

Famous Forgers

“Good artists copy, great artists steal.”
— *Pablo Picasso*

Forgery—Old as Art

Art forgery **dates back more than two thousand years**. Ancient Roman sculptors produced copies of Ancient Greek sculptures. The contemporary buyers likely knew that they were not genuine. During the classical period art was generally created for historical reference, religious inspiration, or simply enjoyment.

Michelangelo

The world-famous artist Michelangelo was accused of art forgery in his initial career as an artist. Long before he was commissioned to paint the Sistine Chapel, he struggled to get work. And so, he helped other artists to create fake roman and Greek antiquities.

He was employed by the powerful [Medici family](#) and was asked to create an ancient-looking sculpture that was buried and found by excavation.

In 1496, Michelangelo created a *sleeping Cupid* figure and used acidic earth to artificially age it and make it appear ancient. The sculpture was bought by the [Cardinal Riario of San Giorgio](#). The forgery was done so well that even after realizing the fraud, **the buyer did not accuse Michelangelo and let him go unpunished.**

Elmyr de Hory

Elmyr de Hory was a Hungarian-born painter and art forger, who is said to have sold over a thousand art forgeries to reputable art galleries all over the world. His forgeries garnered celebrity from a Clifford Irving book, *Fake*, and a documentary essay film by Orson Welles, *F for Fake*.

<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0208885/> (trailer)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMMfPQ-PuII&t=6s> (fake Modigliani)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uoQym9VpRIc> (fake Matisse)



Eric Hebborn

Eric Hebborn started forgery as an act of rebellion against the state. He started working as a restorer and discovered his talent for copying the styles of many great artists which is when he started taking forgery seriously and created fresh new works from ages-old paintings. He went so far as to open a gallery to start selling his creations and passing them off as original. Hebborn was such a genius that after he was caught, [he wrote a book](#) to cash in on his reputation as a con artist, talking about how so many art experts accepted forgeries for their own economic benefits.

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/473933560759625821/> (45 mins)







Han van Meegeren—Fake Vermeers

Henricus Antonius "Han" van Meegeren was a Dutch painter and portraitist, considered one of the most ingenious art forgers of the 20th century.

As a child, Henricus Antonius “Han” van Meegeren developed a love of his country’s prized artists. In his own paintings, he mimicked the style of those painted from the Dutch Golden Age.

Perhaps a little too much.

van Meegeren’s work was criticized as being derivative, and lacking originality. The condemnation eventually brought his painting career to an end, but his life as a forger was just getting started.

“Spurred by the disappointment of receiving no acknowledgments from artists and critics....I determined to prove my worth as a painter by making a perfect seventeenth-century canvas,” he would later confess in court.

By the late 1930s, the critics were silenced, if not stunned, by the exact replicas van Meegeren would create based on the old Dutch artists

- http://www.essentialvermeer.com/misc/van_meegeren.html (13 mins) Dutch with Subtitles
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8kY7DCHiCM> (in English)
- <https://blog.theveteranssite.greatergood.com/van-meegeren-vermeer/> (fooling the Nazis)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CH78icePU-w> (1 hr)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpfZKNxxx7I> (English) Good



Fake or Real?

How Han van Meegeren fooled the world





Max Brandrett –Max the Forger

Max developed his art skills after running away from his Barnardo's children's home to join the circus at 15. Whilst grooming elephants and painting the trucks for 2 years, he found his passion for art. After a chance meeting with the famous forger Tom Keatings, Max was tempted to experiment with copying the great masters. Word of his talents reached the black market, and the Kray twins asked for a portrait of their mother, which they luckily loved. Brandrett however, did end up paying the price with 3 prison sentences and promised he wouldn't do it again, even when his most profitable piece fetched over £12,000 back in the 80s. Even today, many people don't know exactly what is hanging on their walls! Now he is just looking for the respect his skills deserve. He prefers working on detailed recreations that challenge his skills such as battle scenes, ships and animals. He still produces copies of famous pieces, but by changing one tiny detail in each image, this time it is legal...

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTE5bKPgHM>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54O-fxQd-P8>



Laurence Stephen Lowry

Laurence Stephen Lowry RBA RA was an English artist. His drawings and paintings mainly depict Pendlebury, Greater Manchester as well as Salford and its vicinity. Lowry is famous for painting scenes of life in the industrial districts of North West England in the mid-20th century.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0R3FP8NJIuk&t=129s> (17 mins)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJ_gTI_xOkQ (3 mins)

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/l-s-lowry-1533/how-paint-lowry>
(paint like Lowry)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8WupeLTxow> (Lowry Forger—David Henty)













Pei-Shen Qian—Fake Rothko

Pei-Shen emerged as one of China's biggest forgers who first began as an artist in the 70s when he used to produce original work that was deemed too decadent by art critics. As a result, he started copying famous early Post-Impressionist paintings by Matisse and André Derain. This immigrant from China is suspected of having fooled the art world by creating dozens of works that were modeled after America's Modernist masters and were later sold as their handiwork for more than \$80 million. You can view Qian's involvement in one of the largest art fraud cases in American history in the recent documentary titled [“Made You Look: A True Story About Fake Art” \(2020\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzGkg3PreQ8&t=6s).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzGkg3PreQ8&t=6s> (7 mins)

- Pollocks and Rothkos





Wolfgang Beltracchi

Wolfgang Beltracchi has remained the [most financially successful forger](#) in art history. He copied artists like Max Ernst, Fernand Leger, Max Pechstein, and many more for the longest time without ever being noticed. It's estimated that Beltracchi has forged about 1,000 to 1,300 paintings in his lifetime, with the artist himself saying that he has lost count of the pieces that he has copied.

Beltracchi was finally caught by the authorities in 2010 and was sentenced to six years in prison, after which he promised that he would never indulge in forgery ever again and he has kept this promise to this date. However, that didn't stop him from being named the 'forger of the century', with his forgeries even having appeared on the cover of a Christie's auction catalog. Hundreds of his works are still in circulation to this day, which just goes to show his ability and popularity.

[“Beltracchi: The Art of Forgery” \(2014\)](#) documents the almost 40 years of forging and selling of paintings by Beltracchi, in the style of early 20th-century masters.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YH-E9tLO6Q&t=1s> (1 hr)

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3212568/> (2 mins trailer)







Ken Perenyi

Ken Perenyi is one of the greatest living forgers of current times. He usually copies 18th and 19th century British and American paintings which sell for millions of dollars. In fact, his work is so good that the FBI actually had to perform chemical analysis on the pieces that he sold to make sure that they *really* were forgeries. Lucky for Perenyi, the investigation was closed five years later and he was free to continue making money by copying some of the most famous works in history. According to the forger himself, he believes the artists that he copies would be happy to see their work being appreciated and understood this way. The forger now has [a successful business](#) where anyone can walk in and buy one of his master-copies.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrvO1R7kFuA&t=2s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8n98P1w0c0&t=5s>









Mark Augustus (Mark Landis)

For most artists, the whole point of forgery is to make money, right? But Mark Augustus is a forger who refuses to accept a single penny for his copied work. Augustus is notorious for donning different disguises and asking museums to accept his pieces as donations, which means that he really isn't violating any law by [sharing his art with the world](#).

This has — to this date — been the longest-running and most bizarre case of art forgery the world has ever seen. He has impeccably copied artists like John Hancock, Picasso, and Robert Henri. He then has given away his works to museums without ever asking for anything in return.

It has been speculated that Landis suffered some psychological breakdown in his youth and most likely is schizophrenic. Clearly, this episode hasn't affected any of his artistic abilities. The 2014 film [“Art and Craft”](#) documents Augustus' exceptionally strange story from start to finish.

<https://alchetron.com/Mark-Landis>

<https://world.museumsprojekte.de/tag/mark-landis/>





Introduction

The equities of numerous *refugees* incriminated, and one of the most that of Hungarian-born artist Ernst, almost by accident, and indirectly following World War II, that decried in the style of other aesthetically accomplished artists, including drawing he had made in the past and offered to buy it. The story is to be a Picasso. This, the surgery, which ultimately remains a thousand of his paintings, means that also included his *Madness* (1908-1920), an engraving collected about

After a chance meeting with a local cattle breeder, assistant, and owner, Villa La Falena, on the Sp. death by suicide in late 1976. In addition, most of which the many of the works have never

Portraiture was a fundamental part that was not directly related to the creation of many portraits. From people he happened upon at the more detailed oil studies and paintings such as the *Self-Portrait* by Forgy that are in this exhibit.

The artist's true problem, never created and more the inevitable whether old friends of many you encounters. All of these types portraits, which can be considered

Tony Tetro

Anthony Gene Tetro, known as Tony Tetro, is an art forger known for his perfectionism in copies of artwork produced in the 1970s and 1980s. Tetro never received formal art lessons, but learned from books, by painting and experimentation.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiOagdIFlhg> (long)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s59DnrHX3D0> (short)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s59DnrHX3D0> (short)







ORIGINAL



TETRO COPY

WOMAN WITH A PARROT
TIEPOLO





TETRO COPY

THE GARDEN OF LOVE
Peter Paul Rubens



ORIGINAL

Eduardo de Valfierno

In 1932 journalist Karl Decker published a story in the *Saturday Evening Post* claiming Valfierno paid several men to steal the work of art from the [Louvre](#), including museum employee [Vincenzo Peruggia](#). On August 21, 1911 Peruggia hid the [Mona Lisa](#) under his coat and simply walked out the door.

Before the heist took place, Valfierno allegedly commissioned [French](#) art restorer and forger [Yves Chaudron](#) to make six copies of the *Mona Lisa*. The [forgeries](#) were then shipped to around the world, readying them for the buyers he had lined up. Valfierno knew once the *Mona Lisa* was stolen it would be harder to smuggle copies past customs. After the heist the copies were delivered to their buyers, each thinking they had the original which had been stolen for them. Because Valfierno wanted to sell forgeries, he only needed the original *Mona Lisa* to disappear and never contacted Peruggia again after the crime. Eventually Peruggia was caught trying to sell the painting. It was returned to the Louvre in 1913.

(MINISTERO DELL'INTERNO - DIREZIONE GENERALE DI P. S.)

Servizio di Segnalamento

N.

Cognome *Peruggia* Nome *Vincenzo*
 Paternità *Giàcomo* Madre *Rossi Celeste*
 Soprannome *...* Falsi nomi *...*
 Nato il *8 ottobre 1881* a *Dumenza* Domiciliato a *Parigi*
 Istruzione *elementare (3ª classe elementare)* Professione *imbucandino*
 Rianzanti dei pregiudizi noti *...*
 Motivo dell'arresto: *arrestato il 12.XII.1913 per furto della "Gioconda".*
 Identificato per *...*

Iride

N. della Classe

Connotati cromatici.

Avvicina *castana* 21 Pigiamento *bianco* Capelli *neri* Rappi *castani*
 Periferia *verdastroraggiata* 31 Sangue *rosco* Sopracciglia *castane* Denti *cast-rosce*



Impronte della mano sinistra.

Data del rilievo segnalatelo.

Città *Firenze* Giorni *23* Mese *dicembre* Anno *1913*
 Annotazioni: *colpire alla fotografia ed allo impronte fotografiche e impronte rilevate alla carcere della Prussia.*



Shawn Greenhalgh

Shaun Greenhalgh is a British artist and former art forger. Over a seventeen-year period, between 1989 and 2006, he produced a large number of forgeries.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYtHfMvkDaQ> (part 1)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vfNxYY6KW8> (part 2)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejaLJcJsSbc> (how he was caught)





LW/9

Jackson Pollock

In 2007, hedge fund manager Pierre Lagrange bought a silver drip painting by Jackson Pollock for \$17 million from Knoedler Gallery. Four years later, he found out the painting was a fake.

A few years after that, at least three different people were [ensnared into buying works](#) they believed were part of a previously unknown cache of Pollocks assembled by a mentally unstable and reclusive German immigrant named James Brennerman. That story also, perhaps unsurprisingly, turned out not to be true.

“As one of our great ‘art myths,’ Pollock fakes continue to crop up,” says the author and art dealer Richard Polsky. He “remains the most-forged postwar artist.” To help combat the issue, Polsky is now offering authentication services for Pollock’s work.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOGDDh1thaQ> (secret to his success)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Amu2mOslz-w> (how to spot a fake Jackson Pollock)



ANATOMY OF A FAKE



WIRED



Van Gogh--Wacker

- <https://www.britannica.com/video/187079/chemistry-art-forgery>
- Detecting forgeries using X Rays
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YP8nmaNQeoQ&t=135s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FF3kxtL058>

Munch Fakes Foil Thieves

Thieves attempting to steal three [Edvard Munch](#) artworks from an Oslo hotel have succeeded in making off with near-worthless copies.

The hotel, Oslo's Hotel Continental, had replaced its Munch originals - lithographs entitled Vampire, Self-portrait and Melancholy - with prints, following the much-publicised theft of two Munch masterpieces from an Oslo museum last year.

"Except for the joy they give the observer, they are worthless," hotel manager Siv Lunde Kolrud said.

This comes in marked contrast to events last August, when an armed gang stormed the Munch Museum in a daring daylight raid, stealing two paintings, The Scream and Madonna, both of which have yet to be recovered.

Although these works were also copies of sorts - Munch painted each subject four times, each version slightly different - they are valued at £10.4m and police have offered a reward of up to two million kroner (£181,500) for their return.

- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/aug/03/2>

Assignment Suggestions...

- Meticulously copy a known work of art
- Create an original artwork that might have been created by a known artist.
- “Age” an artwork—use tea or work on old paper. Weather something.