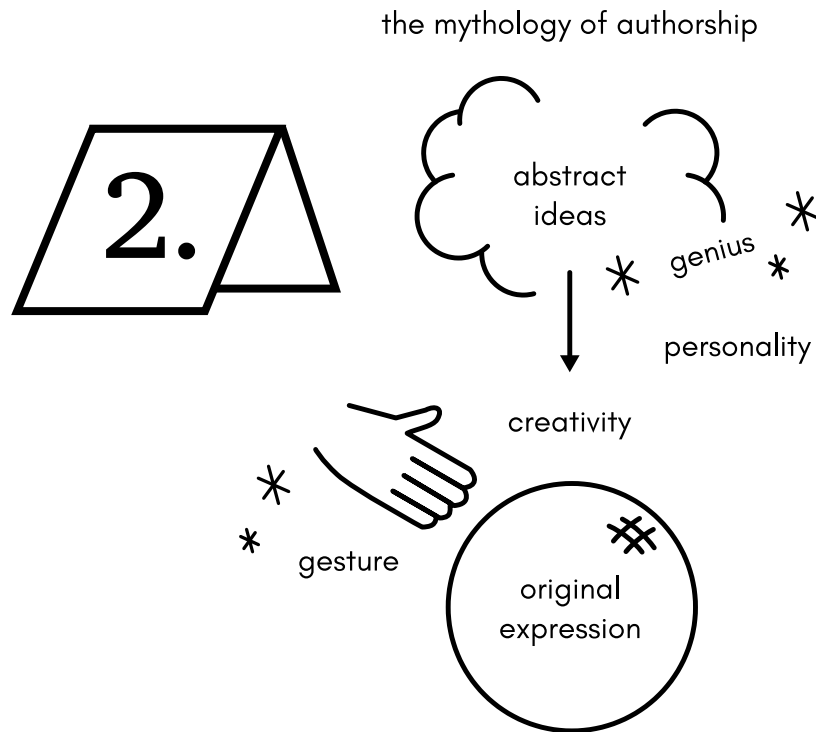


Copyright, the Basics



2.1. The Rights to Your Expressions: The Basics of Copyright

What follows is the story of copyright. As humans, we share the realm of abstract ideas. What artists do, so the story goes, is to take an abstract idea and make a series of creative choices informed by their personality in order to create an expression that is the artistic work. Because your personality is unique, your artistic work is original. And because the work is so tightly tied to your personality, you should be allowed to have some control over it. And because copyright was invented by writers and publishers, not by painters, the control that you have is not over the physical object through which your expression is fixed, but over its copies.

Once you are recognised as the author of something, copyright ensures you are the one who decides who can copy it. Copyright law says nothing about getting paid, but the underlying assumption is that you can leverage copyright by asking for compensation from whoever wants to publish or republish your work. Needless to say, the power of an artist to choose a publisher is not only about money. Often the publisher will play an important role in the creative process. A given publisher will also speak to a certain crowd and come with a certain image. Being able to choose how and where you publish is an important part of the work.

Next to regulating the copies of a work, copyright also regulates the reuse of your copyrighted work in a new work by another author. Most forms of sampling, adaptation and appropriation are, as far as copyright is concerned, still copies. The