June Kaminski
BellaOnline's Web Design Editor

Graphics and Ethics: What´s the Connection?

Beginner web designers have a multitude of graphical web resources available to them - all free for only a link back to the graphics site. Usually, as web development skill advances, designers turn to other venues to offer cutting-edge graphics. The most logical solutions come down to two choices. Make your own. Or buy them from a pro. There are other choices of course, ones that compromise one ´s online integrity and challenge the often unspoken ethical code of web designers. Simply, **"Thou shalt not steal!"**

Anyone who has taken the time to learn graphical software programs and advanced to the point where they can make decent graphics can relate to this dictum. Graphical design is not a piece of cake for most of us. It takes hours to master a good program like Adobe PhotoShop, Illustrator or PhotoImpact. It takes even more hours to carefully birth a splendid new graphic. Many talented artists offer free use of select collections of graphics for other web designers to use, **IF** they are given credit for their reations. Other artists offer legitimate use of their art without credit, **IF** a fee is paid. But most absolutely forbid the uncredited use of their work, or the addition of their selections into collections available through a third party on another site. Credit needs to be given where credit is due.

The Graphics Activists

Several online collectives have sprung up that help graphic designers protect their work. If you design graphics for free use or for sale on the web, you´d be wise to check these organizations out. If you are a user of such graphics, you too would benefit from visiting these sites and learning what the parameters of graphical use really are. It is simply not respectful to help yourself to any graphic that might catch your eye as you meander around the web. Again, credit must be given to the creator of this eye candy. The following sources offer groups, information and support for graphic creators and guidelines for graphic users.

About Digital Collections - informative page about the use of graphics illegally in graphic collection offerings, either online or CD.

GreyDay.org - support the creators of web content in their effort to eliminate online plagiarism, the unlicensed use of copyrighted works, and bandwidth robbery. The next Grey Day is October 1st, 2002 where the web turns grey for twenty four hours as all participating individuals and companies of the Web unite and speak with one strong voice by replacing their web sites´ entrance page/s with a special

grey page, as a statement of global support and fellowship with the artists, writers, musicians and programmers of the World Wide Web.

Look but Don´t Steal! - a heartfelt expressive plea from an online graphic artist for all users of graphics to consider.

Spider Awareness Page - Robyn Harton´s informative site that warns artists about "spiders", programmed web robots that can be directed to a) index your site to be included in search engines b) copy your text c) copy your images d) get your email address off your site.

The Copyright Files - their slogan: "Respect Artists. Don´t Steal!" Their mission: "Our purpose is to increase the knowledge of copyright laws across the internet, help to prevent violations due to ignorance (as well as just plain malice), and raise people´s awareness of how artists feel about their work and the respect they deserve."

The Eleventh Commandment - an initiative by Moyra, superb creator of "The Web Jewels" to deter illegal use of copyrighted web art.

R.I.G.H.T.S. - The Redistribution in Graphics Has To Stop offers support to stop the illegal use of graphics by web designers offering graphic and web design services inexpensively that include stolen graphics.

The Scoop.Net - Home of the Stop Cases of Online Plagiarism Network - supports artists of all types, writers, photographers, web and graphic designers, musicians, and such.

What is Copyright? Offers clear guidelines for artists and users of graphics on the scope of copyrighted web graphics. A must read for any graphic designer.