

Pastiche.

The term “pastiche” comes from the French *pastiche* or the Italian *pasticcio*, which originally meant a “pasty” or “pie” dish containing several different ingredients. It has come to be used synonymously with a variety of terms whose meanings are rarely fixed with clarity: parody, montage, quotation, allusion, irony, burlesque, travesty, and plagiarism. Most of them share, to some degree, what is essential to the notion of pastiche, namely, the imitation of one form of artistic medium (text, representation, music) by another. More often than not, pastiche is defined in comparison to the notion of parody. Although some definitions of pastiche strive to remain neutral, others have taken on a pejorative sense. Still others are more positive, especially within the realms of twentieth-century postmodern art and architecture.

At the most basic level, pastiche is considered to be a simple imitation—at the level of stylistic elements and identifiable structure—in comparison to a more complex type of imitation particular to parody. A strict formal textual imitation, pastiche is a borrowing of words, phrases, visual or musical motifs from the original that are reproduced in an imitation. In *A Dictionary of Architecture and Building*, Russell Sturgis (1902) defines pastiche as:

1. a. A work of art produced in deliberate imitation of another or several others, as of the works of a master taken together, and
2. b. Especially, in decorative art, the modification for transference to another medium, of any design.

Other neutral definitions were offered in the late 1970s and early 1980s by literary theorists Linda Hutcheon and Margaret A. Rose in their analyses of the corresponding notion of parody. For both, pastiche is more like quotation: a reproducing of the substance of a thought or image without alteration or afterthought. Like allusion, it adds a layer of reference to the past or to other contemporaneous works without construing it into something more than it is: simple reference. For example, Chippendale furniture reproduced the facades and decorations of classical stone and marble architecture in reduced wooden form; likewise, Philip Johnson’s postmodern AT&T building in Manhattan imitates and refers back to Chippendale furniture.

Hutcheon (1985) comments on the fact that in pastiche there is little or no room for creativity—“Pastiche usually has to remain within the same genre as its model, whereas parody allows for adaptation”—and that pastiche may be an imitation not of a single text but rather an indefinite number of texts. Whereas pastiche merely imitates or corresponds to the original, parody has been labeled a dual- or double-coded (double-voiced) hybridization. Parody seeks to do something more than just imitate, to differentiate itself from the original. It is repetition that includes some difference: “imitation with critical ironic distance.” There is a connection between the original and parody that is deeper than surface repetition. Thus the parody is doubled or multilayered in meaning, more adaptive to playful commentary on the original. According to Hutcheon, neither ridicule nor humor is essential to parody or pastiche; they are, however, essential to both burlesque and travesty.

In a more recent work by Hutcheon on adaptation (2006), the concept of pastiche is surprisingly abandoned in spite of the characterization of adaptations—a typically denigrated genre—as having “an overt and defining relationship to prior texts, usually revealingly called ‘sources.’” Unlike parodies, however, adaptations openly announce their relationship.” Again, in this view, parodies critically comment on the original whereas adaptations merely repeat with some added difference. Examples include the work of Hans Haacke and Sherry Levine “who take the work of others and ‘re-function’ it either by title changes or recontextualizing” (Hutcheon, [2006](#)).

Rose also sees parody as double-coded, but she includes a comic or humorous element to its essential character (Rose, [1993](#)). For her, pastiche is not “blind,” “blank,” or “humorless” parody, as Fredric Jameson suggested in the 1980s, since in her definition of parody, humor is essential. Pastiche is not lacking humor; it was never originally constituted in terms of humor. Rose notes the confusion of the term with “parody,” especially in French literature, clarifying that pastiche “is not only a much more recent term than parody, but differs from the latter in describing a more neutral practice of compilation which is neither necessarily critical of its sources, nor necessarily comic” (Rose, [1993](#), p. 72). Pastiche is further distinguished from fakes or forgeries (plagiarism) in terms of intention; for example, in architecture, pastiche is a compilation of different styles or motifs used deliberately and without the concealment characteristic of both the forgery and the more serious hoax. Unlike montage, it involves some added element of integration among the elements; far from slavish imitation, it can be used in a variety of “imaginative rather than derivative ways.”

In a more recent analysis, Rose adds the new notion of comic pastiche to the lexicon, in addition to viewing the visual arts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the lens of comic interpictureality, a term that broadens the concept of intertextuality to include both images found in visual art works and images within a literary work (Rose, [2011](#)). The works of René Magritte and Pablo Picasso exemplify pastiche whereas comic pastiche is found in works by British graffiti artist Banksy (who incorporates the Peanuts character Charlie Brown) and Los Angeles “King of Pop” artist Nelson De La Nuez (known to imitate the paintings of Roy Lichtenstein and to include characters from the movie *The Wizard of Oz*).

Pastiche has had its detractors, even in its short history. Edward Lucie-Smith’s *Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art Terms* begins with neutral terms (“a work of art using a borrowed style and usually made up of borrowed elements, but not necessarily a direct copy”) but then adds that pastiche “often verges on conscious or unconscious caricature, through its exaggeration of what seems most typical in the original model” (Lucie-Smith, [1984](#)). In Peter Murray and Linda Murray’s analysis in *A Dictionary of Art and Artists*, the meaning of pastiche borders on plagiarism: “an imitation or forgery which consists of a number of motives taken from several genuine works by any one artist recombined in such a way as to give the impression of being an independent original creation by that artist” (Murray and Murray, [1959](#)). Some academics who worry about issues of authorship note that most twenty-first-century artists and writers (including college students) who borrow frequently and without citing sources are guilty of plagiarism, that is, “passing off someone else’s words or ideas as one’s own”; they unethically appropriate intellectual property and then later, as artists, simply (and often insincerely) claim it as pastiche or “as an homage to a particular artist or mentor” (Mullin, [2009](#)).

But pastiche has its champions as well. Filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard was known for having referred back to the genre of film noir and also for paying tribute to François Truffaut in his 1966 film *Masculine-Feminine*, in which a female character sings a song from Truffaut's *Jules et Jim*.

Charles Jencks sees pastiche (like parody) as a method for positive, playful, and meaningful double-coding in postmodern art and architecture. He cites the example of Carlo Maria Mariani's *The Constellation of Leo*, also called *The School of Rome* (1980–1981), as an example of the role pastiche (combined with satire) can play in referring back to both modern neoclassical and modernist art, including (among others) *The School of Athens* by Raphael and *The Red Model* by René Magritte. The coupling of these borrowed elements with Mariani's fresh vision (the placing of Magritte's disembodied feet at the base of a classical statue) results in a double-coding of meaning within the elements of the work of art itself as well as at the level of historical style referring back in time: "modernism is also 'double-coded' with other periods via the use of pastiche, and the art of the 'modern' or of 'now' itself made a part of history" (Rose, [1993](#)). One theorist, Hal Foster, has gone so far as to consider pastiche the distinguishing mark of postmodern art: "Yet nearly every postmodern artist and architect has resorted, in the name of style and history, to pastiche; indeed it is fair to say that pastiche is the official style of this postmodernist camp" (Foster, [1985](#)). Jameson influenced this perspective as well, inspiring followers to see pastiche as a ubiquitous replacement for parody.

Other theorists have joined the discussion over the nuances of pastiche as it multiplies in various art forms. Ingeborg Hoesterey ([2001](#)) suggests that postmodern pastiche operates by means of cultural memory and the ostentatious borrowing practices of artists who set themselves apart from their predecessors, namely, modernists overly concerned with the distinction between high and low art. In effect, pastiche signals an "emancipatory aesthetics" that fosters critical thinking. Simon Dentith (2000) casts pastiche in its contemporary usage as a potpourri of fragments pieced together, particularly in painting: the imitation of another style without critical distance. Richard Dyer updates the concept of pastiche by introducing a wide range of examples such as films, videos, novels, poetry, rap tracks, music, and painting. Claiming that pastiche can contain montage or collage, Dyer ([2007](#)) asserts that pastiche is more self-aware and often deeply moving in its emotional impact; it is not, as often described, emotionally distancing. The cultural currency of the term has certainly increased; it remains to be seen, however, whether "pastiche" will ever replace "parody" in anything more than a user-friendly, trendy terminological shift toward simplicity.

[See also [Collage](#); and [Parody](#).]

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