

WRONG!

But a nice fake is a valued object in a university art museum.

by CHRISTOPHER REED

IN JUNE OF 1955, Agnes Mongan, then assistant director and curator of drawings at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum, bought a drawing by Henri Matisse, *A Lady with Flowers and Pomegranates*, for \$325, doing business through the mail with a person previously unknown to her, E. Raynal of Miami.

Raynal wrote to acknowledge receipt of the museum's check, called Mongan "très sympathique," and offered to express his appreciation by lending drawings from his collection to the Fogg for exhibition during the summer. In July two Modiglianis, a Renoir, and another Matisse arrived.

"Our suspicions were aroused," Mongan recalled in a 1968 letter to the writer Clifford Irving, when the four drawings came. "The Renoir we knew immediately was wrong. The Modiglianis we studied and rejected." The museum held the drawings over the summer and then returned them. Mongan said nothing to E. Raynal of her suspicions. She had not met him. He could well have had and offered the drawings in good faith. He had not asked for opinions. Mongan still believed that *A Lady*

with *Flowers and Pomegranates* was genuine (see page 45), and the museum reproduced the drawing on a postcard.

But doubt soon assailed her. Her assistant curator of drawings, Emily Rauh (now Pulitzer), A.M. '63, got on the case. Laboriously and over the course of several years, she and Mongan spoke with hundreds of private collectors, dealers, and museum curators and assembled photographs of drawings attributed to Matisse. They put them in two piles, "those we thought were right and those we thought were wrong," Mongan told Irving. "By the time we had worked on the lists we were convinced that ours was a forgery." (Mongan, who became director of the Fogg, died in 1996. Pulitzer, now of St. Louis, remains actively involved with the Harvard University Art Museums as a benefactor and chair of the collections committee.)

"At one point," Mongan reported to Irving, "we were in touch with a dealer in New York who told us that Raynal had turned out literally hundreds of Matisse drawings, mostly in series, the various series based on authentic drawings in many cases....A Chicago gallery had in all innocence handled many of the drawings. So had Knoedler [a New York City gallery] as well as the Museum of Modern Art. They were, as you already know, all pretty well taken in, as we had been."

Irving knew of Raynal and his doings because he was writing his biography, *Fake! The Story of Elmyr de Hory, the Greatest Art Forger of Our Time*, which appeared in 1969. De Hory/Raynal/von Houry/Herzog/Cassou/Hoffman/Dory-Boutin, a flamboyant, talented Hungarian expatriate, boulevardier, and rogue, was born in 1905, although he claimed 1911. He began his forging career in 1946,

when, as a struggling artist in Paris having little luck selling de Horys, he sold a “Picasso” to his friend Lady Malcolm Campbell. After his jig was up in 1968, de Hory estimated that he or his felonious dealers and handlers, Fernand Legros and Réal Lessard, operating in North and South America, Europe, and Japan, had passed off as genuine 1,000 drawings and paintings of his they claimed to be by Matisse, Picasso, Modigliani, Dufy, van Dongen, and Derain.

De Hory lived in the 1960s on the Spanish Mediterranean island of Ibiza, where he would spend two months in a sun-dappled prison in 1968. The charges

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brought against him in that Franco-era Madrid court were relatively trivial, ranging, writes Irving, “from homosexuality and consorting with known criminals to ‘no visible means of support.’” A noisier trial, one more to the point, would have embarrassed the numerous experts who had authenticated de Hory’s fakes as genuine, the dealers who had eagerly sold them, and the collectors and museum curators who had laced their holdings with his frauds. After his incarceration, he was booted out of Spain and went to southern Portugal. De Hory died, possibly a suicide, or disappeared—there is some uncertainty—in 1976.*

De Hory “posed as a Hungarian nobleman, and when he had money, he lived like a gentleman of leisure,” says William Robinson, the present curator of drawings at the Fogg. “He kept trying to make a living with his own work, but couldn’t sell it. When he didn’t have money, he resorted to forgery. His dealers didn’t want to give him too much of the take for fear he would stop working. So they cheated him.”

NO DOUBT Agnes Mongan disliked being bamboozled by Raynal and his Matisse, but that is not to say she found the drawing valueless. She taught connoisseurship, which is defined by Ronald D. Spencer, editor of *The Expert versus the Object: Judging Fakes and False Attributions in the Visual Arts*, as “that sensitivity of visual perception, historical training, technical aware-

*Irving also lived in the 1960s on Ibiza, which is how he came to meet the forger. And perhaps to sit at his knee. In 1972 the writer was ordered to pay back \$765,000 to his publishers when it was discovered that his “authorized” biography of the recluse Howard Hughes was no such thing and was based on faked documents. Irving spent 14 months in a federal prison. Orson Welles made a film that featured both de Hory and Irving. *F for Fake*, and de Hory is the subject of a Norwegian video, available in the United States as *Masterpiece or Forgery*. The video stars actress Ursula Andress, who knew de Hory, and William Robinson, curator of drawings at the Fogg.



Mixing and matching

Imitator of Vincent van Gogh. *Self-portrait with a Bandaged Ear and Pipe*, dated 1889.

Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890). *Self-portrait Dedicated to Paul Gauguin*, 1888.

STARTING in about 1925, Otto Wacker of Berlin, a cabaret performer turned art dealer who would eventually face 19 months in the jug, introduced into the art market 33 previously unknown

“Van Gogh” canvases supposedly painted some 35 years before. He told a patchy tale of where he had gotten them. He was “clearly possessed of a confidence trickster’s charm,” writes Walter Feilchenfeldt in a 1989 article in the art-history journal

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: KATYA KALLSEN, ALLAN MACINTYRE, RICK STAFFORD, AND DAVID MATHEWS



incongruous in a later composition. Moreover, “the brush strokes of the forgery resemble those of Van Gogh’s Paris paintings,” says Cooper, “a thatch of strokes laid on in various patterns in an Impressionist way to create a sense of light.” But for the forgery to be convincing, the brush strokes ought to resemble those of Van Gogh’s later, more Expressionist work, in which “they follow the bumps and hollows of the anatomy and impart a tremendous, rolling energy that moves through the figure.” The x-ray images shown here, of the forgery and of a late, genuine self-portrait from the collection of Maurice Wertheim ’06 at the Fogg, show clearly this difference in brush strokes.

The pretty, somewhat murky colors of the forgery also more closely resemble those of Van Gogh’s earlier works than the gleaming, acid colors of the Wertheim picture, for instance.

Both brush strokes and colors seem awkward and ill-managed, as well as inappropriate to the period the forgery pretends to, owing to deficiencies of technique by the forger.

The drawing of the face strikes Cooper as clumsy in a number of ways. “There’s something odd about the far side of the face, which is the harder side to do because it’s curving away in perspective. The way the pipe enters the mouth, the way the mouth is crushed around the pipe, and the ‘v’ of the lips don’t quite seem right. The nose is a little too beaky. The eyes have a slitty, deeply set look, which I don’t think you see in Van Gogh’s self-portraits. There’s something literally and figuratively mean about those eyes. Whatever his craziness, Van Gogh’s face generally has some sympathy and pathos to it, and you don’t see it very much here.”

This fake teaches a useful lesson, says Cooper. “It shows how one can misunderstand the flow of an artist’s career by mixing and matching from two different periods.”

The Fogg has a closet full of fakes, most so amateurish that they are boring. “But this one must be pretty good,” says Cooper, “to have fooled De la Faille and Meier-Graefe.” He adds, “It is always easy to see suspicious earmarks in retrospect, once a picture has been proven to be not right.”

Simiolus (Feilchenfeldt’s art-dealer father helped expose Wacker in 1928). Art experts J.-B. de la Faille, author of the standard catalog of Van Gogh’s works, which first appeared in 1928, and Julius Meier-Graefe, Van Gogh’s biographer, were convinced of Wacker’s integrity and of the authenticity of these pictures.

The *Self-portrait with a Bandaged Ear and Pipe* was one of the batch. The Fogg has both the painting—a bequest given as genuine—and a testimonial by Meier-Graefe that reads, in translation: “I certify that I consider this picture an authentic, well-preserved work by Vincent van Gogh. It comes from his sojourn at Arles in 1888. I consider it one of the most beautiful self-portraits.”

“Today it is an established fact that the pictures [all 33] are fakes,” writes Feilchenfeldt. Harry Cooper, curator of modern art at the Fogg, tells what trips up this one. The forger did not want to copy a known painting, but rather to create a new one that would fit plausibly into the corpus of Van Gogh’s work. He adopted a classic forger’s m.o., making a pastiche of parts of authentic paintings. He cannibalized at least two, of which he must have had reproductions. From the background of *Portrait of Père Tanguy*, done in Paris in 1887, he took a Japanese print of a woman (Tanguy sold such things and artists’ supplies). The head he took from a real Van Gogh, *Self-portrait with Bandaged Ear and Pipe*, done in Arles in 1889. Given the ear, the forged painting is clearly meant to be seen as done near the end of Van Gogh’s life, but the decorative detail from a painting of an earlier period is

ness, and empirical experience needed by the expert to attribute the object.” A wrong Matisse set side by side with a right one can be a powerful teaching tool, illuminating the genuine and helping a connoisseur-in-training sharpen a knowing eye. Forgeries also often teach of the fallibility of experts, perhaps a useful lesson in humility.

Mongan welcomed exposed forgeries into the Harvard collection. A 1960 article on fakes in the *New York Times Magazine* noted that “The Fogg pays a flat \$5 per picture if it finds the work especially interesting or well done—regardless of whether it is supposed to be a Leonardo da Vinci or a Grandma Moses.” The drawings collection today contains five other Matisse pretenders, knowingly donated as forgeries, including at least one other de Hory and a drawing defaced by the veritable Matisse in 1951 because it was a fake.

Forgeries teach lessons about the history of taste, and that is another reason university art museums value them. Fakery is generally a market response to demand. Over the centuries, when the demand for a certain sort of artwork outstripped the supply, the forgers got to work. When ancient Romans conceived that owning an original Classical Greek sculpture was a step up in the good life, the supply of genuine pieces quickly vanished, and Roman craftsmen churned out Greek statuary until the poet Horace could exclaim in the first century B.C.,

“He who knows a thousand works of art, knows a thousand frauds.” In the early years of the twentieth century, admiration for the paintings of Corot led to an outpouring of bogus Corots, so that in 1940 *Newsweek* could joke that “Of the 2,500 paintings Corot did in his lifetime, 7,800 are to be found in America.” When British Grand Tourists visited Italy in the early eighteenth century, says Robinson, they lusted after master drawings as souvenirs. “It was a moment in the history of taste when drawings were starting to be collected for themselves.” Much favored among the British travelers were landscapes and figural works by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri Guercino, and forgers worked flat-out trying to please the visitors. An Italian scholar



Too good to be true

Covered globular jar with decoration of flowers, butterflies, rocks, and lingzhi fungus. Qing dynasty, probably Yongzheng period (1723-1735). 3¾ inches high without cover.

Small, broad-shouldered jar with decoration of the eight Buddhist Treasures (*babao*) amid scrolling lotus decor. Ming dynasty, Chonghua period (1465-1487), probably 1481-1487. 3½ inches high.

MOST OF THE HARVARD MUSEUMS' FORGERIES live in the dark in storerooms. Robert D. Mowry, Dworsky curator of Chinese art and head of the department of Asian art, occasionally exhibits the jar above in the Sackler Museum galleries as a beautiful example of early-eighteenth-century Chinese porcelain. It is that, but it

purports to be something rarer and pricier—a work of the late fifteenth century. The reign mark on its bottom lies about its age.

The jar at right is an authen-

Flat pomegranates

Henri Matisse (1869-1954). *A Lady with a Necklace*, 1936.

Henri Matisse forgery by Elmyr de Hory. *A Lady with Flowers and Pomegranates*, dated 1944.

“THE FIRST THING you notice about the fake” at right, says William Robinson, the Fogg’s curator of drawings, “is the flatness of the space. Matisse’s line creates volume and plasticity. He uses a strong contour line and a lighter line for modeling that tapers a bit, suggesting the

tic fifteenth-century work. It is missing its cover. When this treasure came to Harvard in 1979, it had lost its identity and was miscataloged as an eighteenth-century work, but Mowry established its venerability through scholarly detective work. Both jars are done in what is called the *doucai* (or dovetailed) technique—decoration painted in bright overglaze-enamel colors within underglaze cobalt-blue outlines—a technique that had its start in the fifteenth century.

About 100 Chenghua *doucai* porcelains are present and accounted for worldwide —“cups, bowls, and such, but these little jars, of which only 12 are known, have always been celebrated as the most desirable Chinese overglaze-enamel pieces,” says Mowry. “They were revered from the time that they were made and, because there weren’t very many of them, faked virtually from the beginning. The very best forgeries were made in the first half of the eighteenth century.” Harvard’s Chenghua jar is the sole known example of this particular pattern to have survived intact, the rarest of the rare. The eighteenth-century jar copies the pattern of another of the 12 known jars, now in the collection of the Percival David Foundation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

What distinguishes the authentic jar from the forgery? Shape, most conspicuously, and the shapes of both jars are typical of their periods. “The Chenghua jar has a short, vertical neck and broad shoulders, which curve down and slant inward as if it’s a person standing with shoulders pulled back, as your mother said to do when you were a child,” says Mowry. “The globular eighteenth-century jar has slopping shoulders and a bulging belly. Whether the imitators simply liked the globular shape better and thought no one would notice, or whether they didn’t fully understand what they were copying, we’ll never know.”

Mowry describes the drawing on the earlier jar as “a little bit hesitant. It’s not that the imperial porcelain makers were com-



pletely inexperienced in the use of the brush. They had been producing blue-and-white porcelain for more than a hundred years. But they were not practiced in drawing paired outlines of the same curvature, very close together, and in very thin lines, into which they would fit the overglaze-enamel colors in a succeeding phase of production. The long outlines of the scrolling stalks, for example, tend to be a series of hesitant short strokes joined together. The creators of these Chenghua pieces also haven’t learned when their brush will expend all of its cobalt solution. One can see clearly where they have just dipped the brush into the cobalt, and the tonality of the outline is dark, and where they have let the brush run out of cobalt so that the outline virtually disappears. By contrast, the eighteenth-century artist is a master of the brush. All his little lines are beautifully drawn—hair-thin, absolutely parallel, and done with a fluid, continuous brush stroke. All hesitancy is gone. Finally, while one would not characterize a Chenghua *doucai* piece as messy, the colors sometimes spill ever so slightly out of their underglaze blue outlines. In the eighteenth century, such a thing is most unlikely to happen.”

volume of the woman’s blouse. Faker de Hory tries the strong contour, but the secondary line doesn’t mean anything, doesn’t suggest a form. He lacks the ability to use a contour to suggest three dimensions.

“The nose in the genuine drawing, for instance, is very simple,” says Robinson, “but the line does suggest roundness and sculptural values absent from the other drawing. Matisse draws a Romanian blouse. You see how it puffs. Everything in the fake lies in the plane.”

When an art expert goes thumbs-down on an object, its owner often asks, plaintively, “Couldn’t the artist have had a bad day?” The answer is, “Of course.” Any artist’s studio contains abandoned works that didn’t go quite right. But here Robinson is confident that even on a bad day, Matisse could not have produced de Hory’s drawing.



recently put together a catalog of Guercino fakes that required two volumes. Harvard has several examples.

"I MUST HAVE EXAMINED 50,000 works in all fields," writes Thomas Hoving of his 15 years at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, 10 of them as its director. "Fully 40 percent were either phonies or so hypocritically restored or so misattributed that they were just the same as forgeries." In his rollicking account of a lifetime of fake-busting, *False Impressions: The Hunt for Big-time Art Fakes*, Hoving declares, "What few art professionals seem to want to admit is that the art world we are living in today is a new, highly active, unprincipled one of art fakery."

Theodore E. Stebbins Jr., curator of American art at the Fogg, admits it readily. "The art market is tricky, unorganized, and unregulated," he says, "and in this market it pays

When authenticating an object, experts have provenance, technical analysis, and their connoisseurship to rely on.

very well for people to sell objects that aren't what they purport to be. An American modernist picture that cost \$2,500 in the 1960s might be valued at \$3 million or \$5 million today. The only thing that stands between the dealers and the collectors are some of the professors and curators who are willing to give opinions."

When authenticating an art object, experts have provenance, technical analysis, and their connoisseurship to rely on. Provenance or purported provenance—the former whereabouts of an object—is often of little value, proving only that a thing was not made yesterday. A bad piece can have a good provenance, and documents attesting to who owned what when can be faked. Technical analysis can usefully probe the physical makeup of objects with x-ray, infrared, or ultraviolet examination, for instance, and detect all sorts of repairs and subsurface peculiarities. But Stebbins believes that technical analysis leads to definitive conclusions less often than not. The best way to judge right and wrong, he asserts, is "educated, experienced, and very close looking"—connoisseurship.

Stebbins, the author of two catalogues raisonnés of the works of nineteenth-century American painter Martin Johnson Heade, is known throughout the art world as the expert on Heade. Thus, in 1980 when Sotheby Parke-Bernet proposed to auction a newly found, unknown work attributed to Heade, the gallery naturally asked Stebbins his opinion. He examined a color photograph sent to him of *Two Hummingbirds and an Orchid* and stated that it was indeed by Heade and he would include it in the next edition of his book. Doubts nagged him, however, and he went to New York on the day of the sale to examine the painting in the flesh. He found the flesh suspicious. Its colors were chalky and too bright, and the brush strokes did not seem to him like Heade's. He asked Sotheby's to withdraw the piece, although it was due to go on the block in 20 minutes and the consigner was in the hall. Sotheby's withdrew it. Subsequent scientific testing backed up Stebbins's judgment by showing that the canvas and stretcher suggested a quite recent



Failing marks

Two-handled silver bowl. 6¼ inches wide.

FOUR IDENTIFYING MARKS appear on the bottom of this bowl: a date letter (1668-69); a lion passant (it is sterling); a leopard's head (it was made in London); and a maker's mark, the letters "WM" crowned, a variant of a mark attributed to William Mathew. But "the style and form are typical of north-German brandy bowls of the seventeenth century," according to silver expert Christopher Hartop, author of a forthcoming catalog of British and Irish silver at the Fogg. "I think it could be a genuine German piece with English marks 'let-in' in order to make it



Darned Ottoman

Velvet cushion cover (*yastik*). Silk, metal-wrapped silk, and cotton. Turkish. Probably late seventeenth century. 3½ by 2 feet.

“OTTOMAN VELVETS of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are among the finest velvets ever woven,” says Mary McWilliams, Calderwood curator of Islamic and later Indian art. The Edwin Binney 3rd Collection of Turkish Art at the Arthur M. Sackler Museum has some ravishing examples, as well as this cushion cover. Used, leaned against, as it was meant to be, it became seriously worn over time—a memory of its former self.

Threads that run in the vertical direction are the warps, those in the horizontal, the wefts. The red silk pile of this piece is

Only traces of metallic weft threads remain in the restored velvet. The detail at right, from a much-better-preserved Ottoman velvet of circa 1600 at the Sackler, shows the barberpole threads clearly.

made of an extra warp; it is brought up to the front in the weaving process in a loop, and the loop is then cut. Decorative weft threads were made of flattened silvery foil wrapped in a barberpole fashion around a silk core. In some Ottoman velvets the foil is gilded. These can be very colorful textiles. Here only tiny traces of the metallic wefts remain, tucked close to areas of pile where they escaped abrasion.

In fact, this velvet is now only about 30 percent original, says McWilliams. The rest is restoration, probably done after the mid twentieth century when demand for Ottoman velvets began to rise. The design, featuring carnations and hyacinth blossoms, is original. Most of the pile is still the Ottoman pile; where it was lost, the restorer added pink chenille. The restorer has stitched in vertical and horizontal threads to create an illusion of the missing satin foundation and the metallic wefts.

“It’s almost like something you colored in with crayon,” says McWilliams. “I’ve seen this sort of thing hanging on the walls of collectors’ homes, and sometimes I think they don’t understand what they have. What would you call it? A loving restoration? An accretionary fraud?”



The evidence of the zinc white

Imitator of Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes. *Portrait of a Woman*.

THE DISCERNING collector Grenville L. Winthrop, A.B. 1886, LL.B. ’89, bought this alleged Goya portrait of Maria Isabella de Bourbon, infanta of Spain (1741-1763) from a New York dealer in 1936.

He gave it to the Fogg Art Museum in 1943, where it was consid-

ered genuine, although several scholars had doubts. Goya expert F.J. Sanchez-Canton, visiting from the Museo Nacional del

Prado in the early 1950s, declared the painting a forgery on the basis of its modern surface. Conservator Elizabeth H. Jones wrote at the time of the “curious oily slickness of the paint.” The canvas was old, and the paint bore the crackle marks of age.

An x-ray image of the painting in 1954 revealed the presence of an earlier portrait of a woman beneath the surface, but a woman with a longer face. Analysis also proved the use of zinc white paint, invented after Goya’s death. Cleaning showed that the paint surface was indeed relatively modern and had been applied lightly enough so as not to obscure the *craquelure* of the original. The base painting, thought to be a Spanish provincial work of about 1790, was not in good shape; the face may have been partially abraded by the forger.

Conservators left some of the modern surface in place so that what we see today is a face half by the forger and half by his predecessor—useful for teaching and a result Jones characterized as a “split personality in paint.”

more salable at a period—probably the early twentieth century—when English antique silver was much more valuable than Continental.”

The forger cut the four marks from other pieces of silver—presumably spoons, for Mathew was a spoonmaker—and inserted them individually into the metal of the bowl. No seams are visible at a glance by the innocent, but Hartop sees solder, a silver-colored halo, around each mark. The forger probably covered the solder with silver plating to cover his tracks, Hartop surmises, and it has worn off over the years with cleaning.

of the Fogg’s department of paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts, says that a vigorous breath on the bottom of the bowl will sometimes reveal the forger’s hand. Hartop guesses that an x-ray would show the actual joins.



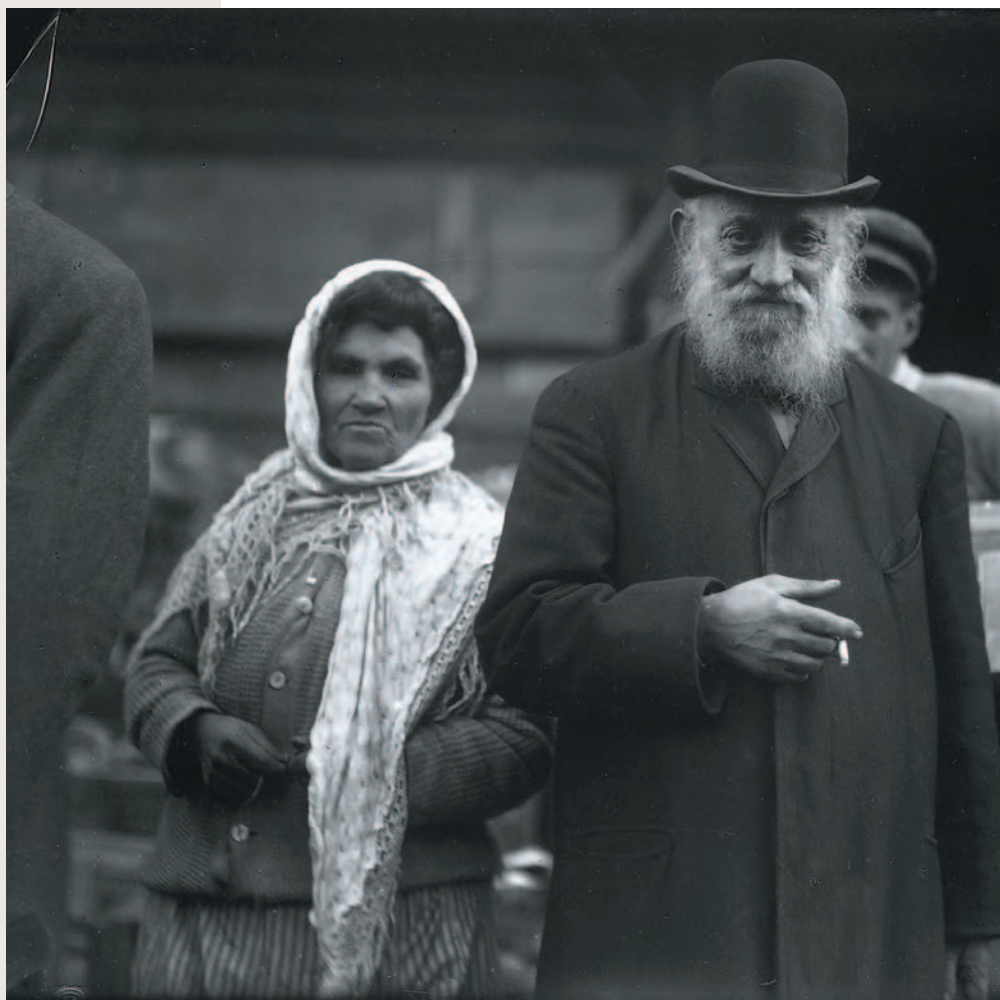
forgery and some of the pigments had come into use only after Heade's death. Stebbins has since insisted on face-to-face examination of a work before offering his opinion, and in difficult cases he may want a conservator and a scientist with him. He believes that possibly two quite able Heade forgers are at work today.

In a sea of flimflams, one wants more and better connoisseurs to cling to, yet connoisseurship has been called a dying skill. Stebbins is a lawyer as well as an art historian, and he contributes a chapter to *The Expert versus the Object* entitled "The Art Expert, the Law, and Real Life." "Since the 1980s," he writes, "many of the best minds in art history have turned away from seemingly 'old-fashioned' connoisseurship of works of art to a variety of theoretical approaches that mark the 'new art history.'...[I]n the future it may become even more difficult for dealers, collectors, and the public to find objective, skillful expertise on works of art than it is today." Indeed, "such service to the marketplace is a primary reason," Stebbins writes, "that younger historians have turned against connoisseurship."

But Stebbins is willing. "Every few weeks I get a letter from somebody wanting my opinion about a piece. I ask people to sign a disclaimer saying that they've asked for an opinion, they realize it's just an opinion, and they promise not to sue me or Harvard as a result of it." He sticks within his field of expertise. He charges no fee. "Every curator at the Harvard University Art Museums is willing to do this," he believes. "We regard part of our mission as helping people." (He does not volunteer opinions. When Stebbins sees an advertisement in a prominent art-world magazine offering for sale a picture by Heade that is nothing like Heade, he says nothing. "The law abhors a volunteer. I'm not the Heade police. The dealer didn't ask. Whoever bought the picture didn't ask. But sooner or later," he says, "someone will ask me.")

Stebbins is pleased to help people avoid getting cheated, but he also wants to keep fakes out of the recognized Heade oeuvre. "If a fake Heade gets into my book, others like it will follow," he says, "and then Heade will become a worse painter, he'll be diminished because he'll be thought to have painted this and this and this, and history will be falsified." (Falsifier Eric Hebborn, a twentieth-century English artist and author of the confessional *Drawn to Trouble: The Forging of an Artist*, by his own admission faked 500 old-master drawings. Motivated by greed, of course, he also had a powerful desire to stick it to the art establishment: simply to sow confusion, he claimed to have forged some drawings in important collections that in fact were perfectly genuine.)

FORGERY HAS ITS NUANCES. Innocent students have been set the task of copying great works since the teaching of art began. The young Michelangelo was said to be able to copy an old master drawing so precisely, in fact, that he kept the original, returned the copy in its place, and got away with it, the sixteenth-century art chronicler Giorgio Vasari reported.



What kind of forgery is this?

"Bearded Man and Woman with Shawl, Lower East Side, New York." Lewis Wickes Hine (1874-1940). 1910, printed later. 5⁷/₁₆ by 7³/₈ inches.

PEOPLE WHO BUY AND SELL fine-art photography prints distinguish between "vintage" prints, made by the photographer

Mis-orientation

Silver didrachm. Greek, from Karystos on the island of Euboea. Circa 290-253/2 B.C. 7.47 grams.

Two forged didrachms of Karystos, of 6.99 grams (center) and 7.93 grams (right).

THE COIN AT LEFT is genuine, the other two fake. (Obverse and reverse are shown for each.) All three are from the important collection of ancient Greek coins at the Sackler Museum formed by the late Arthur S. Dewing '02, Ph.D. '05, a professor of finance at the Harvard Business School. Dewing bought the fakes from shops in Athens in 1937 and 1954.

The catalog of the Dewing Collection published in 1985 did not include the coin at far right because the editors, Silvia Hurter and the late Leo Mildenberg, and Alan S. Walker, the author of the section on this part of the Greek world, thought it



near the time that the shutter clicked; “lifetime” prints, made by the photographer during his or her lifetime; and “posthumous” prints, made from the photographer’s negative by someone else. Vintage prints are valued highest by far, perhaps because they seem the closest connection to the moment of creation of the image—never mind that a print made years later, when the photographer has acquired improved darkroom equipment or technique, may *look* better, or that a print made by somebody other than the photographer may look the best of all simply because that person is a better printer.

Lewis Hine was a leftist documentary photographer best known for portraits of child laborers and Ellis Island immigrants and dizzying shots of high-steel workers constructing the Empire State Building. He was interested in the content of his photographs, not in the quality of his prints, and did not imagine himself a fine-art photographer.

Walter Rosenblum, a photographer and for decades a teacher of photography at Brooklyn College, Yale, and elsewhere, as a young man knew Hine through the Photo League, a New York organization of socially conscious photographers. When Hine died, bankrupt, in 1940, he left his estate to the League, and Rosenblum took responsibility for the images and their legacy. He says that in 1955 he turned over all the Hine material—6,000 prints, 4,000 negatives—to the George Eastman House, in Rochester, New York.

He and his wife, art historian Naomi Rosenblum—both Hine

experts and of lustrous reputation in the world of photography—in 1975 and 1979 gave a total of 19 Hine prints from their collection to the fledgling photography department at the Fogg. They were given as prints at least made by Hine in his lifetime. (Of interest to the student of motive: the market for fine-art photography was just getting started in the 1970s, says Deborah Martin Kao, Menschel curator of photography, and so the Rosenblums’ gift would not have earned them significant tax deductions—a few hundred dollars, tops.)

In the late 1990s came a great brouhaha, well chronicled by Richard B. Woodward in “Too Much of a Good Thing: Photography, Forgery, and the Lewis Hine Scandal” (*Atlantic Monthly*, June 2003). Its upshot is that the Rosenblums, writes Woodward, “are now suspected of having known that Hine photographs from their collection, which they sold as vintage or lifetime prints, were made after Hine’s death—perhaps by Walter Rosenblum himself.”

If you stand in a darkened room with Hine’s bearded man and scarved woman, put on goggles, and shine ultraviolet light on the print, the whites—in the woman’s scarf, for instance—fluoresce bright purple white, an indication that the manufacturer of the paper added optical brighteners to make the highlights pop. Penley Knipe, assistant conservator of works of art on paper at the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, says that the now ubiquitous brighteners were first added to photographic papers in the 1950s, more than a decade after Hine’s death. Most of the prints given by the Rosenblums are signed, and Hine did not routinely sign, says Knipe. The back of this print is scuffed and soiled in what appears to her to be a deliberate manner.

“If Hine had printed this photograph around 1910,” says Kao, “it would comprise expansive middle-gray tones and exhibit a soft matte surface instead of the hard, shiny surface of this print. It is also likely that there would be visible, unretouched dust spots on the photograph, whereas this print is pristine.”

Should a posthumous print made from an original negative be called a “forgery”? asks Woodward. “Or should it be called something else—something less damning?”

undoubtedly false. The catalog did include as genuine the middle coin, but curator of numismatic collections Carmen Arnold-Bicchieri would call it fake simply because it is so similar to the undoubted fake in its style and in its “fabric,” its general appearance as a piece of metal. Research by Hurter, published in the *Bulletin on Counterfeits* in 1987, associates it with a group of fake two-drachma coins of Karystos probably made in the 1930s. “These counterfeits are struck [as the genuine is, and as opposed to cast]...and they often have an artificially crystallized surface. Apparently two obverse and two reverse dies were used.”

Ancient mint workers fixed a die engraved with the design for the obverse (here a cow suckling a calf) in an anvil, put a warmed silver blank on top of it, placed on top of that a die for

the reverse design, and whacked the top die with a hammer. At most mints the worker held the reverse die in his hand and made no attempt to orient the reverse design with the obverse in any particular way. At some mints, however, the ancients fixed the reverse die in position so that its image was tidily at 12 o’clock in relation to the obverse, or at 6 o’clock (as is the case with U.S. coins today). Mildenberg demonstrated in *Nomismatika Chronika* in 1989 that the mint of ancient Karystos used fixed dies, with the reverse at 12 o’clock. Of our faker, he wrote: “This cunning craftsman, whenever and wherever he worked, struck from loose dies.” His roosters are positioned randomly—perhaps at 2 o’clock, perhaps at 8 o’clock—a mistake, and this by itself gives them away.



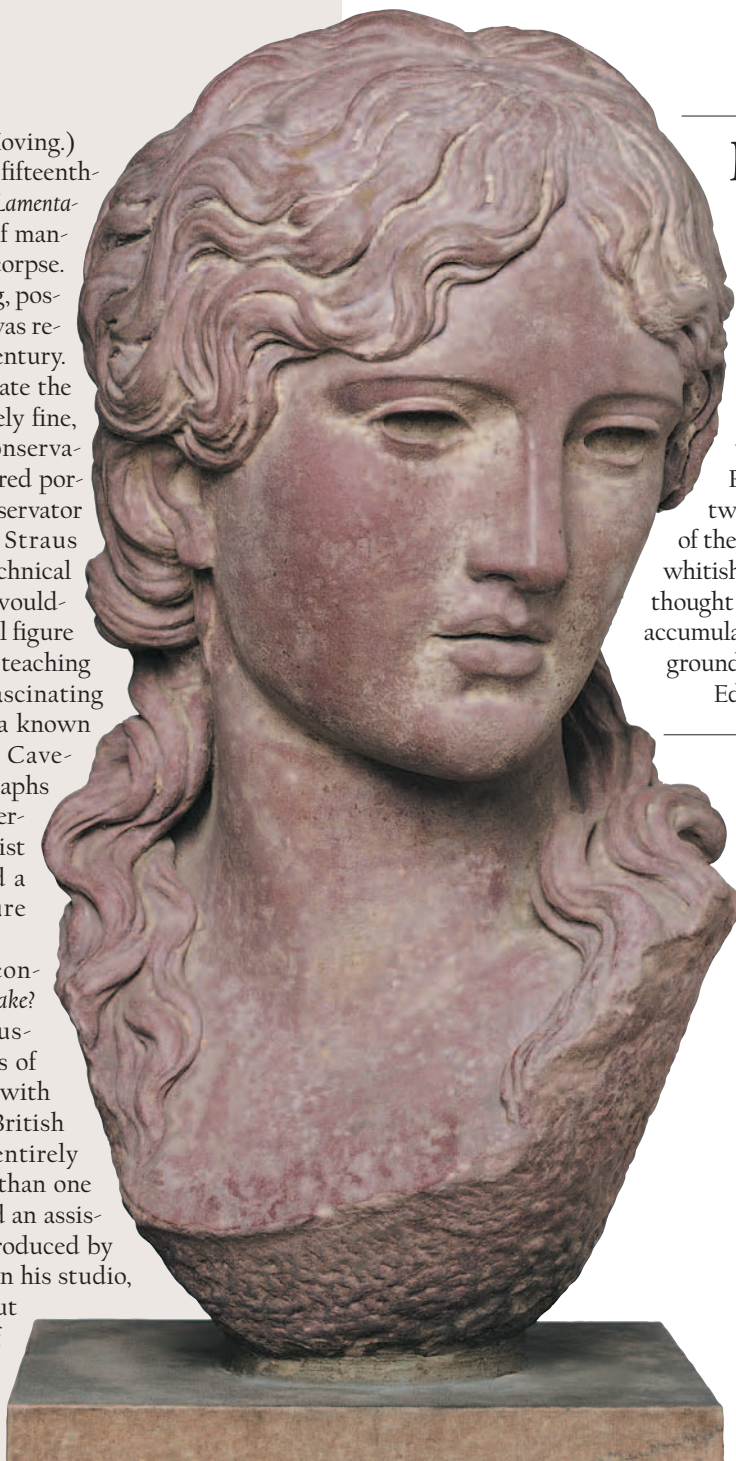
(“Yellow journalism,” declares Hoving.)

The Fogg has a painting by the fifteenth-century Venetian Carlo Crivelli, *Lamentations over the Dead Christ*, a group of mannered figures on either side of a corpse. Almost all of Christ went missing, possibly due to water damage, and was repainted in the early twentieth century. The restorer took pains to simulate the crack marks of age with extremely fine, black brush strokes. “Today, conservators would not remove the restored portions,” says Teresa Hensick, conservator of paintings in the museums’ Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, “because the painting wouldn’t make sense without its central figure and because it is useful as is for teaching purposes. Its restoration is a fascinating example of a reconstruction by a known and talented craftsman, Luigi Cavanaghi.” The museum has photographs of the *Lamentations* before the overhaul. Senior conservation scientist Narayan Khandekar has coined a term for a painted-over picture meant to deceive: a “restorgery.”

The nuances are described concisely by Mark Jones, editor of *Fake: The Art of Deception*, a richly illustrated exploration of many sorts of fakery published in connection with a revelatory exhibition at the British Museum. “A portrait painted entirely by Rubens is more of a Rubens than one in which he painted the face and an assistant the rest, while a portrait produced by others, under his direction and in his studio, is described not as a Rubens but as ‘Studio of Rubens.’ A copy of a painting by Rubens is just that, but if it is made in order to pass as a Rubens it is a fake. A damaged painting by Rubens that has been deceptively restored so as to lead the buyer to believe it all in Rubens’s own hand is also a fake, even though in some areas or beneath the restoration Rubens’s own brushwork is still extant.” Objects such as prints made after an artist’s death but from original plates—or bronzes, say, from original molds, perhaps in authorized editions, perhaps not—further complexify one’s understanding of “fake.”

Harvard’s art museums have never mounted an exhibition of their fakes, and this small gathering in print is unprecedented. It includes a few right pieces standing next to the wrong, and most of the latter, almost certainly, were fashioned to deceive. ♥

Christopher Reed is executive editor of this magazine. He has been suckered by a fake and knows how that feels.



Head fake

Colossal Head of a Goddess or a Woman, after a type of the fifth century B.C. 27 inches high.

THIS RED HEAD purportedly was dug up in a vineyard at Porta Salaria, Rome, in 1898 or 1899. Between the curls at the back of the head lie encrustations of whitish gunk, which might be thought to be calcium carbonate accumulated over centuries in the ground.

Edward W. Forbes, A.B.

JUNIOUS BEEBE



Wolf whistler

James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). *Nude Reclining*, circa 1878.

Follower of James McNeill Whistler, *Reclining Nude*.

RONALD D. SPENCER, editor of *The Expert versus the Object*, relates that James McNeill Whistler was once shown an alleged Velázquez painting and dismissed it after a glance. Asked why he needed to look no harder, he explained, “I always swoon when I see a Velázquez.”

Theodore E. Stebbins Jr. is no swooner. The curator of American art likes to take his time judging the authenticity of a picture, to have it close to hand and look at it carefully from time to time to see how it behaves.

1895, later director of the Fogg and a force in art history at Harvard, acquired the head and gave it to the University in 1900. He soon wrote that he had shown a photograph of his purchase to Sir Charles Waldstein, reader in classical archaeology at Cambridge University, who pronounced it a forgery, citing the modernness of the hair, which falls in long, casually waved locks to the shoulders, and a curious treatment of the lower shelf of the eye. Adolf Furtwängler, professor of classical archaeology and director of the Glyptothek museum in Munich, said that the head conflated aspects of the Lemnian Athena by Phidias in Bologna and the Antinous Mondragone in the Louvre and called it modern because of the “earth” on the back of the head and the treatment of the curls.

David G. Mitten, Loeb professor of classical art and archaeology and Hanfmann curator of ancient art, also finds this head of a wistful Hera, Demeter, or maybe Aphrodite “peculiar” and judges it an art nouveau classicizing piece made in Italy in the 1890s rather than an ancient Roman one. He notes that the head has not had much

modern study. A 1996 analysis of the unusual stone determined that it is marble, its grayish red color due to iron oxide. Technical analysis of the gunk might confirm its relative modernity.

Then again, it might not. Henry W. Lie, director of the museums’ Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, says that attempts have been made to examine cross-sections of mineral accretions on antiquities to see if they have a laminated structure—difficult for a forger to create—indicative of annual dry and wet seasons. But such analysis is often impossible because of the irregular surfaces of objects.

Forgers are getting better and better at simulating ancient accretions. Root shapes, for example, are found in such accretions because roots carry more liquid through them than the ground water itself and deposit minerals on the surface of objects. Forgers have discovered that certain plants may be grown on top of a buried object and will deposit lots of minerals quickly, perhaps in six months to two years, so now Lie and his colleagues see plenty of more-or-less instant accretions with root marks.



ALLAN MACINTYRE

“This faker of Whistler,” he says, “has worked on the right kind of paper, has drawn apparently the same model so that she looks familiar, has used the same black chalk outlines and white hatching on the body, and has aimed for the exact level of finish—almost finished but not quite.” The drawing at right is generously cataloged as by a “follower” of Whistler, but Stebbins believes this was a faker who tried hard to mimic the original in order to deceive. Although the unknown artist did not attempt Whistler’s “butterfly,” his monogram signature, numerous unsigned, unmonogrammed, genuine Whistlers exist.

Both pastel drawings were given to Harvard by Grenville L. Winthrop. “They are a perfect teaching tool,” says Stebbins. “If teaching, I would put them side by side and ask, which of these do you like better? Some students would like the fake better at first. At least, you hope they will.

“Whistler was a very good draftsman when he made his drawing and understood the figure beautifully,” says Stebbins. “The way that the right arm and elbow come around the model’s head, and the way that her left hand is folded under her face, are convincing. The arm by the faker is not convincing. The left leg by Whistler

you believe is folded underneath. The left leg by the faker looks cut off, a stump without musculature, a piece of spaghetti.”

The faker has also revealed a small misunderstanding of the master by including an horizon line, which Whistler would not have done in any drawing of this sort.

“The whole figure by the faker is sexier and flimsier than Whistler’s,” says Stebbins, “and looks a little like the pinups of the 1930s or early 1940s, the Betty Grable pinups that the soldiers had. Whistler’s nude is not a pinup at all.” Stebbins believes that the fake was probably made in the 1930s.

“Forgeries tell you what period they are,” he says. This is an important characteristic of many forgeries and is seen again and again in the history of fakery—they reflect the aesthetic of their day and of the forger, rather than that of the artist being forged, and they con experts who are the forger’s contemporaries. The fakes look incongruous only later, to those with a different aesthetic. For that reason, the late Agnes Mongan, curator of drawings, held that the life of a fake was one generation. Others give the light more time to dawn and say that you spot the forgery that fooled your grandfather.