



CAN YOU SPOT A FAKE?

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- Today I am looking at side-by-side comparisons of **forgeries, fakes, copies** and genuine works and then allowing you to judge which is which before revealing all.
- Let us look at the terms I am using before we start:
 - **A forgery** is an item made to fool others and it implies intentional illegality.
 - **The word 'fake'** includes forgeries but also paintings that have been incorrectly and innocently misidentified by a seller.
 - If in doubt at, e.g. an auction, call it a fake not a forgery.
 - **A copy** may have been done **by the original artist** so it is in that sense genuine and the word 'fake' is not usually used, it is simply a copy. To avoid any doubt **a copy should be signed by the copyist or clearly marked** in some other way. There is also the case where a copy is not painted by the artist but by **someone authorised** by the artist.
- A word of warning, **art forgers are very skilled artists** and so visual analysis should always be backed up by **scientific analysis**. They **know all of the techniques described here** and can overcome most

most of them so detecting a forgery is very difficult and very expensive. A simple starting point is to buy the **catalogue raisonné** of the artist, that is a list of all the officially recognised works. If the work is not listed then it is probably a fake as new works are rarely found. If it is listed then look for proof that the picture you are looking at is the one in the catalogue. Visit art galleries to look at works by the artist. Then call an expert. If you cannot afford an expert and scientific analysis then only pay what you would pay for an unknown artist.

MOST FORGED ARTISTS

- Based on <https://www.mutualart.com/Article/The-Most-Faked-Artists-in-History/ADD1DF7752FEBC5D>
- Pablo Picasso as he painted so much
- Jackson Pollock
- Amedeo Modigliani
- Andy Warhol
- Vincent van Gogh
- Pierre-Auguste Renoir

SOME BRITISH ARTISTS AND FORMER FORGERS

- Shaun Greenhalgh (b. 1961, British artist and former art forger), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shawn_Greenhalgh
- Leo Stevenson (b. 1958), British artist and copyist, <https://leostevenson.com/profile-leo-stevenson/>
- David Henty (b. 1958), <https://www.davidhentyart.co.uk/abouttheartist>
- Max Brendrett (b. 1948), British artist and former art forger
- John Myatt (b. 1945), British artist convicted of art forgery https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Myatt
- Eric Hebborn (1934-1996), British painter and art forger,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Hebborn

- Tom Keating (1917-1984), British art restorer and famous art forger, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Keating

NOTES

- If you are a forger then don't try to forge a Rembrandt go for a lesser known artist whose work sells for £10,000 not £10 million. So, turning that around if you are offered a work by a lesser known artist then do not buy it without cast-iron provenance. Frauds are usually designed to overcome checks that are likely to be made so if you think something is fake you must check it in a way it hasn't already been checked.
 - **Common sense.** Is the deal too good to be true? Do you trust the person?
 - **Compare.** Look for obvious inconsistencies with known works.
 - **Examine.** Look for things that should not be there (e.g. has it been artificially aged? Does it have objects from a later period?). Examine the frame and the back carefully. Take it from the frame and examine every inch particularly the back for stamps, labels and written notes.
 - **Provenance.** Is provenance provided? Use the internet for simple checks.
 - **Research.** First check the provenance for authenticity. One forger actually put fake provenance in the Courtauld library.
 - Look in the catalogue raisonné but a forger will argue it is an unknown work. If it is an unknown work it is probably a fake. A catalogue raisonné is reasonably low cost, George Stubbs £85, Jasper John 5 vols £253, Picasso 33 vols. Modigliani s/hand £1,500, Gwen John used £60. Whistler's is online.

- Visit auction houses and galleries to identify marks on the back of the work.
- **Connoisseurship** and its limitations (reputation)
- **Science**. What can science do?
 - Microscopy. Remove paint flakes (usually from damaged areas), set in resin, thinly slice and polish and examine under a microscope to identify the paint layers and therefore how the artist built up the painting layer by layer.
 - Fingerprints checked against fingerprints on known works.
 - Check hairs and fibres to see if they are synthetic.
 - Thread count. Measure the warp and weft thread counts to compare with known canvases used by the artist. If the canvas is lined then an X-ray machine can be used to see the threads. The primer (base layer) can also be tested to identify the canvas.
 - Ultraviolet (UV) reflectance. Certain materials glow under ultraviolet light particularly organic materials found in mediums, oils and varnishes and this increases with time as they slowly degrade. Forgers can remove varnish from an old worthless painting and coat in on their forgery.
 - Infra-red reflectography (IR), look for pentimenti/corrections/underdrawing using infra-red light as it detects carbon-based materials such as graphite, charcoal and ink.
 - Gas chromatography - mass spectrometry (GC-MS), mix paint samples in a solution, inject into a helium stream, heat, bombard with electrons and separate fragments to identify materials. Useful for identifying the binding

medium. It was used to identify Bakelite in the paintings of Hans van Meegeren.

- X-ray, see <https://www.britannica.com/video/187079/chemistry-art-forgery> used to reject an alleged van Gogh. Tom Keating claimed to have written swear words in white lead on his forgeries to enable radiographers to find them.
- FTIR (Fourier-Transform Infrared Micro-spectroscopy) to identify compounds in paint chips used to reject alleged Pollocks
- XRF (X-ray Fluorescence) used to analyse elements in pigments. Large X-ray fluorescence spectrometry analyses the complete painting in one go. It is very expensive and there are few machines
- Multispectral scan. Use an ultra-high resolution camera to scan the painting using different light filters. Different filters can see through layers of paint, identify pigments and recreate the original colours.
- Raman laser spectroscopy. Measure the spectrum of light reflected from the painting from a low-powered laser to identify the pigments. It is non-invasive and non-destructive. It can be used on a cross section of the paint layers.
- Dendrology if it is painted on a wood panel. It can identify the year the tree was felled but old panels can be found.
- **Use AI** to spot a fake? See <https://spectrum.ieee.org/this-ai-can-spot-an-art-forgery>

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- The talks are free and are given to a small group of people who are asked to make a voluntary contribution to charity. After the talk a recording may be uploaded to YouTube for free public access.
- The notes are based on information found on public websites including Wikipedia, Tate, National Gallery, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Khan Academy and the Art Story.
- If a talk uses information from specific books, websites or articles these are referenced either at the beginning of each talk or in the 'References' section of the relevant page. The talks that are based on an exhibition use the booklets and book associated with the exhibition.
- Where possible images and information are taken from Wikipedia under an Attribution-Share Alike Creative Commons License.
- If I have forgotten to reference any work then please let me know and I will add a reference or delete the information.



Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675), *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, c.1665, 44.5 × 39 cm, Mauritshuis



Possibly Han van Meegeren, *The Smiling Girl*, c.1925, 41 × 31.8 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675), *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, c.1665, 44.5 × 39 cm, Mauritshuis

Anonymous Imitator of Johannes Vermeer possibly Han van Meegeren, *The Smiling Girl*, c.1925, 41 × 31.8 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, not on display

- I thought I would start with an **easy one**.
- You will all recognise the one on the left. **(CLICK)** It is *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by **Johannes Vermeer's**, one of his best known works, although we shall see in a moment that even that can be faked. The painting on the right is interesting as it was also **thought to be by Vermeer**. It was not thought to be a copy of *Girl with a Pearl Earring* but an original work. It was **donated by collector Andrew W. Mellon** in 1937 to the National Gallery of Art in Washington as a genuine Vermeer. **(CLICK)** It is now widely considered to be a **fake**, the painting is **possibly by Han van Meegeren** (1889-1947) (or his friend Theo van Wijngaarden).
- Van Meegeren was **arrested as a traitor** after the Second World War for **selling a Vermeer to Nazi leader Göring**. Then the

assistant of the arresting officer noticed similarities between the faces in the painting and another painting that was less than one hundred years old. **Van Meegeren confessed** and said he hadn't admitted it before as he thought no one would believe him. He was right, **no one believed him**, they thought he was trying to escape a death sentence for treason for collaborating with the Nazis. **So he painted a Vermeer in the courtroom** and proved his claim. He was released and **became a national hero** for fooling Göring.

- He even fooled an early scientific test. The only way to check the age at the time was to **rub a small part of the painting with alcohol**. If the paint dissolved it meant it hadn't hardened with age and so was a fake. **However, Van Meegeren mixed his pigments with Bakelite which artificially hardens the paint** and it passed the alcohol test. Scientific tests cannot prove a work genuine but they can sometimes detect a fake and they are improving every year.

NOTES

- *The Last Vermeer* is a film about Han Van Meegeren who some consider the most successful forger of all time, or at least the one with the most entertaining life story.

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smiling_Girl

<https://dmtalkies.com/the-last-vermeer-ending-explained-2020-film/>

<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=92483237&t=1653934599104>



Max Brandrett (b. 1948), copy of *Girl with a Pearl Earring*



Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675), *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, c.1665, 44.5 × 39 cm, Mauritshuis, The Hague

Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675), *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, c.1665, 44.5 × 39 cm, Mauritshuis, The Hague

Max Brandrett (b. 1948), copy of *Girl with a Pearl Earring*

- The last one was easy but this is difficult, which is the Vermeer here? One of them is a **fake by Max Brandrett, master forger, jailed three times for forgery**. He now only paints copies and works in the style of famous artists and sells them under his own name.
- **The lesson here is important. There are many artists that are so skilled they can create a work that at first sight is indistinguishable from the original.** If they reuse an old canvas from the period and use pigments from the period and, if it is before the nineteenth century, grind them by hand then it starts to become difficult to distinguish them. Of course, a forger would never copy such a well-known work. He would produce a work in the style of a lesser known artist or possibly a finished work based on a sketch by a famous artist.
- Let me give you a clue. Ignore the differences in brightness and colour as they are artefacts of the computer image. I may be wrong

but one of them to me looks more upright and the expression more seductive and lively while the other looks sadder.

- Let's see. (**CLICK**) The one on the left is the one I think looks sadder and is by Brandrett. We are social animals and masters of judging expressions where the difference may be fractions of a millimetre.
- By the way, **just now I said 'he' when talking about forgers.** That is because **I cannot think of a female forger** and I have no idea why there are no women forgers. If a forger is a skilled artist who has been **overlooked or ignored by the art world, a common motivation**, then there should be more women forgers. **Perhaps, they are so good their forgeries have never been detected?**

NOTES

- Brandrett has just published an autobiography called *Britain's No. 1 Art Forger Max Brandrett: The Life of a Cheeky Faker*. He grew up in a Barnado's children's home and when he left he joined a circus. He had always been good at drawing and when he met the forger Tom Keating he saw an opportunity to make money. More about him later.

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<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6488711/Artist-70-jailed-forging-famous-masterpieces-stage-exhibition-fake-work.html>

Italian, Florentine, *An Allegory*, c. 1500, tempera and oil on wood, 92.1 × 172.7 cm, National Gallery, purchased 1874 for £1,627 10s, NG916, not on display



Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), *Venus and Mars*, c. 1485, tempera and oil on poplar, 69.2 × 173.4 cm, purchased 1874 for £1,050, NG915, National Gallery



Italian, Florentine, *An Allegory*, c. 1500, tempera and oil on wood, 92.1 × 172.7 cm, National Gallery, purchased 1874 for £1,627 10s, NG916, not on display

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- The next lesson is that **even the most prestigious organisations can be fooled**. Here it is the National Gallery, London.
- One of these is a genuine Botticelli, the other is a fake. **Both were purchased by the National Gallery in 1874 and the gallery paid more for the work at the top.**
- There were complaints at the time about how much had been paid **but the Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli**, thought the nation should own them as '**rare and wondrous**' works. It is good to find a prime minister that appreciates art even if we have to go back 150 years to the previous and only other ethnic minority prime minister before Rishi Sunak.
- It was not until the **1950s that the curator at the time became**

worried that one of these works and only one was a feeble imitator of Botticelli but **tests revealed that both were egg tempera**, a 15th-century medium. **The pigments , such as azurite, lead white and malachite were also all associated with the period.** Infrared reflectography revealed **elements of the composition had been repositioned** so they were probably not copies of another work.

- So both works are genuine late 15th century or early 16th century paintings but it is **now felt that stylistically only the bottom painting (CLICK) is by Botticelli.** The top painting is now described as Italian, Florentine and is no longer on display.

NOTES

- "Propped up on a pink cushion, this young, fair-haired woman – the ideal of beauty in Renaissance Florence – gazes directly at us. She seems oblivious to the three chubby little boys around her, clutching at handfuls of pink roses.
- This idealised beauty may represent fertility, with which the pomegranate – tucked under her arm – containing many seeds was often associated. The picture's long horizontal format, the reclining blonde in a white dress and playful children recall Botticelli's Venus and Mars, also in the National Gallery's collection.
- We do not know who the artist was, but the picture may be based on Venus and Mars. Like that painting, it may have been placed in the room of a newly wed Florentine couple in order to encourage fertility and, therefore, the birth of many children to carry on the family name." [1]

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<https://webartacademy.com/being-botticelli-forgery>

[1] <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/italian-florentine-an-allegory>



Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806), *Portrait of a Young Woman*, c. 1769, 62.9 x 52.7 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery
 Meishing Oil Painting Manufacture Company, 2015

- Now we come to how easily we, the public, can be fooled.
- **In 2015 Dulwich Picture Gallery** asked visitors to try to find the fake that they had used to replace one of their 270 Old Masters. Nearly 3,000 visitors cast a vote but only 10% guessed correctly.
- They had hung a copy of Fragonard's *Portrait of a Young Woman* (c. 1769) that was **painted in China for £70**. But which one is it?
- You should know that Fragonard painted a series of Fantasy Figures like this very rapidly to show his skill with oil paint.
- After the competition the two unlabelled paintings were hung alongside each other and the gallery gave a hint to help visitors identify the Fragonard. It said "**look at the daubs of paint used to created the lace collar. Which do you think gives a more realistic rendering of lace?**" Although I am not sure this helps. A better hint I think is to remember that Fragonard painted the portrait **very quickly and one of these paintings has a smooth finish in parts.**

- (CLICK) Yes, the **smoothly painted fake** is on the right. The fake is a modern copy of Fragonard's painting on the left.

NOTES

- The fake was painted by the Meishong Oil Painting Manufacture Company, where 150 artists, many of them art students, make copies of well-known paintings - including Picasso, Matisse, Van Gogh and Monet - to order for clients across the world.

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<https://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/explore-the-collection/051-100/young-woman/>

https://www.artspace.com/magazine/news_events/quiz/quiz-fake-dulwich-picture-gallery-52780

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-32493860>

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Leo Stevenson (b. 1958), well-known London copyist asked to copy a Canaletto



Giovanni Antonio Canal known as Canaletto (1697–1768), *Grand Canal: The Rialto Bridge from the South*, c. 1727, oil on copper, 45.5 × 62.5 cm, Holkham Hall

Leo Stevenson (b. 1958), well-known London copyist asked to copy a Canaletto

Giovanni Antonio Canal known as Canaletto (1697–1768), *Grand Canal: The Rialto Bridge from the South*, c. 1727, oil on copper, 45.5 × 62.5 cm, Holkham Hall

- You might get this one.
- One of these is by the artist Leo Stevenson (b. 1958) who makes it clear that he does not paint copies for anyone other than rare TV requests. So, in this case, it is **not a copy of a Canaletto but a painting in the style of Canaletto** and he can paint in any style you wish.
- He is a **self-taught artist who has drawn and painted since he was a child**. He worked in the **Conservation Department of the British Museum** where he painted **high-quality one-off replicas for other museums**. In 1989, he became **self-employed copying** famous paintings. He went on to **create fakes**, that is, works in the style of the original artist using the same techniques and similar subject matter. **This is much harder than copying.**

- He now spends most of his time painting in his own style, mostly landscapes, cityscapes, seascapes and aviation paintings.
- **(CLICK)** You have probably already worked out **Stevenson's work is on the left as he has a cleaner, more recent Rialto Bridge**. The bridge was completed in 1591 so it is the same bridge as the one painted by Canaletto but some of the detailing has changed over the years. **Also the clouds are more modern perhaps from what artists learnt from John Constable.**

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<https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/fakers-fakes-fake-fakers-2325/>

<https://leostevenson.com/serious-fakes/>



Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675), *The Wine Glass*, 1658-60, 67.7 × 79.6 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin



Leo Stevenson (b. 1958), painting in the style of Johannes Vermeer, 61 x 51 cm

Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675), *The Wine Glass*, 1658-60, 67.7 × 79.6 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin

Leo Stevenson (b. 1958), painting in the style of Johannes Vermeer, 61 x 51 cm

- Another by Leo Stevenson, described as "**A fake in the style of Vermeer. I've used various elements and visual clues from his paintings and created a whole new interior scene. I wanted this painting to have the beautiful light that typifies his paintings and to capture some of that slightly mysterious atmosphere that many of them have too. Very difficult, like writing a play in the style of Shakespeare, but I'm proud of this painting nonetheless.**"
- Over the years his work has been on television in the UK and abroad, has featured in leading newspapers such as *Forbes* magazine and the *Sunday Times*. He now mainly paints in his own, personal style. He says that he was once called "**the most accomplished art forger in the world**" although 'forger' implies an intention to mislead so I prefer to call him a creator of first-class

fakes and an artist in his own right.

- These two examples **should be a lesson to us all about the difficulty of recognising a genuine work**. Remember, some artists are very skilful.

REFERENCES

<https://leostevenson.com/serious-fakes/>



Attributed to Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), *Portrait of a Young Fiancée, or La Bella Principessa*, 1495 (?), vellum, oak panel, ink, gouache paint, 33 × 24 cm, private collection



Ambrogio de Predis (c. 1455-after 1508), *Bianca Maria Sforza*, c. 1493, oil on poplar wood, 51 × 32.5 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Attributed to Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), *La Bella Principessa* or *Portrait of a Young Fiancée*, 1495 (?), vellum, oak panel, ink, gouache paint, 33 × 24 cm, private collection

Ambrogio de Predis (Milanese, c. 1455-after 1508, pronounced 'ambro-jee-o day pray-dis'), *Bianca Maria Sforza*, c. 1493, oil on poplar wood, 51 × 32.5 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, upper center on headdress is the Sforza motto: MERITO ET TEMPORE (With merit and time)

- This is interesting as one of these is **either by Leonardo da Vinci or is a fake** and **the other is by a fifteenth-century Italian Renaissance artist**.
- **Leo Stevenson**, the artist we have just seen, and the critic **Jonathan Jones** (writing in *The Guardian*) both think one of these is a **forgery** [1][2]. They believe the current owners have only carried out **scientific tests that support their claim** that it is a genuine Leonardo. The vellum has been **carbon dated to between 1440 – 1650**, within a 95 % confidence interval. Fifteenth century vellum is relatively easy to find and this is the only work Leonardo created on

vellum. This is suspicious particularly as it is harder to detect a fake on vellum. The **provenance is mysterious** and for a drawing that looks superficially like a Leonardo this seems "**very suspicious**".

- In November 2015, notorious art forger **Shaun Greenhalgh** (pronounced 'green-haltch') **claimed that he created the work in 1978**, at the age of 20; he said the woman's face is that of a supermarket check-out girl named Sally who worked in Bolton, outside Manchester. In his memoir *A Forger's Tale*, written in prison, Greenhalgh claims to have forged the drawing by obtaining an old piece of vellum from a reused 1587 land deed. Kemp said he found the claim it is by Leonardo hilarious and ridiculous.
- So which is which? (**CLICK**) The painting on the right is by a less well-known Italian Renaissance artist, Ambrogio de Predis and the other on the left is a controversial work that some experts claim is **a recently discovered Leonardo** and other claim it is a "**screaming 20th century fake**" [3].

NOTES

- **La Bella Principessa** (English: "The Beautiful Princess"), also known as *Portrait of Bianca Sforza*, *Young Girl in Profile in Renaissance Dress* and *Portrait of a Young Fiancée*, is a portrait in coloured chalks and ink, on vellum, of a young lady in fashionable costume and hairstyle of a Milanese of the 1490s. Sold for just under \$22,000 at auction on January 30, 1998 at Christie's Auction in New York City, the portrait was catalogued as early 19th-century German work. In 2007, Peter Silverman, purchased the portrait from a gallery on East 73rd Street, owned by Kate Ganz. Peter Silverman believed that the portrait was possibly from an older period, potentially dating back to the Renaissance period, and some experts have since attributed it to

Leonardo da Vinci. In 2010 one of those experts, Martin Kemp, made it the subject of his book co-authored with Pascal Cotte, *La Bella Principessa: The Story of the New Masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci.*" (Wikipedia)

- The evidence for Leonardo is the style, high quality, corrections ('pentimenti'), left-hand hatching, the sitter's hair-style and the use of three chalks first pioneered by Leonardo, a palm print in the chalk associated with Leonardo. There is also some evidence that it was torn from a book now in the National Library of Poland which was given to Galeazzo Sanseverino. The knot-work ornament of the caul is similar to patterns explored by Leonardo in other works.
- However, left-hand hatching can be copied, as can the hairstyle and the three chalks. The palm print has been disputed and has now been dropped. The torn page from the book could have been part of an elaborate plan of deception although Martin Kemp's "needle in a haystack" search means the alleged forger did not bait the trap very effectively.
- By a process of elimination Kemp concluded it was a portrait of Bianca Sforza who married Galeazzo Sanseverino, a patron of Leonardo, in 1486 when she was 14. She died within months of her marriage possibly from an ectopic pregnancy.
- The attribution has been challenged by many scholars because of the lack of provenance prior to the 20th century, unusual given the fame of Leonardo and the Sforza family. The use of vellum which Leonardo had only used once before and **the lack of cracking of the surface** ('craquelure'). The use of left-handed hatching was common by forgers of Leonardo. The palm/finger print evidence has been questioned. One scholar describes it as a "**screaming 20th century fake**".
- Shaun Greenhalgh first practised the drawing on cartridge paper,

then he mounted the vellum on an oak board from an old Victorian school desk lid, taken from the storeroom of Bolton Industrial Tech, where his father, George, worked as a cleaner. He had used just three colours, black, white and red, gum arabic earth pigments that he then went over in oak gall ink. Leonardo was left-handed so Greenhalgh turned the painting and hatched strokes from the profile outwards. When it was finished, Greenhalgh, he took the picture to an art dealer in Harrogate, where he offered it for sale – not as a forgery, but as a homage. The dealer criticised its quality and paid just £80, an amount that barely covered the materials, let alone the labour.

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Kemp and Cotte, La Bella Principessa di Leonardo da Vinci.
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[2]

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[3] <https://www.artlistings.com/Magazine/Is-this-portrait-a-lost-Leonardo-72415>



Attributed to Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), *Portrait of a Young Fiancée, or La Bella Principessa* (detail), 1495 (?), vellum, oak panel, ink, gouache paint, 33 × 24 cm, private collection



Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), *A Portrait of a Woman in Profile* (reversed and detail), c.1485-90, metalpoint on cream prepared paper, 32.0 x 20.0 cm (sheet of paper), Royal Collection

Attributed to Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), *La Bella Principessa* or *Portrait of a Young Fiancée* (detail), 1495 (?), vellum, oak panel, ink, gouache paint, 33 × 24 cm, private collection

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), *A Portrait of a Woman in Profile* (reversed and detail), c.1485-90, metalpoint on cream prepared paper, 32.0 x 20.0 cm (sheet of paper), Royal Collection

- Just to add to the confusion and if you were thinking **the drawing was not by Leonardo**, this is a genuine Leonardo drawing in the **Royal Collection**. Notice Bothe have left-handed shading. (CLICK) I will now reverse the image so that you can compare more easily. Of course, a forger would be aware of this drawing in the Royal Collection and so it could be the basis of the forger's drawing, if, of course, it is by a forger.

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Master of the Mornauer Portrait (1460-1488), *Portrait of Alexander Mornauer*, altered to look like a Holbein, pre-restoration, 1464-88, 45.2 × 38.7 cm, National Gallery



Master of the Mornauer Portrait (1460-1488), *Portrait of Alexander Mornauer*, post-restoration, 1464-88, 45.2 × 38.7 cm, National Gallery

Master of the Mornauer Portrait (1460-1488), *Portrait of Alexander Mornauer*, altered to look like a Holbein, pre-restoration, 1464-88, 45.2 × 38.7 cm, National Gallery low hat before cleaning and blue background

Master of the Mornauer Portrait (1460-1488), *Portrait of Alexander Mornauer*, post-restoration, 1464-88, 45.2 × 38.7 cm, National Gallery tall hat after cleaning

- **This one is more involved.** It was purchased by the National Gallery in 1990.
- Originally, when it entered the collection of the Marquess of Buckingham between 1788 and 1797 it was called a ***Portrait of Martin Luther by Hans Holbein the Younger***.
- We now know it is **not Martin Luther** but **Alexander Mornauer** (pronounced 'morn-hour'), town clerk of Landshut (pronounced 'lan-suit') in Bavaria and the letter he holds is addressed to himself.
- X-radiography and infrared reflectograms revealed the artists had made changes, for example, the fingers of his left hand were originally drawn inside the folds of his coat.

- Analysis of a paint sample under the microscope showed (**CLICK**) the blue of the background lies **above two layers of varnish**. An analysis of the blue paint revealed it is **Prussian Blue**. Which was **not available to Holbein** and was probably added **after the 1720s** when it came into widespread use and before the 1780s/90s when it entered the collection. Why? Probably to make the painting look more like a Holbein to make it more valuable.
- Conservators **removed the blue** and the layers of varnish to **reveal this (CLICK)**. There is a wood grain effect background and his hat is taller. **The artist was not Holbein** and we don't know who it was but it is a **typical late fifteenth-century German portrait**.
- So, we have here a **different type of forgery**, an unknown artist's work has been **modified some 300 years later** to be passed off as a Holbein.

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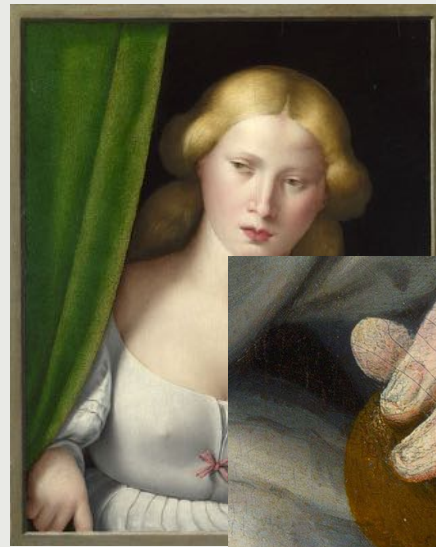
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North Italian artist, *Woman at a Window*, probably 1510-30, oil on wood, 51.4 × 41.6 cm,

North Italian artist, *Woman at a Window*, probably 1510-30, oil on wood, 51.4 × 41.6 cm, National Gallery, bought 1855

- This is different. The painting has been modified to make it less like the original.
- In **1855 the National Gallery bought this** painting of a woman at a window. Investigation of the painting revealed that it had been **drastically modified during the nineteenth century** to satisfy Victorian tastes.
- It was **painted in 1510-30** when there was a fashion for **beautiful, ideal women often in provocative poses**. Let me reveal what the original Renaissance painting looked like which was revealed by removing the nineteenth-century modifications (CLICK).
- What a difference. The restoration revealed a **blond woman drawing back a green curtain**. She is **not looking at us but down** possibly at an admirer and she hold something in her **left hand**. (CLICK) In close up the object looks like this, is it a **fruit of some kind**? I am not a horticulturist but it could be a pomegranate which was a symbol of Venus and desire. (CLICK). Note that we only have a

black and white photograph of the painting before restoration.

- **Her face has been modified to make it sweeter, more innocent, her eyes are larger and she looks directly at us, her nose is less pinched, her mouth is larger and her nipples have been brushed away.** The original was probably intended to be a courtesan looking down at the street below to attract passing men from her window. Such images of courtesans were very common in Venice in the early part of the sixteenth century.

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After Francesco Francia, *The Virgin and Child with an Angel*, probably second half of the 19th century, National Gallery



Francesco Francia (1447-1517), *The Virgin and Child with an Angel*, about 1490, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh

After Francesco Francia, *The Virgin and Child with an Angel*, probably second half of the 19th century, National Gallery
 Francesco Francia (1447-1517), *The Virgin and Child with an Angel*, about 1490, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh

- The **National Gallery** has owned what it considered to be a **Francesco Francia painted around 1490. In 2010, it announced it was a fake** probably painted in the second half of the **nineteenth century**. In 1954 **another version** shown above came to light and is now in the **Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh. Which is the fake?** And how was it discovered?
- This one is difficult. (**CLICK**) The genuine Francia is the **Carnegie version on the right**.
- So how did the National Gallery decide their version was the fake?
- First they examined the painting closely and the wood panel, ground or undercoat and the paint layers were consistent with 15th-century practice except that the ground was very bright white. The imprimatura, which is the thin layer of paint applied over the ground, was **pinkish-brown**. This was unusual but consistent with a later

painting by Francia. So far, not bad.

- X-ray photographs of both paintings showed the National Gallery's version was **thinly painted** but the Carnegie version was built up in thicker layers which was more traditional.

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Photomicrograph detail, showing 'faked' craquelure in the Virgin's hand, near the Child's wrist

After Francesco Francia, *The Virgin and Child with an Angel*, probably second half of the 19th century, National Gallery

- **The first serious problem was when the cracking, or craquelure, of the paint was examined closely.**
- **(CLICK) It was found to be painted** on the surface to mimic the appearance of naturally aged paint. In 1955, the Gallery announced their version was probably a 19th-century fake.
- **In 2009** the Gallery decided to examine the two paintings again to see if they could discover more evidence. They first found from X-radiographs that **woodworm holes** had been filled but the holes did not extend to the back of the panel, **they had been filled from the front.** This suggested it had been **painted on a genuinely old panel that had first been filled** from the front before being planed down to receive the new painting. This is a common technique used to make it appear old.
- Secondly, it was found that the other painting by Francia with a pinkish imprimatura had been **transferred to a new panel in the 18th century** and the pink colour had been applied then, so it was not a sign of a Francia painting.
- High performance liquid chromatography was used to determine that the **red lake pigment was probably manufactured in the 19th**

century and the chrome yellow only became available in 1818.

NOTES

- High performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) uses liquid to carry the sample through a column of porous material, causing the molecules in the sample to separate.



After Francesco Francia, *The Virgin and Child with an Angel*, probably second half of the 19th century, National Gallery



Infrared reflectogram detail, showing underdrawn head of the angel at lower right, 'The Virgin and Child with an Angel', National Gallery

Infrared reflectogram detail, showing underdrawn head of the angel at lower right, 'The Virgin and Child with an Angel', National Gallery

- **Infrared reflectography** involves using light with a long wavelength to **penetrate through the paint layers** and carbon black, which is used for underdrawing, shows up black enabling the artists drawing to be examined.
- It was found that there was **an unusually detailed drawing** made with a graphite pencil and based on a transfer from a pricked cartoon.
- In comparison the underdrawing of the **Carnegie painting was done with a brush** and detailed analysis shows the **artist made minor changes** as he progressed, further indication of an original. A skilled forger could fake changes but if someone was examining the painting in that much detail then other signs would give it away.
- Finally, microscopic examination of the London painting showed **pencil lines on top of the paint**, a technique that was **not used by Renaissance artists** but was used by 19th-century artists onwards.
- It have given you more information about the analysis of these

paintings to show the lengths that a leading gallery can go to uncover a forgery. Such techniques are **far too expensive** for a normal buyer.



CAN YOU SPOT A FAKE? (PART 1)

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- That concludes the first part of my talk.



CAN YOU SPOT A FAKE? (PART 2)

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- In part 2 I look at some more recent forgers, fakes and copies starting with an interesting copy of a Renoir.



Melania Trump (b. 1970) standing next to the fake Renoir in Trump Tower

Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), *Two Sisters (On the Terrace)*, 1881, 100.5 × 81 cm, Art Institute of Chicago

Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), *Two Sisters (On the Terrace)*, 1881, 100.5 × 81 cm, Art Institute of Chicago
 Melania Trump (b. 1970) standing next to the fake Renoir in Trump Tower

- This is not a side-by-side comparison. What you can see here is a genuine **Renoir, called *Two Sisters (On a Terrace)* and it is in the Art Institute of Chicago**. It was donated in 1933 (by Annie Swan Coburn) who had bought it from the dealer Paul Durand-Ruel for \$100,000 in 1925 and the dealer had bought it directly from Renoir in 1881, an **impeccable provenance**. It is a genuine Renoir. Why do I emphasise that?
- In 2005, **Trump's biographer was interviewing him** when he saw a painting on the wall that **he immediately recognised as a copy** of the original in Chicago. When asked **Trump maintained that his painting was the real one**.
- *The Times* wrote, "Now fake art can be added to the list. Mr Trump is accused of claiming that his copy of *Renoir's Two Sisters on the Terrace* is the real thing, when it is well known that the original has

hung in the Art Institute of Chicago since 1933. The president, whose replica was previously displayed in his private plane, **liked to tell guests that it was worth \$10 million.**" [2]

- **\$10 million would have been a bargain** as the highest price paid for a Renoir was **\$78.1 million in 1990** for ***Dance at Le moulin de la Galette***. It was sold at Sotheby's and would **now be worth about \$160 million**. It was bought by a Japanese businessman (Ryoei Saito) and is now believed to be in a private collection in Switzerland. Some of you might be thinking **but I saw that painting at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris**. You are right. Renoir painted a second smaller version which is the one sold by Sotheby's. So you are now thinking, **did he paint two versions of *Two Sisters* (On the Terrace)**, not as far as we know.

NOTES

- Renoir called it *Two Sisters*. Paul Durand-Ruel added "(On the Terrace)".

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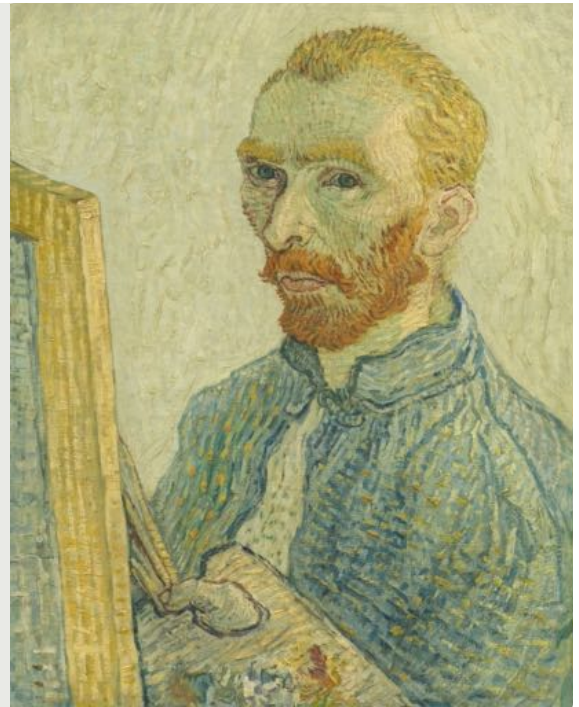
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Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), *Self-Portrait*, 1889, 57.8 × 44.5 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC



Unknown artist, Forged version of Van Gogh *Self-Portrait*, early 20th century, 59.1 × 47.5 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), *Self-Portrait*, 1889, 57.8 × 44.5 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

Unknown artist, Forged version of Van Gogh *Self-Portrait*, early 20th century

- **One of these paintings was involved in an art forgery case** that went to court in **1932**. A **German art dealer** called Otto Wacker was being **tried for selling what were claimed to be forged Van Goghs**. Two expert witnesses were brought in to authenticate the work but **neither of them could agree**.
- This was the **beginning of the end** for art connoisseurship and **the court turned to chemistry and forensic testing**. This trial was the **beginning of using scientific evidence** to detect forgeries. The chemist, Martin de Wild, was asked to find any chemicals Van Gogh **could not have used**. He found a **pigment** Van Gogh never used and a **resin that makes paint dry more quickly** which is something Van Gogh never did.
- As Noah Charnet explains in his book "**Forensic testing is regarded as the best way to authenticate a painting today, and**

it began with that trial." Further police investigation revealed a studio where Otto's brother Leonhard had many unfinished Van Gogh forgeries.

- Which is the forgery? (CLICK) As you have probably guessed **the painting on the left is genuine** van Gogh's *Self-portrait* (1889) and the one on the right is the forgery I have been talking about both now at the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

NOTES

- There are over 35 self-portraits by van Gogh. Twenty-five were painted in Paris when he did not have enough money to pay for a model.

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Noah Charney, The Art of Forgery



Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920),
Portrait of Madame Hanka
Zborowska, 1918, 64.5 × 46 cm, Tate



Elmyr de Hory, *Hommage à Modigliani*

Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920), *Portrait of Madame Hanka Zborowska*, 1918, 64.5 × 46 cm, Tate
Elmyr de Hory, *Hommage à Modigliani*

- Coming back to what we might call a conventional forgery.
- "Not long ago, a British newspaper (*The Telegraph*) reported that **all works, except one**, in an exhibition of twenty-one paintings by the great Italian painter, **Amedeo Modigliani** (at **Genoa's Palazzo Ducale**) **were fake**
- A French expert (Marc Restellini) on Modigliani said, '**Modigliani is one of the most copied artists in the world and his paintings sell in the millions.**' He believes that there are over 1,000 fake Modigliani paintings in the world." [1]
- So which is the fake? (**CLICK**) This time **the fake is on the right. It is by the well known forger Elmyr de Hory** who, in his 30 year career, **created more than 1,000 forgeries many of which are still in museums and private collections.** He was talented and charming and managed to convince everyone he met that the paintings he was offering were genuine; celebrities he fooled include **Marilyn**

Monroe, Liz Taylor, Rita Hayworth, and Orson Welles.

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Henri Matisse (1869-1954), *Odalisque in Red Trousers*, 1925. Original (left) and fake (right)

Henri Matisse (1869-1954), *Odalisque in Red Trousers*, 1925. Original (left) and fake (right)

- The Caracas Museum of Contemporary Art in **Venezuela** had Matisse's *Odalisque in Red Trousers* on display when **a collector raised questions about it** and the **museum discovered that a copy had been on display** for at least two years (2000 to 2002).
- Ten years later the **FBI set up a sting operation and met two people in Miami** to negotiate the purchase of the painting. **The thieves asked for \$740,000** even though it was valued at about \$3 million. The two (Pedro Guzman and Maria Lazo) were arrested and both **pleaded guilty** and were sentenced to 33 and 21 months in prison.
- The **United States** has been **inexplicably reluctant to return the painting** to Venezuela. This has led to a **dozen topless women wearing only red pants, protesting** on the steps of the museum. After all the publicity the fake painting will now be worth a great deal and **some say there was a second substitution and the alleged genuine version is another fake.**

- Which is which? (**CLICK**) We believe the one on the left is the original. Or is it?

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Henri Matisse, *Odalisque in Red Trousers*, c.1924-1925, 50.0 x 61.0cm, Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris



Elmyr De Hory in the style of Matisse: *Odalisque*

Henri Matisse, *Odalisque in Red Trousers*, c.1924-1925, 50.0 x 61.0cm, Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris

Elmyr De Hory in the style of Matisse: *Odalisque*

- Another Matisse forgery.
- One of these, I think you can probably guess which one, is by the master forger **Elmyr De Hory, he never copied the masters but painted in the same style**. So how do you paint in the same style? Many claim you must enter into the mind and soul of the artist but De Hory thinks this is just romantic nonsense. **"Could you write a story like Hemingway by trying to put yourself into Hemingway's mind and soul? Could you become Hemingway? No, it's a terribly vulgar and romantic explanation . . . though I'm sure the public eats it up. What I did was study—very, very carefully—the man's work. That's all there is to it."**
- With Matisse he learned to draw easy flowing lines until **he realised that Matisse hesitated when drawing a line**, perhaps when he looked up at the model, so De Hory learnt to interrupt the line. He claims **Matisse was the easiest artist to fake** although in this side-

by-side comparison you have probably already spotted the De Hory. (**CLICK**) It is the one on the right.

- Today, de Hory's pastiches are **still available for purchase under his own name**, and there have even been reports of **forgeries of the great forger's work**. These **fake De Hory are being sold at auction for \$2,000 to \$3,000**. They are signed Matisse, Modigliani or Picasso on the front and they have a fake De Hory signature on the back.

NOTES

- [1] "Matisse's 'odalisques' display the artist's passion for decorative pattern and motifs. The artist visited the French colonies in North Africa (Algeria in 1906 and Morocco in 1912–13) where the brilliant light, exotic environment and Moorish architecture inspired a new body of work. His odalisques have been described by art historian Roger Benjamin as 'elaborate fictions' in which the artist re-created the image of the Islamic harem using French models posed in his Nice apartment. The fabrics, screens, carpets, furnishings and costuming recalled the exoticism of the 'Orient' and provided a theme for Matisse's preoccupation with the figure and elaborate pattern."

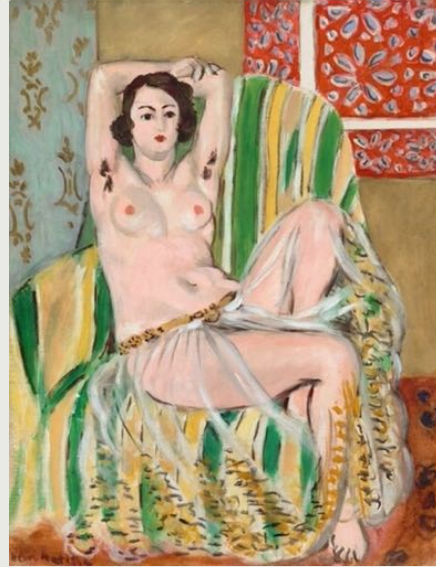
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John Myatt (b. 1945), *Yellow Odalisque - In The Style of Henri Matisse*, 2012, 91.4 × 68.6 cm



Henri Matisse (1869-1954), *Odalisque Seated with Arms Raised, Green Striped Chair*, 1923, 65.1 × 50.2 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

Henri Matisse (1869-1954), *Odalisque Seated with Arms Raised, Green Striped Chair*, 1923, 65.1 × 50.2 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

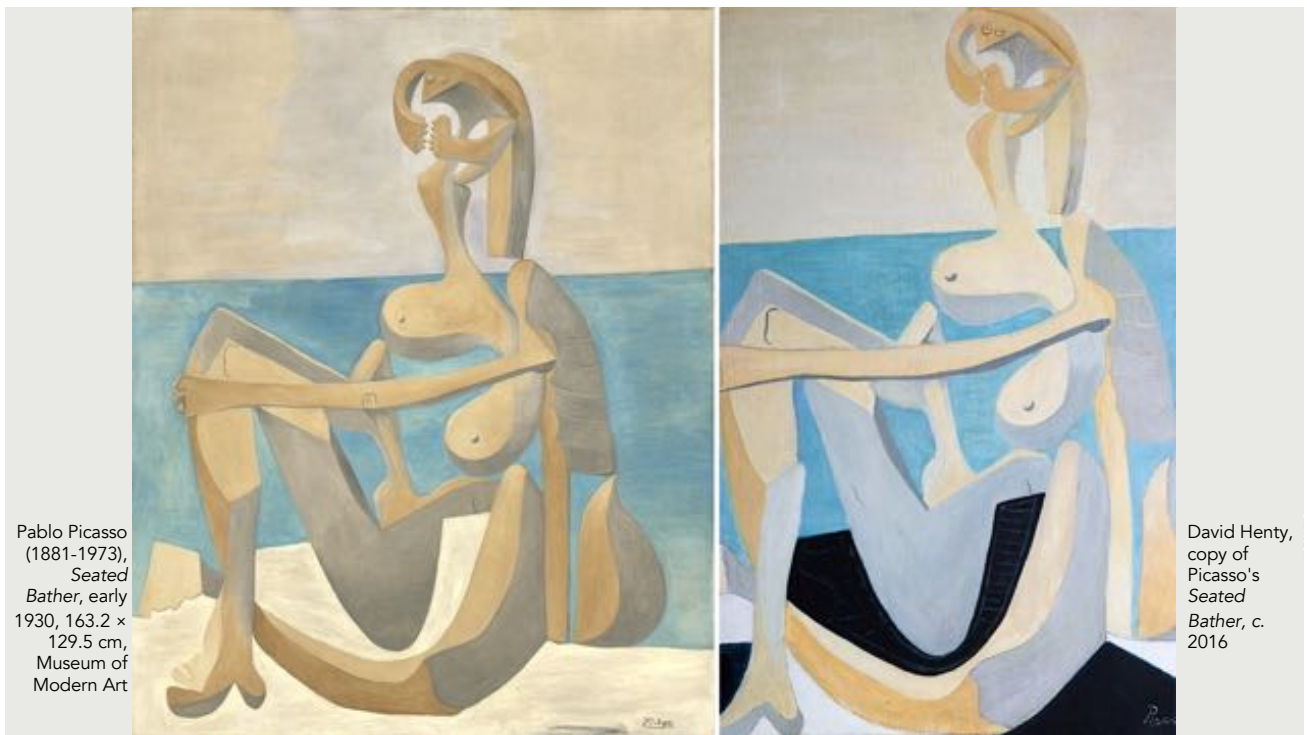
John Myatt (b. 1945), *Yellow Odalisque - In The Style of Henri Matisse*, 2012, 91.4 × 68.6 cm

- **Another genuine Matisse with a fake** painted by another artist.
- You should now be able to **spot the Matisse immediately**. Yes, it is the one **on the right** (CLICK).
- The one on the left was one of a signed limited edition of 49 works by the **infamous forger, John Myatt** entitled *Yellow Odalisque (in the style of Henri Matisse)*. Like De Hory, Myatt become so famous in his own right that people wanted to own a '**genuine**' Myatt. I have a talk next term about all these famous forgers and artists that I have mentioned today.

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Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Seated Bather*, early 1930, 163.2 x 129.5 cm, Museum of Modern Art

David Henty, copy of Picasso's *Seated Bather*, c. 2016

- "Due to his prolific output, there is **no authoritative catalogue raisonné of Picasso's work** which is estimated to total as many as **50,000 paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures and ceramics**. To make matters worse for authenticators, Picasso was known for being **difficult about signing his work**. He once declared that he "**would sign a very good forgery**" and even defaced one of his own canvases with multiple signatures after a patron asked him to sign it."
- Antiques dealer Philip Stapleton **bought one of these** paintings at a **car boot sale for £230** (in 2018). **He thought it was a fake** but experts at the Brighton and Hove Auction Rooms told him it **might be genuine**. He was told it could be an early draft of the 1930 painting at the Museum of Modern Art as it had what appeared to be an old signature on the back. Now **David Henty**, who has made a living out of selling replica's of Picasso work, said "**It's definitely**

mine. It's just one I gave away about three years ago ... I only did it for a bit of fun. I wasn't planning on selling it, I just painted it for pleasure."

- (CLICK) The Henty is the one on the right. The one on the left is the genuine Picasso at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

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<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78721> Picasso, Seated Bather



Unsigned (Abraham Wolfgang Kűfner? 1760-1817), 18th century copy of Dűrer's *Self-Portrait with a Fur-Trimmed Robe* 1500, c. 1785, The City of Nuremberg's Art Collections



Albrecht Dűrer (1471–1528), *Self-Portrait with Fur-Trimmed Robe*, 1500, 67.1 × 48.9 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich

Unsigned (Abraham Wolfgang Kűfner? 1760-1817), 18th century copy of Dűrer's *Self-Portrait with a Fur-Trimmed Robe* 1500, c. 1785, The City of Nuremberg's Art Collections
 Albrecht Dűrer (1471–1528), *Self-Portrait with Fur-Trimmed Robe*, 1500, 67.1 × 48.9 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich

- **Nearly 11,000 books and articles have been written about Albrecht Dűrer (1471–1528) yet things are still being discovered.** The son of a goldsmith he quickly emerged as a rival to his contemporary Leonardo da Vinci. His skill is such that the famous Venetian artist Giovanni Bellini is said to have asked him for the brush he used to paint the single hairs of his realistic beards and Dűrer gave him an ordinary brush - it was his extraordinary skill that achieved the effect not the brush.
- In 1500, a **full frontal pose was exceptional** for a secular portrait as most were profile portraits and were **being replaced by three-quarter views** which Dűrer had used in his earlier self-portrait. Full frontal views were **associated with images of Christ** and one of these pictures was used as a depiction of Christ in a 1520 woodcut.

- (CLICK) This is *Self-Portrait with Fur-Trimmed Robe*, his **last painting of himself alone**.
- The one on the left is a copy and is a mystery. **It is believed to be by Abraham Wolfgang Kűfner** (1760-1817). He asked the city of Nuremberg, who owned the work, if he could make a copy. **He painted a copy but it is said he gave the copy back to Nuremberg** and kept the original.
- It is fairly certain that **Elector of Munich bought the original from Kűfner** in 1805 as Kűfner gave them a receipt. So why did Nuremberg demand the return of the work in 1822? Is it because they had just discovered that Kűfner he tricked them? Later, the painting went from the Elector's collection to the Alte Pinakothek in Munich where it is today.
- The one on the **left is the copy now in Nuremberg** and it lacks Dűrer's signature letters "AD" in the upper left corner. Raising the question of why Nuremberg did not see they had a copy immediately? It is possible that Nuremberg sold their the painting to the Bavarian royal collection and kept the copy.

NOTES

- Dűrer was so talented that many artists copied him. In his engraving of the Virgin, Dűrer added the inscription "**Be cursed, plunderers and imitators of the work and talent of others**".
- Dűrer painted two earlier self-portrait, one now in the Louvre and the other in the Prado, Madrid.

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Italian artist, *Portrait Group*, early 20th century, oil and tempera on wood, 40.6 × 36.5 cm, National Gallery, bought, 1923



Domenico Ghirlandaio (1448–1494), *An Old Man and his Grandson*, 1490, tempera, poplar panel, 62.7 × 46.3 cm, Louvre

Italian artist, *Portrait Group*, early 20th century, oil and tempera on wood, 40.6 × 36.5 cm, National Gallery, bought, 1923

Domenico Ghirlandaio (1448–1494), *An Old Man and his Grandson*, 1490, tempera, poplar panel, 62.7 × 46.3 cm, Louvre

- The **National Gallery purchased this work in 1923** believing it to be an authentic 15th century painting. (CLICK) However, **scientific analysis showed the pigments were not available** before the 19th century. The painting had also been covered in shellac to simulate age.
- There is **not a similar painting** with which to compare it. The **representation of children was uncommon** but here is one very well-known example in the Louvre, and an unusual painting. (CLICK) It is *An Old Man and His Grandson* by Ghirlandaio, late 15th century. It is unusual because at that time **appearance was thought to signify inner virtue**. A **beautiful face meant a beautiful mind** and an **ugly face meant an evil person** yet here an old man with **rhinophyma, a skin disease** mistakenly linked to alcoholism. Ghirlandaio has painted him **sympathetically** and his grandson

tenderly places his small hand on his chest while his grandfather looks down affectionately.

- The famous art historian Bernard Berenson wrote, "**There is no more human picture in the entire range of Quattrocento painting, whether in or out of Italy.**"

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Raphael (1483-1520), *La Fornarina* or *The Portrait of a Young Woman*, 1518-1519, 85 × 60 cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome

- This is ***La Fornarina*** by Raphael, some say **it is his girlfriend** and others a picture of a beautiful woman assembled from different models.
- (CLICK) Instead of comparing it with the copy I have a photograph of **Leo Stevenson painting *La Fornarina* for a TV documentary**. As you can see it is identical except that he has created **the original colours**, the red is more crimson and the blue of the sky brighter so you can see the myrtle tree behind her more clearly.
- Stevenson added: **"I always try to put a secret in my paintings. They will deliberately fail certain scientific tests. Sometimes I'll put a joke or a saying on the first layer of paint, and if you X-ray the painting you will see it. I did a Venice Canaletto several years ago. If you X-rayed it, you'd see a submarine coming out of the water."**

NOTES

- Gustave Flaubert wrote of this painting, "She is a beautiful woman,

no need to know more."

- When first mentioned the painting was described as a Venus and it is not described as Raphael's lover until some time around 1618-30. It was not described as 'la fornarina' (baker or baker's daughter) in 1772 and this was assumed to be the occupation of Raphael's lover in the nineteenth century. Since then the woman is traditionally identified with the fornarina (baker) Margherita Luti, Raphael's Roman lover, though this has been questioned. The identification ignores the fact that bread-making has been associated with Demeter, the goddess of the harvest, fecundity and sexual union since antiquity.
- According to Vasari, Raphael was known for his excessive sexual activities and had traditionally thought to have died after a night of passion with his mistress but this is speculation.
- There are currently five interpretations of this painting:
 - **Bella Donne.** It is Raphael's version of the Bella Donne theme that had become a popular subject.
 - **Raphael's Lover.** She is wearing an arm band inscribed 'Raphael Vrbinas' suggesting this is a portrait of his muse and mistress Margherita Luti, who is said to have turned down his proposals of marriage every time they met. She eventually left him and he fell into despair and refused to paint so his patron Pope Leo X bribed her to disappear for good.
 - **Breast Cancer.** In an article in The Lancet in 2002 a doctor describes a possible tumour on her left breast indicated by the shadow by her index finger, the blue colour of her left breast compared with her right breast and her swollen left arm.
 - **Fornarina was a Witch.** In Shakespeare's Hamlet, Ophelia says "They say the owl was a baker's daughter." The owl

goddess was a witch and a servant of Satan. Some historians believe that at this time certain witches were accepted and they made a living selling potions and spells. There is a legend that Christ begged hospitality of a baker's wife, who would have given it, but was prevented from doing this act of charity towards the seeming beggar by her daughter, who was, in consequence, changed into an owl.

- **Sex Worker.** The woman is a prostitute that Raphael used as a model explaining her seductive look. At the time prostitutes were required to wear a yellow scarf round their heads. These women willing acted as models and such women could show their naked body without being prosecuted.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Fornarina



Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), *The Path to the Old Ferry at By*, 1880, 49.8 × 65.1 cm, Tate



Tom Keating (1917-1984), *River Landscape*, Porczyński Gallery, Warsaw, signed as Alfred Sisley, claimed to be a Keating forgery

Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), *The Path to the Old Ferry at By*, 1880, 49.8 × 65.1 cm, Tate

Tom Keating (1917-1984), *River Landscape*, Porczyński Gallery, Warsaw, signed as Alfred Sisley, claimed to be a Keating forgery

- One of the painting is by Alfred Sisley, the nineteenth century Impressionist and the other by the famous British artist and forger **Tom Keating**.
- (CLICK) Keating claims his is the painting on the right although it is signed Alfred Sisley. I will be talking about Tom Keating in my talk about famous forgers.

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Max Brandrett (b. 1948), *A Group of Six People* (in the style of Lowry), 1958



Laurence Stephen Lowry (1887-1976), *Family Group*, 76.2 x 101.5 cm

Max Brandrett (b. 1948), *A Group of Six People* (in the style of Lowry), 1958

Laurence Stephen Lowry (1887-1976), *Family Group*, 76.2 x 101.5 cm
sold at Christie's in 2013 for £553,875

- **Lowry is another one of the most forged artists.** One of these works is by the **forger Max Brandrett, known as Max the Forger.** He was **jailed three times** for forgery and copied hundreds of famous masterpieces. **He is now 70 and has said he will never do it again** and he is gaining recognition in his own right and recently published a book called *Britain's No. 1 Art Forger Max Brandrett: The Life of a Cheeky Faker*. He is also filming for a documentary about his colourful life.
- **He grew up in a Barnardo's orphanage and he left at 15 to join a circus.** He started forging to make some money. He believes the market is flooded with forgeries, he said '**There are so many Lowry and impressionist fakes floating around - you can pick up a good Van Gogh for a few quid abroad**'. He is self-taught and never went to art college.

- So which is the Brandrett? (**CLICK**) It is the one on the left.

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David Henty (b. 1958), copy of Lowry *The Postbox*



L. S. Lowry (1887-1976), *The Postbox or Man Posting a Letter*, private collection

David Henty (b. 1958), copy of Lowry *The Postbox or Man Posting a Letter*, left, was withdrawn from eBay after the company was told it was a copy while the real version of the painting was sold at auction for £500,000

L. S. Lowry (1887-1976), *The Postbox or Man Posting a Letter*, private collection, sold in 2011 for £165,000

- **Some legitimate Lowry's have emerged from obscurity.** Claiming to be long lost or forgotten Lowry paintings, now suddenly rediscovered and **one of these is genuine and the other a fake.**
- **The genuine painting was bought by a husband and wife in 1967 from Lowry himself** and kept in the family as they liked his work. When they died their **children decided to sell their four Lowry paintings** and one of these is the most expensive one sold, for £165,000 to a private buyer.
- The other work is by the **amateur artist David Henty**. He admits to **selling hundreds of fake paintings** claiming to be by different artists through his eBay site over the past five years, including dozens of fake Lowrys'.

- (CLICK) The one on the left is by Henty, a good and well recorded example of his replica copy of *The Postbox*. It is sufficiently different in lots of ways so that it could not be misconstrued as the legitimate Lowry.
- **Other artists have copied Lowry** including the notorious British art forger **Shaun Greenhalgh**, was one recent British faker of art who created many a convincing fake Lowry painting in his illicit career in art fraud.

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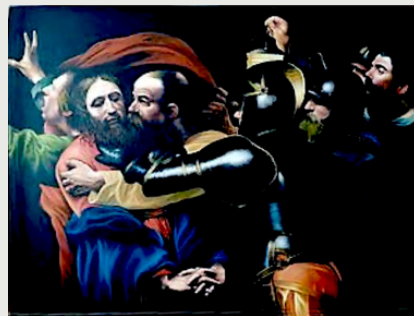
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Caravaggio (1571–1610), *The Taking of Christ*, 1602, 133.5 × 169.5 cm, National Gallery of Ireland



Max Brandrett (b. 1948), copy of *The Taking of Christ*

Caravaggio (1571–1610), *The Taking of Christ*, 1602, 133.5 × 169.5 cm, National Gallery of Ireland

Max Brandrett (b. 1948), , copy of *The Taking of Christ*

- One of these is by **Max Brandrett** (b. 1948). **He could draw as a child**, his **mother was poor** and his **father left home** so he and his brother were sent to **Barnardo's** children's home where he was encouraged to draw and paint. When he left he ended up in a circus cleaning out the elephants. He left the circus and travelled around living on his wits and drawing and painting when he could. **He found he could copy any artist so well that even the experts at major galleries and auction houses were fooled.** He took to painting in the style of **lesser known artists** and then taking a collection of **worthless paintings with that one in the middle** to an auction house. **Feigning ignorance** and claiming they were from a house clearance the auction house would discover what they thought was the only valuable work and he would make a few thousand pounds at auction often bidding up his own pictures.
- At one stage when he lived in London he was approached by

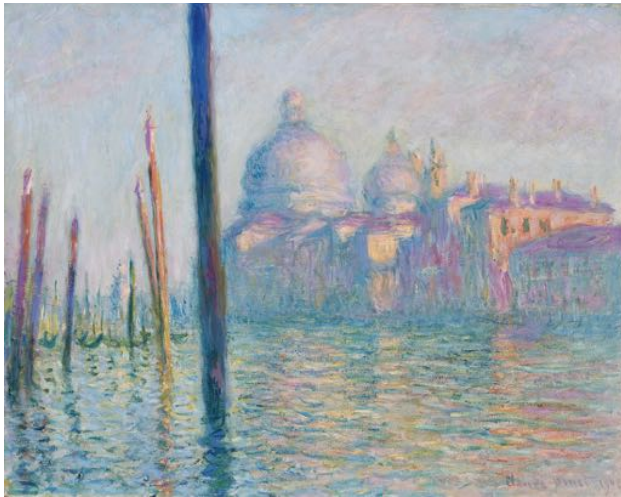
someone asking if he could paint a portrait from a photograph. He did the job only to then discover that it was the **Kray twin's mother**. If they did not like it he could have been physically injured but, after joking that it was not a good likeness they admitted that they loved the work and paid him £200.

- He was jailed three times for forgery and petty crimes but now says he will never do it again and his own work is now selling well. **His copy of Caravaggio's work he sells for £2,500.**
- He said: 'There are so many Lowry and impressionist fakes floating around - you can pick up a good Van Gogh for a few quid abroad'.
- His book *Britain's No. 1 Art Forger Max Brandrett: The Life of a Cheeky Faker* has just been published (February 2022) and he has an exhibition called Fake's Progress at the old Barnardo's shop in Burgess Hill town centre.

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Claude Monet (1840–1926), *Le Grand Canal, Venice*, 1908, 73.7 × 92.4 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Ken Perenyi, *After Claude Monet, Grand Canal*

Claude Monet (1840–1926), *Le Grand Canal, Venice*, 1908, 73.7 × 92.4 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Ken Perenyi, *After Claude Monet, Grand Canal*

- One of these is, of course, by **Claude Monet and painted in 1908**. The other is by **Ken Perenyi** (pronounced 'per-rain-ee'), an artist who became a major player in the underworld in **New York** from the 1970s to the 1990s. He became one of the **most prolific and well paid forgers in the world**. His aim was to master his craft so he could create the works of the masters using the same techniques that they used.
- He **never regarded them as forgeries** but as a continuation of the master's work.
- He **now paints works that he sells openly as copies**.
- American art forger Ken Perenyi published a memoir in 2012 in which he detailed decades of his activities creating thousands of authentic-looking **replicas of masters such as James Buttersworth** (1817-1894, English maritime artist), **Martin Johnson Heade** (1819-1904, American seascapes and tropical bird painter), and **Charles**

Bird King (1785-1862, American portrait painter, known for his portraits of Native American leaders), and selling the forgeries to famous auction houses such as Christie's and Sotheby's and wealthy private collectors.

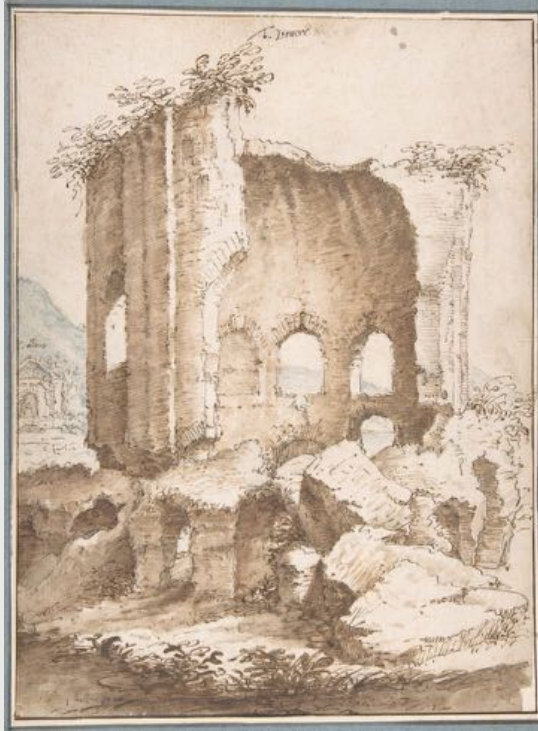
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Ken Perenyi, Caveat Emptor: The Secret Life of an American Art Forger

Circle of Jan Brueghel the Elder, *View of the Temples of Venus and of Diana in Baia from the South*, c. 1594, Metropolitan Museum of Art



or is it Eric Hebborn (1934-1996)

Circle of Jan Brueghel the Elder, *View of the Temples of Venus and of Diana in Baia from the South*, c. 1594, or is it Eric Hebborn (1934-1996)

- I end with a single work in the Metropolitan Museum of Art that they claim is by the **circle of Jan Breughel the Elder**.
- Let me tell about **an artist called Eric Hebborn**. He had a golden rule to **never s to amateur buyers**. He always **dealt with top galleries** and allowed them to judge the work so if it turned out to be a fake that was their failure to not recognising a forgery.
- He is estimated to have created **over 1,000 forgeries** making him one of the most prolific of forgers. He claims to have painted in the style of **Brueghel, Van Dyck, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot and Peter Paul Rubens** and some are still in the finest national galleries.
- When he was young he had **astonishing artistic talent** and was trained at the **Royal Academy of Art School** where he earned the **Rome Prize** for engraving. He then worked as an **art restorer** where he learned additional skills. He **opened a gallery** with his partner

and was accepted by some of the leading dealers and specialists in the London art world.

- He claims **drawing in any style you wish is not illegal** and asking an expert what they think is not illegal. **He believes it is the art world to blame** and looks down on **so-called experts** who cannot tell whether a work is genuine. He also said during a BBC documentary, **"I think you might possibly find an honest man. I just don't think you'll find an honest man who's also a dealer."**
- (CLICK) In his memoirs, ***Drawn to Trouble***, he claims this **etching is by him**. It ended up in the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum claims it is "View of the Temples of Venus and of Diana in Baia from the South" (ca. 1594) to the "circle of Jan Brueghel the Elder."
- We may never know as **Hebborn met an unsavoury end**. In 1996, he was found with his **skull fractured in Rome**, where he had lived for 30 years. There are rumours that **the mafia was involved** in the murder but no one has ever been arrested in connection with the crime.
- We admire the forger's skill and forget that it is a crime like any other and forgers are part of the criminal underworld and so can come to a violent end.

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Eric Hebborn, *The Art Forger's Handbook*



CAN YOU SPOT A FAKE?

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE
ART@SHAFE.UK
WWW.SHAFE.UK

- So, you never know and even the leading galleries are sometimes fooled. So, next time you visit a gallery you may begin to have doubts.
- Let me leave you with the thought—**art forgers are very skilled artists and criminals**. They know all of the techniques described here and can overcome most of them so **detecting** a forgery is **very difficult and very expensive**. A simple starting point is to **buy the catalogue raisonné** of the artist. If the work is not listed then it is probably a forgery as new works are rarely found. Visit art galleries to look at works by the artist. **Then call an expert—and whatever you do don't call me.**
- Thank you.

NOTES

- If you are a forger then **don't try to forge a Rembrandt or a Renoir** go for a lesser known artist whose **work sells for £10,000 not £10 million** upwards. So, turning that around **if you are a buyer** offered a **work by a lesser known artist** then do not buy it without **cast-iron provenance**. Frauds are usually designed to overcome checks

that are likely to be made so if you think something is fake you must **check it in a way the forger would not expect.**

MOST FORGED ARTISTS

- Based on <https://www.mutualart.com/Article/The-Most-Faked-Artists-in-History/ADD1DF7752FEBC5D>
- Pablo Picasso as he produced so much
- Jackson Pollock as it's hard to spot a fake drip painting
- Amedeo Modigliani as he is in demand
- Andy Warhol as prints are easier to forge

SOME MODERN BRITISH ART FORGERS

- Shaun Greenhalgh (b. 1961, British artist and former art forger), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shawn_Greenhalgh
- Leo Stevenson (b. 1958), British artist and copyist, <https://leostevenson.com/profile-leo-stevenson/>
- David Henty (b. 1958), <https://www.davidhentyart.co.uk/abouttheartist>
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