially collaborative remix zone. ☹

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amanda matulick

collaborative practice

A number of years ago the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT) made the decision to adopt open source licences for its print magazine *Filter* – and, feeling consistently comfortable in the fact that the licence choice was protective yet encouraging, we haven't looked back since.

With the recent release of *Filter's* new digital home, and amidst national conversations around digital archiving, it is a pertinent time for such discussions. In the steady growth of open source culture and the adoption of flexible licences the creative process is further encouraged. Creation for creation's sake.

The ever-growing (more in numbers, less quietly) open source initiative is the creative practice of free-sharing where content is released for any and all to use, reuse or remix, often driven by aspirations to contribute to the greater good. Examples of this are rife in research, science and the arts – but perhaps most evidently in peer-to-peer sharing through websites, blogs and social networking sites. Clearly a unified approach to creation is quickly becoming the preferred model. As stated by Andrew Lowenthal: 'The one-to-many model is being surpassed by the many-to-many; the masses are being replaced by the network; command by collaboration...'

A classic example of open source ethos is the Graffiti Research Lab (GRL) New York, who strive to technologically empower individuals to creatively alter and reclaim their surroundings.

GRL are committed to working in and for the public domain and release much of their work under open source licences, without patents but with DIY instructions. In their commitment, they lure in unknowing advertisers looking to cash in on their success and Rickroll them with one quick 'click here' (a common online prank where a seemingly legitimate link results in the unsuspecting victim being taken to a video of the 1987 Rick Astley song *Never Gonna Give You Up*).

In ANAT's case we chose to adopt Creative Commons (CC) licences, which through their 'some rights reserved' system, allow creators and publishers to manage licensing with the level of protection and freedom required for digital environments. (See p36 this issue Artlink.)

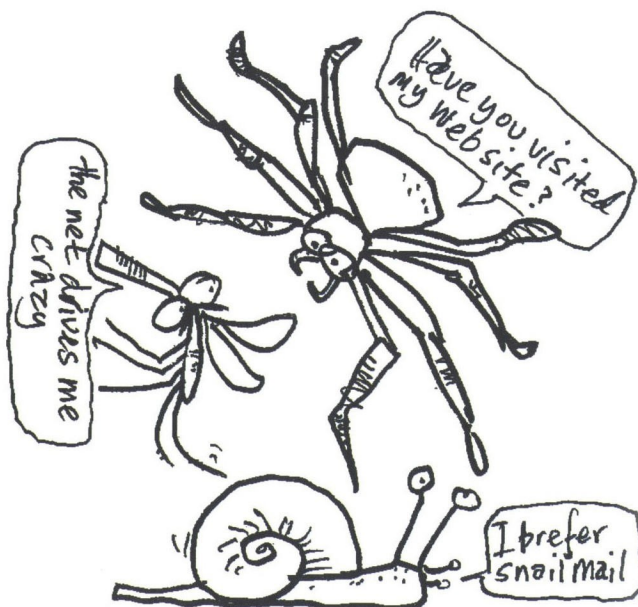
Our move away from traditional copyright models only strengthens our belief that artists should be at the centre of culture, society and economy and that creative projects developed for shared experiences add more value to our living culture. Through adopting CC licences that are protective yet encouraging we strive to increase the functionality of the work and generate future use and dialogue around the creative industries.

Operating under the belief that creation is a shared experience rather than about ownership leaves room for creative experimentation. And experiment we do. ☹

Further reading
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<http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons>
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