



Calligraphy CRUSH

MAGAZINE



FLOURISHING ON
SOCIAL MEDIA

CALLIGRAPHY CRUSH

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COVER ARTIST

Creative, inventive, and hardworking only begin to describe the talent of calligrapher and design artist **Dionne Christiansen (@nibandpixel)**.

From her first design job creating mood boards for an interior designer (while in high school), to her current invitation and calligraphy business, Dionne has relentlessly worked on translating people's ideas and dreams into creative pieces they love.

CONTRIBUTOR INDEX

Click here to see our contributors' biographies and websites.

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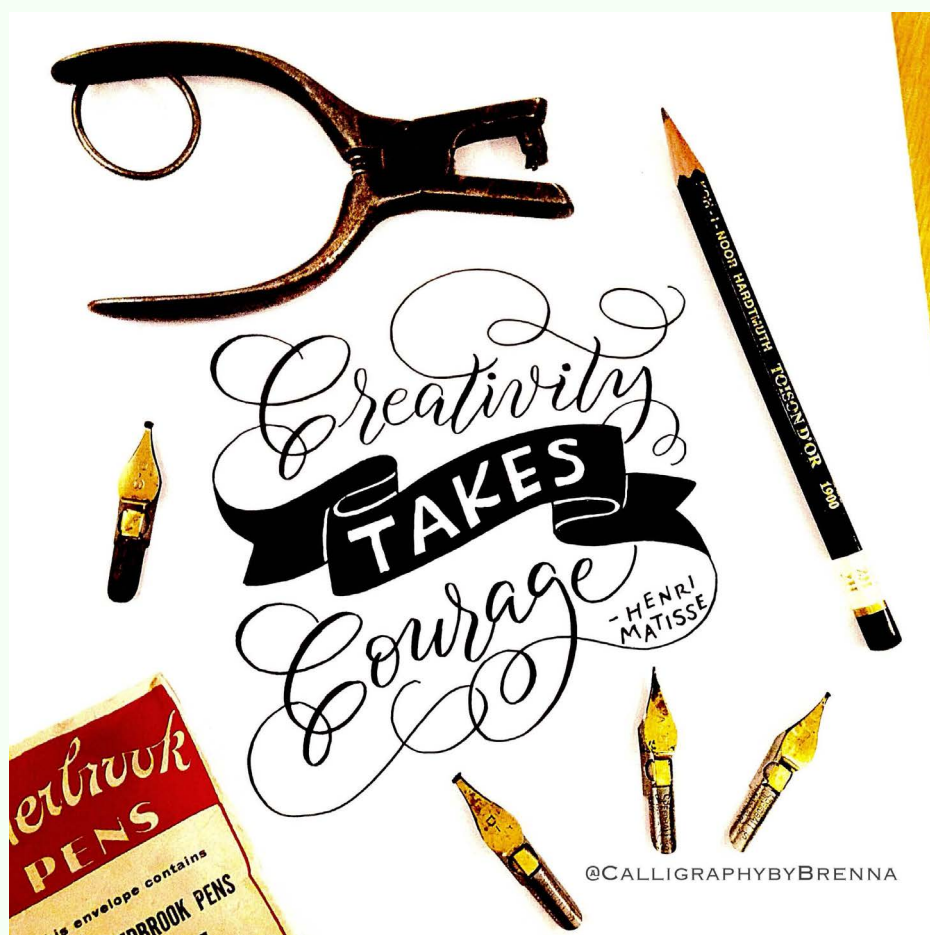
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Instagram Etiquette

Brenna Jordan - @calligraphybybrenna



PHOTOGRAPHER | Sharon McMahon



I have loved lettering for as far back as I can remember, but participating regularly in the Instagram community has helped me to be accountable, to keep developing my craft, and to try new things which may be out of my comfort zone, or that don't come naturally to me.

Since I am a very low-tech person, taking videos while lettering was one of those difficult things. Over time, as I kept creating them, it is now one of my favorite aspects of Instagram.

When I look back on some of my earlier videos, they are really terrible! Yet everyone has to start somewhere and I have found so much happiness in something that I never

I love being a part of the Instagram community! It has been a source of friendship, camaraderie, inspiration and personal growth, as I have had to push through the vulnerability of sharing my art on social media.

The encouragement and support I have received, as well as the wisdom from many other artists finding their way in a creative market, has proved invaluable countless times. Calligraphers and hand-lettering artists are some of the kindest, most humorous and most encouraging people on the planet, and daily I feel privileged to be among this tribe.



thought I would be able to do, thanks to the helpful and encouraging community on Instagram.

But like all things in life, nothing is perfect, and Instagram etiquette is a topic getting a lot of attention lately. Many artists are sharing stories of improper use of their work, not being properly credited or compensated, or having their designs copied. I have a story, too, that I share in an effort to help protect our community by speaking out:

My husband Brent and I were en route home from a mini vacation, having left our kids under grandparent supervision. We were feeling rejuvenated from a few days away from our normal routine, when I received a message from one of my Instagram followers that another account had stolen one of my videos and posted it as their own.

When I investigated, I was horrified to see the account had put their own watermark on my video, and of course, had not tagged or credited me in the caption. Quickly coming down off my “vacation high,” I felt violated, angry, and confused. Why would someone do this, and what was the best way to handle it?

I reached out for help from a trusted advisor, and followed her advice. After several attempts, the account finally responded, called me a litany of names and proceeded

to block me. Not the happiest ending, but hopefully being called out on their wrongdoing made them think twice about doing the same thing again.

Needless to say, Instagram etiquette is a broad and multifaceted topic.

Stealing people’s intellectual property, not respecting the work that goes into an artist’s design and exploiting their time, effort and training has become a fight many of us have been forced to join, and the more people are

aware of the battle going on, the more momentum we have to stop it.

Watching out for each other is one key element, along with confronting occurrences like these with a combination of education and consequences (in my case, I did report the account and also discussed the incident on my own Instagram feed to build awareness).



That’s the more drastic spectrum of social media distress, but what about some of the more common scenarios to consider?

Let’s discuss some of those:

Reposting.

If you wish to repost someone’s photo or video, it’s always a good idea to ask for permission. Follow the appropriate protocol for reposting: make sure to tag the artist, but

remember, tagging alone is not sufficient credit.

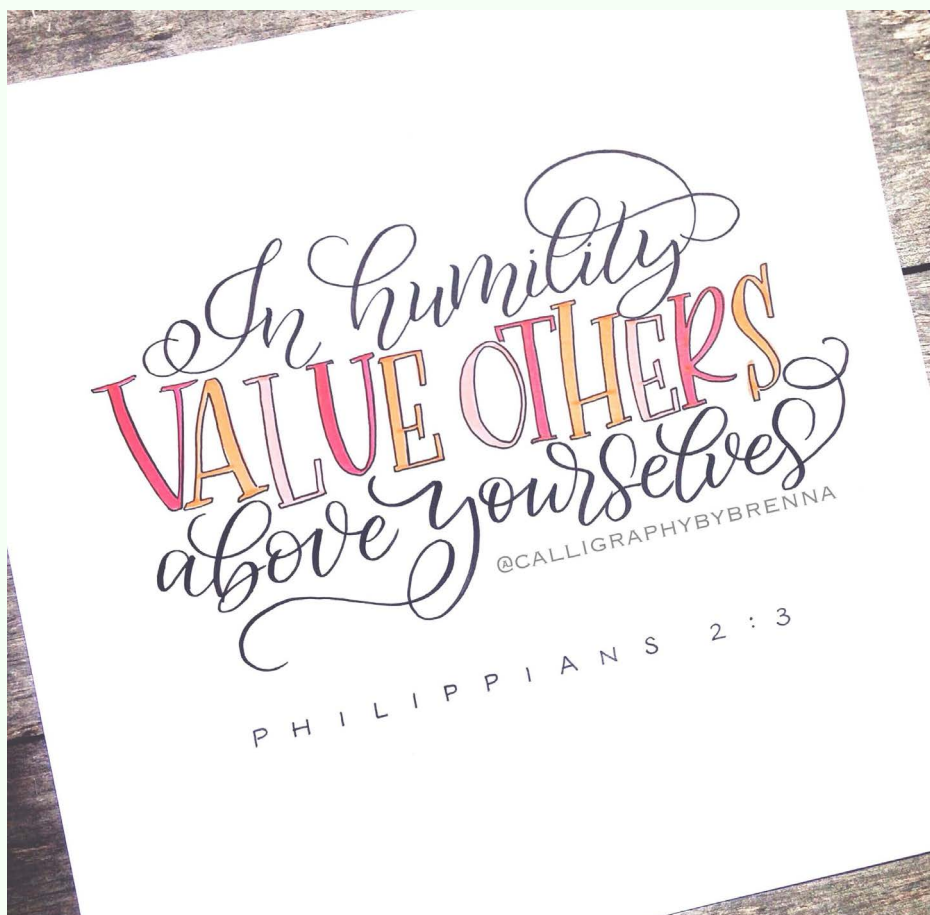
Be sure to mention them right away in the caption (not in a comment), and clearly attribute the work as theirs, so it is not inadvertently taken as being yours. Give them the same love and attention you would wish to receive were someone reposting your work.

Inspiration versus copying.

I can't count the number of times I've been tagged as the inspiration for a post, only to take a look and see the person has posted a nearly exact replica of one of my pieces.

Sometimes, it even looks traced. I have mixed feelings about this. I am thankful they tagged me. I also realize people are at different stages of learning, and I appreciate being part of a diverse learning community.

However, I don't believe true learning is best achieved by copying the work of another artist to the last flourish, without



having to engage your brain in the joyful and sometimes frustrating challenge of composing your own hard-earned design.

Some of my pieces that people have copied cost me many hours, even days, to complete, as I struggled through the process, let the design percolate, and came back to it with a fresh vision. So I would suggest, even to those who are brand new at their craft, to yes, look at Instagram accounts you admire, jot down ideas, and practice a flourish or lettering style here and there.

But when you are sitting down to design a piece that you will post, shut off your phone, computer and other devices, so you are able to develop your own unique style. Let the drafts pile up beside you - that is how learning happens.

If you are still compelled to copy someone's idea for the sake of practice, I am of the

Some of my pieces
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opinion that it should not be posted as your work. If your post has an element that is reminiscent of another artist's style (such as a botanical, or watercolor blend, or flourished majuscule) and you wish to tag them as your inspiration, that's perfect!

Again, try to tag them in the first few lines of your caption, so they get seen, not in a comment, or way down on the caption, where there's much less chance of getting noticed.

What about the question of building a following?

Many people want to know how to build a following. When I get messages about this, people may not like my response: focus on your art, your growth and development, the process of improving as an artist, uncovering your style and unique strengths, and most importantly, enjoying the journey.

Focusing on creating the best content will serve you well in the long run, and must take precedence over growing your following. I'm sure all of us have been turned off by the

multitudes playing the follow/unfollow game.

But there are also more subtle ways of manipulation to avoid. Be sincere in your comments to others. Eventually, the truth surfaces if ulterior motives are involved. I was as naive as they come when I started posting on Instagram. I began to notice some accounts were commenting on a lot of my posts.

After a short time, I allowed them to win my trust, and followed them in an effort to reciprocate. Weeks down the road, it dawned on me that I never received engagement from these accounts anymore. When I investigated, I realized they had unfollowed me when they got what they wanted - another number for themselves. Unfortunately, this devastating behavior hurts the whole community, as it undermines trust and fosters an environment of self-centeredness.



“What pen is that?”

If there is one question I get asked the most, it's probably this one.

It's great to ask questions of artists you admire, but here's just a few tips to keep in mind. Before you ask a question, be sure it's not already answered somewhere else, such as in their caption or hashtags, or in a previous comment.

Be respectful of the artist's time, and remember that some general questions about lettering materials and tutorials can be just as easily researched on the internet.

Please don't ask artists to hand-letter your name, or your friend's dog's name who just died, or your favorite team, unless you are prepared to hire them for a commissioned project. If after researching, you still have a question for a particular artist, word it graciously.

I always appreciate the people who take time to express gratitude for my posts and/

or information I've shared with them. It takes persistence and courage to put out content on a regular basis, and time and energy to respond to comments and inquiries. The people who are considerate of this and offer support and encouragement perhaps have no idea how much they light the darkness during the inevitable creative blocks that come.

Instagram is a vibrant place for lettering artists to build community, stretch our creative muscles, and give and receive encouragement. It provides a platform to see the incredible growth that happens naturally with regular practice.

It is one of the places where we “find our tribe.”

Candid, ongoing communication about issues of proper etiquette will help ensure Instagram remains a place where lettering artists can continue to thrive and learn.

Because, as one of my favorite quotes says, “What we learn with pleasure, we never forget.” - Alfred Mercier

