

Sherrie Levine

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The world is filled to suffocating. Man has placed his token on every stone. Every word, every image, is leased and mortgaged. We know that a picture is but a space in which a variety of images, none of them original, blend and clash. A picture is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. Similar to those eternal copyists Bouvard and Pécuchet, we indicate the profound ridiculousness that is precisely the truth of painting. We can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. Succeeding the painter, the plagiarist no longer bears within him passions, humours, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense encyclopaedia from which he draws. The viewer is the tablet on which all the quotations that make up a painting are inscribed without any of them being lost. A painting's meaning lies not in its origin, but in its destination. The birth of the viewer must be at the cost of the painter.

Sherrie Levine, 'Statement' [incorporating appropriated phrases from sources such as Roland Barthes' 'The Death of the Author'], *Style* magazine, special issue as catalogue of 'Mannerism: A Theory of Culture', Vancouver Art Gallery (Vancouver, March 1982) 48; reprinted in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in Theory 1900-2000* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) 1067.