



AiA Art News-service



# The Most Faked Artists in History

MutualArt

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Maria Howard uncovers the stories behind famous fakes — from a strip club owner's scam, to the scientific test that revealed a painting's true age

From Orson Welles's 1973 documentary *F for Fake* to the BBC's *Fake or Fortune* series, society has always been fascinated by the art of forgery. Today, significant cases still make headlines, yet while some forgeries become the subject of high profile lawsuits, others remain unnoticed, passed on from dealer to dealer and ending up in the homes of unsuspecting collectors — or even Trump Tower.

Last month the President of the United States added an art history scandal to his list of political run-ins, when his biographer outed his copy of Renoir's *Two Sisters (On the Terrace)* as a fake. Tim O'Brien spotted the painting in Trump's residence in 2005, and immediately recognised it as a copy of the original which hangs in the Art Institute of Chicago. When confronted, however, the real estate mogul insisted his was the real deal.

The history of the art market is riddled with trials and disputes over authorship, and as technology has progressed the evidence used has developed from examination of signature and style to forensic details of the kind of pigment and canvas used. While the range of artists imitated is broad, there are some names who crop up more than others — whether it is because of the popularity of their work, the size of their oeuvre or their preferred methods of production.

# Pablo Picasso

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.

Above: The Trailer for Orson Welles' 1974 film *F for Fake*, in which Elmyr de Hory recounts his career as a professional art forger

Many artists took advantage of this during his life as well as after his death; infamous forger Elmyr de Hory – who was the subject of Welles's documentary – began his career with a copy of Picasso drawing and went on to make a small fortune in pastiches of the great artist's work until he aroused the suspicions of a curator and was exposed in the mid-1950s. 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.

# Jackson Pollock

When the Upper East Side gallery Knoedler & Co. was accused of selling over \$80m worth of fake Abstract Expressionist paintings, the case became one of the biggest scandals in the history of the art market. Over the course of the trial it was revealed that, in 1994, the gallery's director Ann Freedman had been approached by a woman named Glafira Rosales who had been commissioning canvases from a Chinese painter living in Queens and passing them off as works by Mark Rothko, Robert Motherwell and Jackson Pollock.



One of several fake Pollocks commissioned by Glafira Rosales, sold to Knoedler for \$750,000 in a scandal that prompted more than one "a load of old Pollocks" headline

But it's not just Pollock's multi million masterpieces that get forged – this summer the International Foundation for Art Research (IFAR) conducted an investigation into a group of works in acrylic on cardboard sold by a strip club owner in a scam aimed at middle

market, low profile, collectors outside the usual network of dealers and galleries. The foundation found the paintings to be problematic and the provenance shady, and ordered tests to be carried out which proved they could not be authentic Pollock works.

## Amedeo Modigliani



Even celebrities aren't immune from art forgeries. Above, an expert informs reality TV's Kourtney Kardashian that her Modigliani is a fake

As prices on the rostrum soar, so the rate of forgeries grows. This is especially the case for works by Italian artist Amedeo Modigliani whose *Nu couché* became one of the most expensive works of art ever sold when it reached over \$174 million at Christie's in 2015. It is thought that there are over 1,000 fake Modiglianis on the market and no definitive catalogue raisonné, though many scholars have attempted to define one. Ahead of the artist's retrospective at Tate Modern this year experts have begun examining the Italian artist's work in order to define criteria of authentication; one giveaway is the use of titanium white pigment that was invented in 1924, four years after Modigliani's early death from tuberculosis.

## Andy Warhol

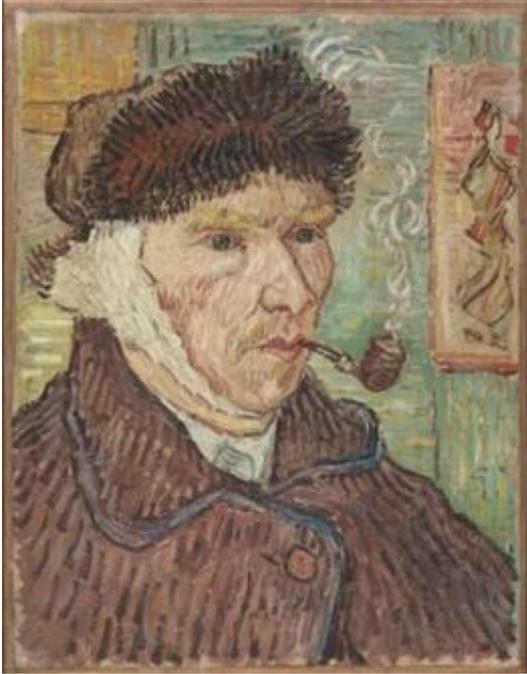


A purported self portrait of Andy Warhol that sparked controversy in 2009 when its authenticity was disputed

When artists are as prolific as Andy Warhol, it's no surprise that there are queues of forgers trying to pass off copies as originals. Over recent years the Warhol foundation has struggled to keep up with the numerous requests for authentication and caused an outcry from dealers and collectors by publicly denying contested works. The pop artist ran a large studio of assistants and did not always sign everything, which has led to a number of posthumous Brillo Boxes and screenprints being discovered. In 2009 former director of Tate Modern Nicholas Serota was forced to cancel the gallery's purchase of a newly discovered self portrait series by the artist as he deemed the controversy around the paintings to be too damaging, despite believing they were in fact the genuine article.

## Vincent van Gogh

Though van Gogh achieved fame only at the end of his life he was still the victim of forgeries before his death, by his own doctor no less. Paul Gauchet, an amateur engraver and patron of the arts, frequently received paintings as payment from his artist patients, who also numbered Cézanne, Renoir and Monet, and while some are genuine it was later found that many works in the collection had been painted by the doctor himself or his son.

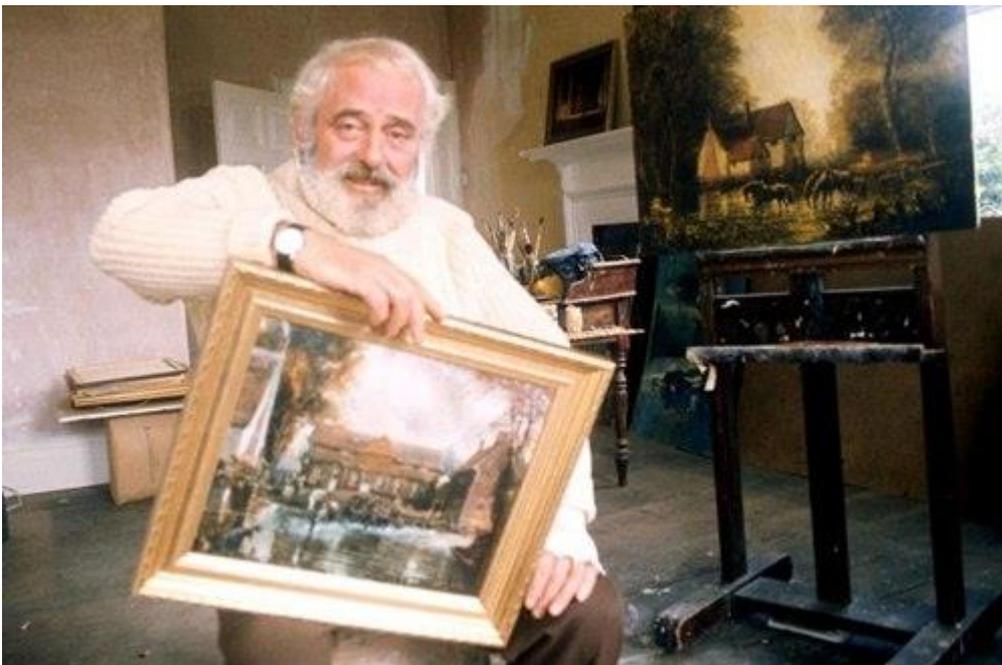


A work from Harvard Art Museums entitled *Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear and Pipe*, attributed to an unidentified "imitator of Vincent van Gogh" — and originally from the dubious Otto Wacker Art Gallery in Berlin

In 1932 van Gogh's works were the subject of a landmark trial in the history of forgery that paved the way for forensic testing in this field. German art dealer Otto Wacker was found guilty of selling a number of paintings forged by his brother after tests showed that as well as differences in style, these works bore signs of pigments van Gogh never used.

## **Pierre-Auguste Renoir**

Trump's fake Renoir may well have been created by former house painter turned master forger Tom Keating. Snubbed by the art world in his youth, Keating turned his hand to restoring old masters, adding the occasional embellishment at the encouragement of his dealer. He soon found he had a knack for imitating the style of the old masters and proceeded to produce convincing copies that were sold at auction for many years.



Famous art forger Tom Keating with an example of one of his works, which he hoped would dismantle the industry

Keating enjoyed deliberately leaving telltale signs of the painting's true age and was eventually caught in the 1970s. He was never charged however and even went on to become the subject of his own television series, *Tom Keating on Painters*, which revealed the techniques of old masters such as Titian and Rembrandt as well as Impressionists such as Monet and Renoir.