"Bad artists copy. Great artists steal."

-Pablo Picasso

No artwork posted in a public forum is sacred; anytime an artwork becomes public, it is liable to contextual changes, forgery, and reuse by other artists. Entire art movements are based around the modification of past works and ideals. As an artist, one must accept the inevitable fact that there will inevitably be change to the artwork.

A case in point is Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa. One of the most famous paintings in the Western world, the Mona Lisa has been remixed, reused, and reinterpreted many times over. Long after da Vinci finished the work (ca. 1507), artists from Basquiat, to Warhol, to Bansky have all worked with this image, continually changing its concept, context, and form. Perhaps the most famous is Duchamp's rendition, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, where he painted a mustache and beard on the face of the Mona Lisa on a postcard print, and retitled it.

Another notable example of reuse is Apache, a song originally written by Jerry Lordan, and recorded by The Shadows in 1960. Later recorded by the Incredible Bongo Band in 1973, this version was mixed with more percussion and a bongo drum. This single has become one of the most sampled works in hip-hop, with artists such as the Sugarhill Gang, Fatboy Slim, Nas, and The Roots using portions in their works.

The reinterpretations of both Apache and the Mona Lisa are interesting examples of how work, new and old, are constantly being remixed. Artists have started to realize this, and rather than fighting the notion, are working with it to open up new possibilities. One notable group of artists doing this is the Free Art and Technology (F.A.T.) Lab. They are "dedicated to enriching the public domain through the research and development of creative technologies," (Free Art and Technology). All of their work is public domain, and they encourage people to reuse, modify, and rework any and all of it. Through

collaborations with other artists the Lab has created some truly unique works, such as the EyeWriter – a low-cost research project that allows people with severe physical disabilities to remain creative through the movement of their eyes. The F.A.T. Lab, amongst others, embrace collaboration, rather than being adverse to it. Because of this, there is a great deal of surprising new work coming from creatives, especially on the web.

There has never been a time in human history where so many individuals are connected. It is a truly global network. In an interview with BBC, the man credited with the invention of the World Wide Web – Sir Tim Berners-Lee – stated that the internet is still in its infancy. He also expresses strong interest in the future of collaborative experiences within the web, saying, "The experience of the development of the web by so many people collaborating across the globe has just been a fantastic experience," (BBC) Berners-Lee went on to say, "The web has been a tremendous tool for people to do a lot of good, even though you can find bad stuff out there." The flood gates have been opened for all types of creative work, both negative and positive. The relative anonymity on the internet allows people to feel free to steal, remix, and reuse anything of their pleasing. The internet site 4chan is a great example of this.

4chan is an image-based bulletin board where unregistered users can participate under an anonymous guise. The site has many boards relating to different topics such as photography, auto, fashion, travel, etc. The fact that most users post under an anonymous name, allows a certain amount of freedom. This in turn encourages users to use any visual material, often times out of context, in hopes of amusing, scaring, or scarring others. There are only a few rules, and very small amounts of moderation in place on 4chan, which is part of the reason the site strives as much as it does.

This freedom is exactly what many graffiti writers enjoy, and why they will break the law to do so. In an email exchange between author of Graffiti: Art and Crime, Daniel Oliver Tucker, and a graffiti writer from Philadelphia named Coda, Coda says "To pour your soul onto a wall and be able to step back and see your fears, your hopes, your dreams, your weaknesses, really gives you a deeper

understanding of yourself and your own mental state," (Tucker). Later in the essay another graffiti artist, Phase2, comments, "For me this was a sport that belonged to me/us and the rules and regulations were all regulated by whoever had the knack to create an innovation within it." Taking control of one's environment is the name of the game in graffiti; changing, what one is forced to see and accept on a regular basis.

This change, is exactly where the RAUS Collective comes in. This project is a unique, web-based, visual arts collective that encourages the reinterpretation, reuse and remix of work. By encouraging users to steal, and remix any works in a no-holds barred fashion, the group will be constantly changing, and constantly reflecting on itself. Though users will have to register to be part of the community, there will still be a sense of anonymity given in the use of a pseudonym.

Much like many other sites, the collective will allow anyone to register, post work, and interact with the rest of the community. One can be proud of their work, yet remain anonymous, because of the pseudonym the user chooses when registering as a member of the collective. Artist Banksy has managed to keep his identity fairly well hidden, and because of this, has been able to do more risky ventures; the same lack of personal information in the collective will allow artists to be more venturous. These ventures will have a place to be exhibited on the collectives website, www.RAUSCollective.com.

The head of the website will be a gallery space, allowing users to browse through and see other works, as well as post works of their own. Though works that have been reconsidered in context, form and concept will be encouraged, brand new works will also be accepted. Because all of the works will exist in the public domain, everything on the website is free to any other internet user; this will again encourage the reinterpretation and reuse of work. This collective, much like the World Wide Web, is in its infancy – both are user-driven powerhouses that have the promise of change.

The first website was put online on the 6th of August 1991, by Sir Tim Berners-Lee and colleague Robert Caillau. These two men started something that has truly changed the world. As this

revolution progresses, we live in an opportune time to make change, quickly.   Again, this is where the RAUS Collective comes into play. By offering a different experience, users can start to control their environments. No longer will media be controlled by a select few media professionals, as in the past, mass media is in everyone's hands now. The hive mentality of the digital age is increasing our output, creativity and expectations.

Come play

Fuck often

Listen to music

Stumble, fall, get back up

Try new things

Regret nothing

Steal anything

Remix everything

Rinse

Repeat

If at any point you are afraid of what's to come, then leave now. We do not have time for you.
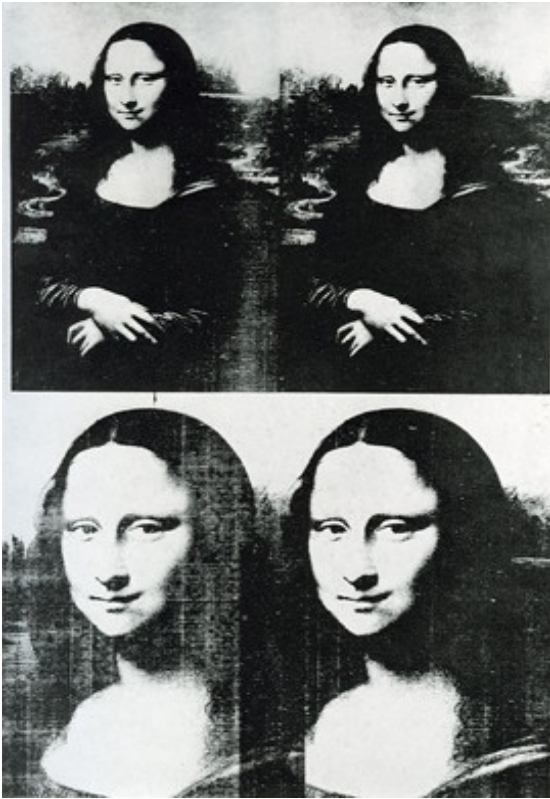
-Earl Carlson

Banksy

Figure 7, Jasper Johns, 1958

Four Mona Lisas, Andy Warhol, 1963

Mona Lisa, Fernando Botero, 1963

Mona Lisa, Jean Michel Basquiat, 1983   *Self Portrait as Mona Lisa,* Salvador Dali, 1964

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