



Creative Theft: I Stole Dali's Dove

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“Art is theft.” ~ Pablo Picasso

The day after Thanksgiving Florida-based artist and designer [Terre Britton](#) ([@TerreBritton](#)) stole Dali's dove. While her act was brazen and her confession unremorseful, I suspect that [Austin Kleon](#) — author of [Steal Like an Artist](#) and [Newspaper Blackout](#) — would congratulate her creative theft and probably even encourage her to steal more!



Creative Theft: I Stole Dali's Dove, by Terre

“What a good artist [Britton](#) understands is that nothing comes from nowhere. All creative work builds on what came before. Nothing is completely original.” ~ Austin Kleon ([Steal Like an Artist](#))

Here's Britton's confession, published on her blog, [TerreBritton.com](#):

“[I Stole Dali's Dove](#) is based on... [a] sketch I produced... nearly 30 years ago. I had planned to leave the right side of the canvas blank... But then, I happened upon The Ecumenical Council (1960), by Salvador Dali, at the Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, FL, and I was wooed by his dove. It's in the top right of his magnificent canvas. Being that I was grappling with the concept of thievery, I wondered what it would be like to steal someone's art... so I did! ... I feel

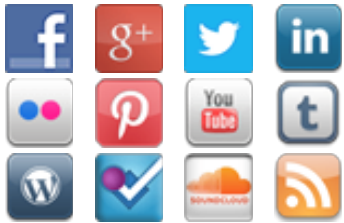
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“Writing is an exploration. You start from nothing and learn as you go.”  
— E.L. Doctorow

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quite satisfied and, at times, justified at having that lovely little dove accompanying, inspiring, and protecting me. ~ [Terre Britton](#)

Britton, co-author of [Energetics: The First Order](#) and owner of [Terrabyte Graphics](#), is no stranger to the increasingly strained relationship between creativity and copyright. Nor is she simply cribbing and cobbling for the sake of hitchhiking on the efforts of other artists. As the curator for [Creative Flux](#) Britton explores the creative process (which necessarily encompasses creative theft) through her own eyes as a writer and painter as well as the experiences of other creators. Here are a few recent excerpts.

“ I’m not officially Licensed to Write . . . but I do have a child’s irrepressible imagination. ~ Ruth Long ([Confessions of a Rogue Ink Slinger](#))

We must dive forward into the agony—sitting there with our face lying sideways on the desk—and discover within it every reason writing is an inanely bad idea... We will lie there and sob. Gnash our teeth... And when we are done, we will know something about life we didn’t know before. We will know how to survive... And then we’ll have something to write about. ~ Victoria Mixon ([Going Beyond the Beyond](#))

I’m convinced that the creative process for fiction writers is a messy mixture of imagination, insecurity, and wee bit of insanity. Combine ingredients, shake well, then get the synapses to start firing, and wait for sheer genius to flow from every pore in your body. ~ Karl Sprague ([Enjoy the Ride](#))

When you have the idea, you next have to figure out how to make it work in practice. It’s one thing to dream, but it’s completely another to engineer the final solution. ~ David Straker ([Creativity’s The Easy Bit](#))

As if intentionally melding these four observations, Britton’s painting is simultaneously placid and wrenching, disturbing and beguiling. The color-play between the eyes and the shirt, the uncomfortable framing, and the bouquet of textures (hair, shirt, feathers) all contribute to the painting’s unnerving impact. Certainly Britton has not copied [Dali’s Ecumenical Council!](#)

Her creative theft is a visual footnote to Dali’s painting, not an imitation. Her painting is a mashup/remix of diverse elements — a black and white sketch she completed three decades ago, a nod to Dali’s dove, and unconventional cropping/coloring choices — which result in a totally original and highly creative image. Proof positive that creative theft provides valuable, if not

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essential, ingredients for artists. After all, as Kleon reminds us, “The artist is a collector”, selectively culling ingredients gathered along life’s adventure, and then weaving these ingredients into art. Bravo, Terre! Keep stealing! Creative theft serves you well.

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- [Mashup Manifesto: Steal Like an Artist](#) (virtualdavis.com)

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