



THE OTTAWA GUILD OF POTTERS

LA GUILDE DES POTIERS D'OTTAWA

Respecting One's Potential, the Creative Process and the Rights of Others **“Be who you are; everyone else is taken.” Oscar Wilde**

Author: This document has been prepared by the Ottawa Guild of Potters Standards and Education Committee. Members who participate in sales & shows are encouraged to be aware of copyright issues.

Objective: to promote awareness of one's potential and awareness of the social, commercial and legal liabilities in denying one's potential through copying the work of others.

Background: We have all learned by the examples of others, being inspired when we see work that enthralls us. Whether we see something on the internet, something taught to us in a workshop or something we see in a gallery or museum, the evolution of our craft depends not on copying or appropriating a style but by building on to it, making a significant change to make it our own. On the other hand copying or appropriating a style is in a sense denying our own creative potential.

It takes some bravery to recognize the difference between inspiration and feeling the need to copy. At that very point we could stop and recognize the situation. We could pause and distill the inspiration, we could wait for the percolation of ideas, we could wait for that fresh new image or flash of originality. Only then are we moving forward, only then are we not trampling the rights of others.

Over the years this has been a recurring issue in the Guild, largely not talked about and tip-toed around. It can be divisive.

The social implications in the past include having lost members who have given up in frustration over having their work more or less copied and often sold at unfair lower prices. This of course affects how professional potters view the Guild.

The innocent victim is the customer who believes they are buying an original 'one of a kind' as our radio ads proclaim.

In the extreme there are legal implications. The original artist could pursue any copyist with cease and desist orders, injunctions to close the Guild sale and fines of hundreds of dollars per copy. You might think that implausible but it almost happened once when a Guild member copied work by an artist at the Originals show. For the customer this can be confusing seeing an often inferior copy at one show and an original at another show. Again this is unfair to the originator.

This is a very large issue ranging from copying, from appropriating a style, and to actually selling a demonstration pot by an instructor as one's own.

Action: The Guild strives to increase awareness of these issues and we need to stress the Guild's objectives as stated in our mandate to maintain a high standard of artistic expression. To this end the Authenticity clause in the sale contract which is quite standard in many craft show applications, bring the guild up to the standard of the form used by Fusion in their Pottery and Glass sale. (2016)

Authenticity:

I _____ declare that I am the original designer, creator and producer of the work that I sell.

Some topical references on the web:

<http://whitneys-pottery.blogspot.ca/2009/05/double-edged-sword-of-etsy.html>

"I had another upsetting incident this week with someone copying my work."

<https://www.facebook.com/KiefferCeramics/posts/237364569713630>

"If folks can't discern one from the other, it's copying."

<http://mudbirdceramics.blogspot.ca/2012/07/ideas-ideas-ideas-put-your-mark-on-it.html>

"There has been a lot of talk in the Handmade/Craft circles of late of other people stealing ideas/patterns/designs and going on to create/sell them "

<http://www.alvalyn.com/drawing-the-line-between-imitation-and-creation/>

"Imitation is said to be the sincerest form of flattery, but it is the laziest form of creativity."