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# The New York Times

## An Infamous Art Forger on His Most Convincing Works

CULTURE

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When, in 2011, the Times first told the story of [Mark Landis](#) — the prolific art forger who, over the course of 30 years, duped nearly 60 American museums into accepting his facsimiles of art works — the article raised as many questions as it answered. Where was Landis now? Why was he doing this? And did his donations — which he delivered in the name of “philanthropy,” sometimes while costumed in the robes of a Jesuit priest — actually constitute breaking the law?

Photo



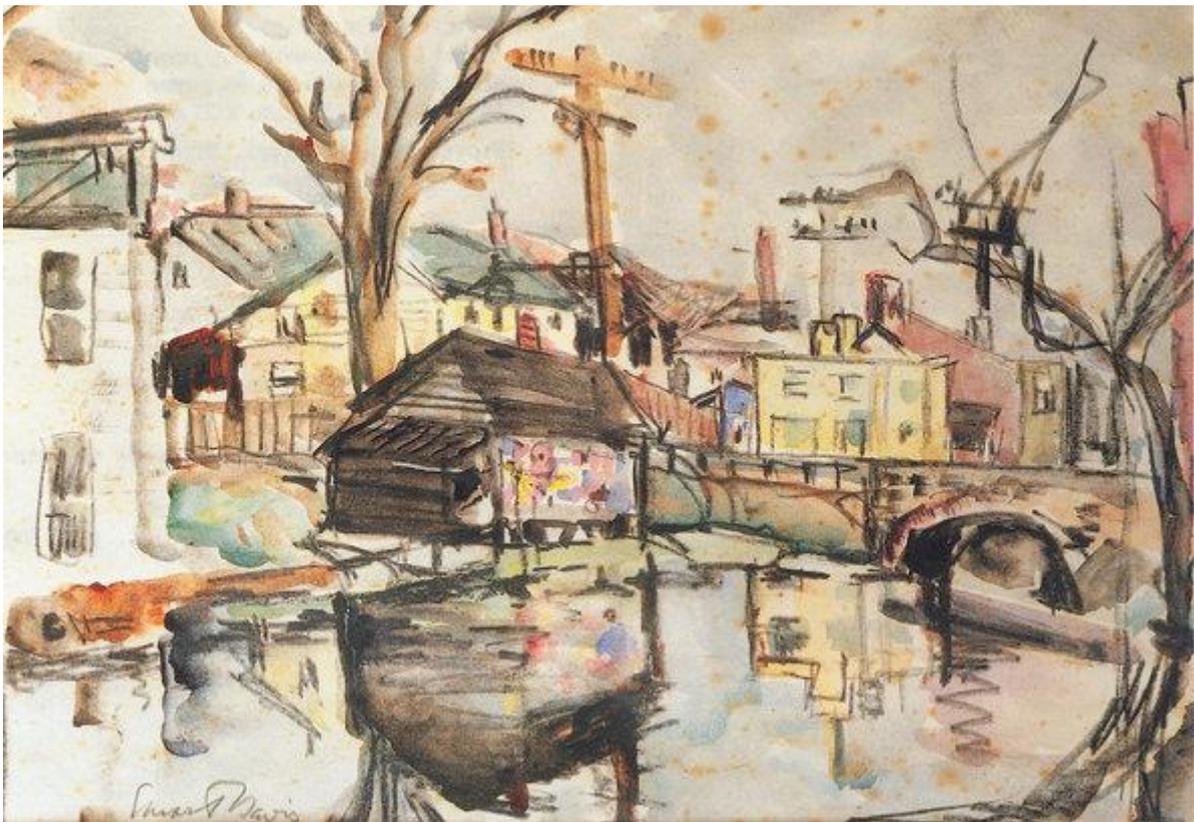
Mark Landis at Tribeca Film Festival. Credit Larry Busacca/Getty Images

A pair of young filmmakers, Sam Cullman and Jennifer Grausman, decided to find out. Their documentary, “Art and Craft,” which opens tomorrow in New York, finds a surprisingly candid Landis in his native Mississippi, where he continues to make his forgeries — he calls them his “arts and crafts” — often while watching television. Diagnosed as schizophrenic and living more or less hermetically since his mother died in 2010, the soft-spoken Landis is engaging if remorseless about his deception, and more than happy to demonstrate for the directors the crude yet ingenious ways he sets about copying works of art. (At one point, he became so brazen that he began to simply print out copies of his works, going over them with colored pencils and staining them with coffee to make them appear more authentic.)

A scene from the documentary film, “Art and Craft.”

He also seems unaware of his own artistic gifts. Speaking by phone from Washington, D.C., where he was in town promoting the film, Landis downplayed the skill needed to pull off such fakes, often diminishing the originals (of the modernist painter John Marin he says, “You could get a 3-year-old to do better sailboats”) while conceding that he may have “a modicum of talent.” Still, he is appreciative of the opportunities “Art and Craft” has brought his way — even if he long ago stopped being able to fool the country’s top museums. “I’ve gotten to make an awful lot of friends, and talk to an awful lot of glamorous, sophisticated people,” he said while sitting with Cullman, the film’s co-director. “It gave me something to live for.”

Here, exclusively for T, Landis talks about some of his most successful forgeries. On the below images, click and drag the slider to compare Landis’s versions (at left) to the original masterpieces (which can be uncovered at right).



**Stuart Davis, "Houses Along A Canal" (c. 1914-18)**

Offered to: Mississippi Museum of Art

“The picture looks like it was done by a 6-year-old, so it took no particular effort. I used watercolors and black crayon because that’s what they said he used in the catalog. When you’re doing one of those old academic drawings from the 16th or 17th century, obviously you’re not going to spend days crushing up chalk or whatever they had to do back then. You use colored pencils. They look the same, you know?”

—





**Charles Courtney Curran, “Three Women” (1894)**

Offered to: Paul and Lulu Hilliar University Art Museum, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

“My grandfather was a manufacturing VP for Auburn Automotives — he believed in the assembly line. That’s why I did so many of these, because you can do them like an assembly line. You get these boards at Home Depot, and you do the sky first because that’s the furthest thing back, and then you go forward. You can churn out three by the time a movie’s over on TCM.”



**José Clemente Orozco, "Estudio De Tres Mujeres Desnudas"**

Offered to: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Michael C. Carlos Museum at Emory University, Art Museum of the Americas

“This is an easy one. It looks like something an untalented eighth or ninth grader would do. When I was 8 or 9, I noticed that I could put a piece of paper over one of the museum catalogs, even if I couldn’t see through it. I flipped back and forth and would remember it just long enough to get it down. It never occurred to me that other people couldn’t do that.”

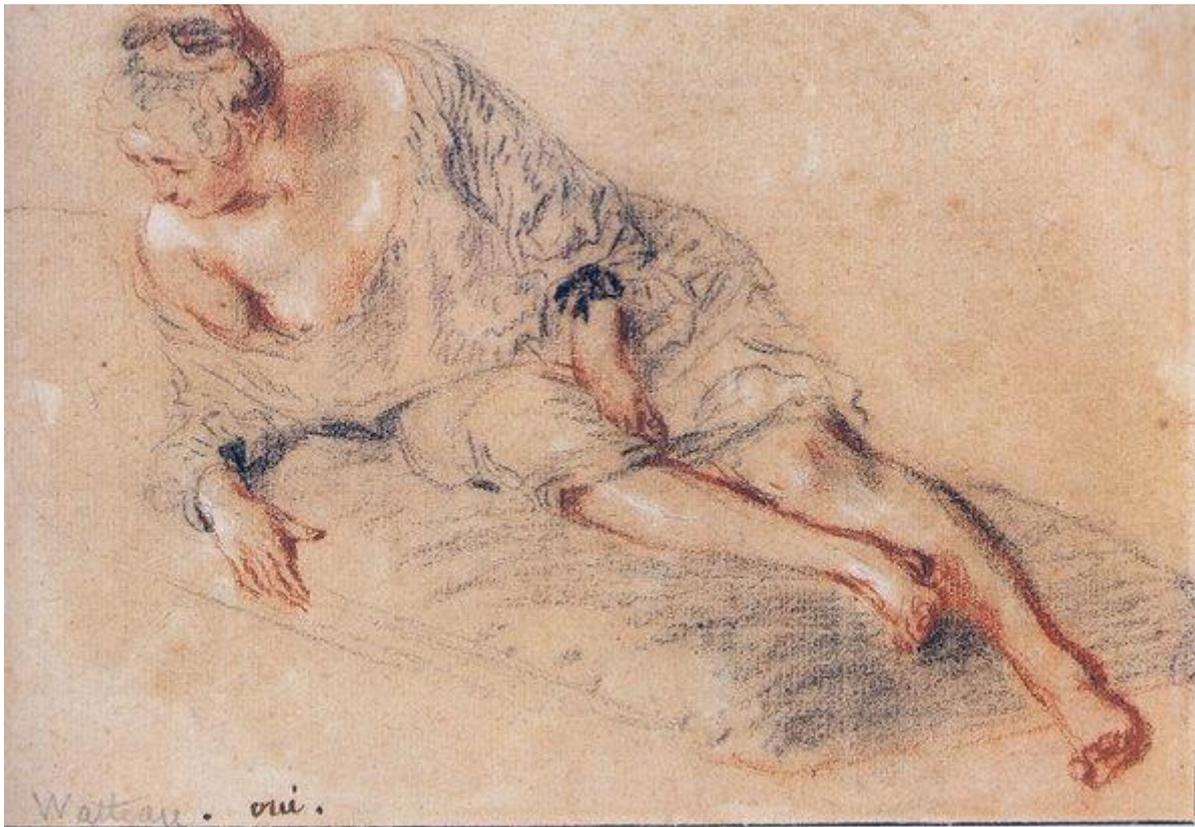




**Stanislas Lepine, "Terrassiers, au Trocadero" (c. 1890)**

Offered to: Oklahoma City Museum of Art, St. Louis University Museum of Art, University of Kentucky Museum of Art, Mississippi Museum of Art, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

"The Lepine I liked because it's nice and small. You buy the same boards at Home Depot as the Curran, which are the exact right width, and you just measure out the length. Just think: you can get three beautiful paintings for five-something. Well, after tax it's around six dollars."



**Jean Antoine Watteau, “A Woman Lying On A Chaise Longue” (c. 1719)**

Offered to: Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, LSU Museum of Art

“What I do with things like this is, I do one that I can think of as a master. Then I run them off on my computer and go over them with some chalk and colored pencils and stuff. Before you run them through the computer, you stain the paper first, otherwise the ink will bleed. And then it looks fine. It looks like a million dollars. Or half a million, I suppose.”