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David A. Scott



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This volume is dedicated to the Scott family and especially to my wife, Lesley Ann Moorcroft, who has lived through many years and travails with the author, too many to name, but also many very happy memories.

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# Contents

Preface	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
List of Illustrations	xiii
<b>Chapter 1</b>	
Authenticity and Conservation: An Introduction	1
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
The Cult of Authenticity	35
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
Authenticity, Monuments, and the International Charters	95
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
Different Approaches to Authenticity	121
<b>Chapter 5</b>	
The Ancient Old World	161
<b>Chapter 6</b>	
The Ethnographic and the Authentic	223
<b>Chapter 7</b>	
Considerations of Medieval Authenticity	273
<b>Chapter 8</b>	
The European Renaissance and Beyond	295

## Contents

<b>Chapter 9</b>	
From the Baroque to the Early Twentieth Century	355
<b>Chapter 10</b>	
The Modern, Postmodern, and Contemporary	373
<b>Chapter 11</b>	
Some Final Thoughts and Reflections	415
Glossary of Terms	425
References Cited	435
Index	479

## Preface

*Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. Devour old films, new film, music, books, paintings, photographs, poems, dreams, random conversation, architecture, bridges, street signs, trees, clouds, bodies of water, light and shadows. Select only things to steal from that speak directly to your soul. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be authentic. Authenticity is invaluable; originality is non-existent. And don't bother concerning your thievery—celebrate it if you feel like it. In any case, always remember what Jean-Luc Godard said: it's not where you take things from—it's where you take them to.*

—Jim Jarmusch, *MovieMaker*, June 5, 2013

This quotation from Jim Jarmusch encompasses some of the cacophony of voices and sources, media, opinions, and self-justificatory statements concerning authenticity that this book seeks to explore. The celebration of authenticity as a contested field of enquiry, one that has been well trodden, picked over, and plowed up, has led to modern anxiety concerning authenticity in the twenty-first century and whether it really exists.

The deeper one excavates the foundations of authenticity, the richer the interactions

across many fields of scholarly inquiry become. Not only does the concept of authenticity have multiple dimensions to be discovered, but the hermeneutics of engagement with it are in serious need of transdisciplinary discussion.

One of the aims of this book is to unravel these terms of engagement across the regions of philosophy, art restoration, aesthetics, conservation theory, and art history in the hope that multiple reflections from each field will illuminate the complex territory in new and exciting ways.

## Preface

Readers will notice that several areas of cultural life, such as literature and music, are either underrepresented in this book or not covered at all. This book studies the visual arts and authenticity, not literature or music and authenticity, about which there is already an extensive and rapidly expanding body of literature. The structural dissonance between art conservation and the art historical discourse has been under attack for some time, particularly in the sector of contemporary art, where a *ménage à trois* between conservator, artist, and curator has become increasingly important for the survival of the artwork. In a more general context, the impact of past and present art restoration programs and the ways these impinge on the interpretation of artwork have been only sporadically explored.

This book strives to integrate these concerns into a dialogue concerning authenticity in the visual arts as a legitimate subject of inquiry. Jarmusch talks of stealing that which resonates with you. That resonance has been intriguing to investigate in the case of master forgers who have tried to emulate the achievements of others and in so doing have created an authentic body of work of their own that emulates, copies, or subverts the work of the original artist. Many of these cases create stimulating problems regarding

how authenticity is defined and applied to the works in question. They also present a foil for philosophical debate on the nature of forgery and its relationships to replicas, copies, or the real. Restoration of works of art is capable, in itself, of creating inauthentic fabrications whose disputed nature is further proof of our interest and engagement with what we consider to be authentic or not, and the question of whether authenticity is better served by our thinking of it in terms of material authenticity, conceptual authenticity, historical authenticity, or aesthetic authenticity. Intellectual arguments concerning these types of questions are fascinating proof of the relevancy and vitality of authenticity in all of its various manifestations.

The author learned much during the research for this book, and in that process came to admire several authors whose work is quoted or discussed in the text, and who now seem like old friends or intellectual companions. As Jarmusch advises, the author selected things to steal or covet that spoke directly to him, changed views, gave him sustenance, or bolstered arguments and perspectives. The author hopes that the present text will help to illuminate this complex topic, which some still claim does not really exist, even if we cannot live without the need for some kind of authenticity in our lives and our art.

## Acknowledgments

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## Acknowledgments

on illustrations are apparent in chapter 10, which deals with modern and contemporary art. To reproduce these works, the payment of fees is unavoidable, and illustrations are scanty in this chapter.

Special thanks go to the Guggenheim Foundation, which awarded me a Guggenheim Fellowship for 2014, which made the writing of this book possible and which acted as an incentive for the recognition of interest in this project in the wider world of scholarship.

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## List of Illustrations

- Figure 1.1.** An apparently complete *Madonna and Child* by Rogier van der Weyden, the majority of which had been lost through damage.
- Figure 1.2.** Crucifix by Cimabue, in the Basilica di Santa Croce, Florence, circa 1268–1271.
- Figure 1.3.** Detail of the Madonna from the crucifix by Cimabue shown in Figure 1.2.
- Figure 1.4.** Eighteenth-century portrait of Pope Innocent XII before and after restoration.
- Figure 1.5.** Victorious Youth, Greek bronze retrieved from the Italian coast of the Adriatic Sea near Fano, 300–100 B.C.E.
- Figure 2.1.** The art-culture system: a machine for making authenticity.
- Figure 2.2.** The RIP triangle of Christopher Caple.
- Figure 2.3.** Conservation dynamics.
- Figure 2.4.** Aspects of perceptual defects that should be viewed from 2 m away.
- Figure 2.5.** Augustus Caesar as the Augustus of Prima Porta and later restorations.
- Figure 2.6.** Naum Gabo artwork in cellulose acetate or cellulose nitrate.
- Figure 2.7.** Modern replica of *Construction in Space: Two Cones*, 1927, shown in Figure 2.6.
- Figure 2.8.** *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)* by Pablo Picasso, 1907.
- Figure 2.9.** *La Saveur des Larmes* (The Flavor of Tears) by René Magritte, 1948.
- Figure 2.10.** *The Toilet of Venus*, also known as *Rokeby Venus*, by Diego Velázquez, circa 1647–1651.
- Figure 2.11.** Concepts of authenticity.
- Figure 2.12.** Arenas of authenticity.
- Figure 2.13.** Ruins of the city of Ur, site of one of the first museums in the world, dating from about 530 B.C.E.
- Figure 2.14.** Ningyo specimen; paper-mâché body and fish tail.
- Figure 2.15.** Modes of intention.
- Figure 2.16.** *Vanitas Still Life with a Portrait of a Young Painter* by David Bailly, 1651.
- Figure 2.17.** A fake limestone statue of Queen Tetisheri.

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## List of Illustrations

- Figure 2.18.** *Untitled* by Michael Mandiberg, 2001.
- Figure 2.19.** The four criteria for the production of the perfect fake.
- Figure 3.1.** Warsaw, Poland.
- Figure 3.2.** Nikko, Japan.
- Figure 3.3.** Uppark House in Sussex.
- Figure 3.4.** The Black Madonna of Chartres before restoration.
- Figure 3.5.** The Black Madonna of Chartres after restoration.
- Figure 3.6.** The Cathedral of Reims as a ruin following German bombing in 1914.
- Figure 3.7.** Hotel designed by George Gilbert Scott St. Pancras, North London.
- Figure 4.1.** *Pietà* by Michelangelo, 1498–1499, St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.
- Figure 4.2.** Concepts important for establishing authenticity, based on Mark Sagoff's ideas.
- Figure 4.3.** Miniature Roman portrait bust of a woman, 25 B.C.E.–25 C.E.
- Figure 4.4.** *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* by Edgar Degas.
- Figure 4.5.** *Lucrezia Donati* by Giovanni Bastianini.
- Figure 4.6.** *The Procuress* by Han van Meegeren, circa 1940.
- Figure 4.7.** Factors that affect our view of the three authenticities outlined in Figure 2.11.
- Figure 4.8.** *Fountain* by Marcel Duchamp.
- Figure 4.9.** *Not to Be Reproduced* by René Magritte, 1937.
- Figure 4.10.** Problems of indistinguishability.
- Figure 4.11.** The problem posed by Danto, with an addition after Radnóti (*Picasso's Tie*).
- Figure 4.12.** A variation on the relationships between artist's intention, appreciation or surpassing intention, the appropriation of tradition that may be invoked by a fake, and the merger of the historical horizons of the artist and the interpreter, based on Gadamer's hermeneutics.
- Figure 5.1.** Granite sphinx of Amenemhet III, from the Twelfth Dynasty, around 1810 B.C.E., from Tanis.
- Figure 5.2.** Decapitated head of the Roman emperor Augustus, 63 B.C.E.–14 C.E., inlaid with eyes of glass and stone.
- Figure 5.3.** Cleopatra's Needle on the Thames embankment in London.
- Figure 5.4.** *Egyptian Multiples: The Ushabti 2014*.
- Figure 5.5.** Old Kingdom–style relief by Ovan Aslanian in the Berlin Museums.
- Figure 5.6.** Alabaster torso of an Egyptian princess of the Amarna period, presumed to be 3,300 years old.
- Figure 5.7.** The North Portico at Knossos, Greece.
- Figure 5.8.** *La Tiare de Saitapharnès*.
- Figure 5.9.** *Roman Harbour Scene*, attributed to Piranesi (1720–1778), imagined by Eric Hebborn as the preparatory drawing Piranesi would have made for a copper etching plate.
- Figure 5.10.** Marble version of the lost original bronze *Apoxyomenos* by Lysippos.
- Figure 5.11.** A fully reresetored sculpture of Marcus Aurelius that came to the Getty Museum in 1999 for treatment.
- Figure 5.12.** The Getty Herakles, circa 125 C.E., shown in its reresetored condition in 2016.
- Figure 5.13.** The Getty Herakles, circa 125 C.E.
- Figure 5.14.** Leda and the Swan, first century C.E.
- Figure 5.15.** Leda and the Swan.
- Figure 5.16.** Two restored versions of the same figure of Bacchus.



## List of Illustrations

- Figure 5.17.** The Getty Kouros.
- Figure 5.18.** Monumental head of Zeus.
- Figure 5.19.** *Discussion on the Piltdown Skull* by John Cooke.
- Figure 5.20.** Totonac wind god Ehecatl.
- Figure 5.21.** Manitou Springs in Colorado.
- Figure 6.1.** Malagan wood carvings with polychromy, Papua New Guinea.
- Figure 6.2.** Preserved Maori *mokomokai*.
- Figure 6.3.** A *mokomokai* in the collections of the British Museum.
- Figure 6.4.** Mask from the Punu tribal region of the Gabon.
- Figure 6.5.** Intangible cultural heritage and the information ecosystem.
- Figure 6.6.** *Bulul* guardian figure of the Ifugao people.
- Figure 6.7.** A Yoruba woman with a traditional wooden *ibeji* figure.
- Figure 6.8.** A carved wooden treasure box—a typical James Little Maori artwork.
- Figure 6.9.** Songye mask from Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- Figure 6.10.** Forgery of Guan Tong’s *Drinking and Singing at the Foot of a Precipitous Mountain*.
- Figure 6.11.** A perfectly authentic Chinese bronze mirror from the Eastern Han period.
- Figure 6.12.** *In the Beginning . . . (Genesis 1) 1997*, attributed to Eddie Burrup.
- Figure 7.1.** Three important concepts in the authenticity of the medieval.
- Figure 7.2.** *Procession of Fragments of the True Cross* by Gentile Bellini.
- Figure 7.3.** The mummified body of Saint Zita from 1272.
- Figure 7.4.** Reliquary containing the relic blood of Christ in procession in Brugge.
- Figure 7.5.** Hand reliquary without the hand, from Belgium, circa 1250–1300.
- Figure 7.6.** Impressive marble tomb purchased by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1924 for \$100,135.
- Figure 7.7.** *Angel of the Annunciation*.
- Figure 7.8.** *The Annunciation* by Simone Martini.
- Figure 7.9.** Marble *Madonna and Child* by Dossena.
- Figure 7.10.** The great forger of Renaissance art Alceo Dossena.
- Figure 7.11.** Cross made for Archbishop Herimann of Cologne.
- Figure 7.12.** *Madonna and Child* by Coppo di Marcovaldo.
- Figure 7.13.** *Madonna and Child* in the style of Coppo di Marcovaldo.
- Figure 8.1.** The *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci.
- Figure 8.2.** The Prado *Mona Lisa* after cleaning and digital remastering.
- Figure 8.3.** The Ludovisi Ares.
- Figure 8.4.** The derestored version of the Laocoön.
- Figure 8.5.** A restored version of the Laocoön as it appeared prior to 1950.
- Figure 8.6.** The Farnese Herakles.
- Figure 8.7.** Painting in the collections of the Brancacci Chapel.
- Figure 8.8.** Detail of the painting from the Brancacci Chapel shown in Figure 8.7.
- Figure 8.9.** Detail from the garden from the Sistine Chapel frescoes by Michelangelo.
- Figure 8.10.** The creation of the sun and moon scene on the Sistine Chapel ceiling before conservation in 1990.
- Figure 8.11.** The creation scene on the Sistine Chapel ceiling after conservation in 1990.
- Figure 8.12.** *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci.
- Figure 8.13.** Varieties of approaches to the restoration of Renaissance works of art.

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## List of Illustrations

- Figure 8.14.** Restored wall painting from the Tomb of Queen Nefertari.
- Figure 8.15.** *Bacchus and Ariadne* by Titian.
- Figure 8.16.** Self-portrait by Charles-Antoine Coype.
- Figure 8.17.** *Prometheus Bound* by Peter Paul Rubens.
- Figure 8.18.** *Virgin and Child in Flower Garland with Angels* by Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder.
- Figure 8.19.** *The Virgin Mary with Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Paul* by Bernardo Daddi, before reresoration.
- Figure 8.20.** *The Virgin Mary with Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Paul* by Bernardo Daddi after reresoration.
- Figure 8.21.** *Portrait of a Young Lady* by Icilio Frederico Joni.
- Figure 8.22.** Art forger Icilio Frederico Joni.
- Figure 9.1.** Page from the website of Gary Arseneau.
- Figure 9.2.** Neo-Renaissance portrait bust of Giovanna Albizzi by Giovanni Bastianini.
- Figure 10.1.** *Erased de Kooning Drawing* by Robert Rauschenberg.
- Figure 10.2.** *One and Three Chairs* by Joseph Kosuth.
- Figure 10.3.** Karl Gunnar Vougt Pontus Hultén, first director of the Centre Pompidou, Paris.
- Figure 10.4.** *Twenty-Ninth Copper Cardinal* by Carl Andre.
- Figure 10.5.** *Primo Piano III* by David Smith.
- Figure 10.6.** *Homage to New York* by Jean Tinguely.

# Chapter 1

## Authenticity and Conservation: An Introduction

Connoisseurship	Intention	Intertextuality
Minimal Intervention	Restoration	Replicas
Anastylosis	Artistic Value	Forgery
Reversibility	Aesthetic Value	

*Objects cannot exist in a state of falsehood, nor can they have a false nature.  
If they really exist they are inherently real.*

—Salvador Muñoz-Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*

### **Introduction, Audience, and Aims**

This volume spans a range of topics, times, and artworks that are used to illustrate the themes of authenticity, restoration, and forgery. The book is designed to be a resource for the general reader interested in how restoration and authenticity of art intermix and how the issues created by forgeries may involve culturally influenced decisions

regarding their reception. The book will be of special interest to archaeologists, conservators, restorers, art historians, philosophers, and critics. In its cross-cultural aims, the volume attempts to synthesize diverse sources and arguments to present views of authenticity from a series of vantage points, sometimes representing antinomies, contested intentions, or disputed vistas.

## Authenticity and Conservation: An Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces a number of conservation topics that are relevant to the themes of authenticity, restoration, and forgery. Since conservation and restoration directly affect the materiality of works of art, these issues are very relevant to the discussions that follow later in the book.

Authenticity interacts with both restoration and forgery, as these two activities may alter how the authenticity of a work of art is perceived or described. The text spans a chronological period from the Paleolithic to the postmodern; the period is broken up for convenience into a series of chapters devoted to particular time periods. The diachronic spread of the artworks discussed in this text seeks to illustrate how notions of authenticity, restoration, and forgery are addressed in different contexts and cultures, and it illustrates a continuity of concerns and debates from the ancient world to the contemporary.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are concerned with a wide-ranging discussion on the interaction between the concepts introduced in chapter 1 and examples of how the philosophical and conservatorial nexus regarding authenticity has a direct or indirect bearing on artworks and the cultural setting of the works. This book is concerned primarily with works of the visual arts rather than literature or music, both of which have a huge literature pertaining to authenticity.

The inauthentic, in the shape of fakes and forgeries, is an important aspect of the way in which artworks are valorized because there is a continuum of authenticities and values associated with them. The processes of historical and cultural assignation of value cannot simply be separated from the problem of fakes or how they are regarded across different time periods and cultures. The subject of fakes is both relevant and important to the

discussion here, especially since restorations of works of art are sometimes accused of becoming historical forgeries themselves in virtue of what has happened to them in the course of restoration.

The philosophical background is germane to this discussion because its various structures support aesthetic or ethical arguments concerning how works of art are to be regarded; how fakes and forgeries raise significant questions regarding their status within the canons of both art and art history; and, more specifically, how their aesthetic and material constitutions can be analyzed or discussed.

For example, can fakes that are visually indiscernible from originals be regarded as aesthetically inferior? Can fakes that were accepted as real artworks for generations be seen as of no value today? Philosophical investigations regarding the aims and processes of restoration have also been invaluable in widening the terms of debate on this important and fascinating topic, which continues to generate many controversies, such as the cleaning of the Sistine Chapel frescoes or the total revamping of the interior of Chartres Cathedral. A more detailed account of some philosophical studies that are relevant to the visual arts and the topics dealt with in this book is presented in chapter 4.

Within the profession of conservation, the lack of any clear philosophical underpinnings led to the formulation of a series of international charters in the early twentieth century. Some of them are reviewed in this book, especially as they relate to problems associated with the concept of authenticity and monuments. These charters are still relevant to discussions concerning the authenticity of art and our various responses to the problem in the twenty-first century. At the same time, they represent a series of time capsules that

embed the thoughts of different generations of scholars at specific historical moments.

In relation to the primary concerns of these codes, namely historic monuments, some aspects of the charters are discussed in chapter 3.

The relationship between the cleaning of works of art and how the perceptible properties of them are evaluated is interconnected with the notion of how far restoration can be taken before the essential properties of an artwork are compromised or overridden by culturally determined choices regarding how the artwork appears. These concerns are part of the argument about the authentic appearance of works of art and what has happened to them over time, a concern that this book fleshes out in a number of pertinent examples throughout the text, particularly in chapters 5 through 9, which deal with the ancient Old World; ethnographic works of art; the medieval period; the Renaissance; the Baroque period to the early twentieth century; and the modern, postmodern, and contemporary era.

One of the aims of this book is to illuminate how concerns regarding authenticity are not a phenomenon of recent times but a human response to the originality and honest reception of artworks from the very beginnings of human interaction with materials. On the other hand, the recognition of the production of forgeries is the Janus face of concerns with authenticity that afflict our aesthetic understanding of the past or in some cases enhance, distort, or valorize it. The text discusses many prominent examples of forgers whose work has either created its own body of artworks that have come to be admired as a reflection of our interaction and signification of them, or that create philosophical problems in aesthetics or conservation decisions.

### The Connoisseurial Nexus

This book takes a robust view of the need for the contextualization of the debate between the art historical connoisseur and the scientific connoisseur, both of whom are part of an essential dialogue concerning the nature of authenticity but who all too often speak in very different terms about the same artwork. Both groups of connoisseurs may be unaware of the materiality studied by the conservator, the nuances of restoration, the aesthetic and ontological arguments advanced by philosophers, or the cultural needs of ethnic communities and how these might impinge on the discussion.

The term *scientific connoisseur* is used throughout this text because, analogous to the art connoisseur, the scientific connoisseur must have a thorough knowledge of art in terms of its materiality; its physical and chemical characterization; the history of artists' materials and when pigments, media, and supports came into use or ceased being used; dating techniques applied to works of art and their field of operation; and limitations inherent in the scientific method. These, rather than possession of an outstanding expertise in one particular technique of scientific analyses, are important facets of the required knowledge base. Seeking the application of a new scientific technique on disparate artworks does not entail a holistic understanding of an artwork itself, which must remain the focus of inquiry, not the novelty of a new form of characterization in isolation from the examination of the totality of the materiality and historical existence of the work.

The art connoisseur must have a range of knowledge about a particular work and a detailed understanding of the artist's catalogue raisonné, the culture from which the object originates, and how that culture used materials and techniques. The art connoisseur must

have a knowledge of documentary sources, underdrawings, X-ray radiographs, catalogs, stamps, seals, signatures, papers, inks, media, frames, stretchers, pigments, stones, and wood, which is not the same kind of knowledge necessarily sought by an art historian.

A good example of the combined strength of these two strands of connoisseurship is the case of *Bords de la Seine à Argenteuil*, a painting attributed to Claude Monet. The BBC team of Philip Mould and Fiona Bruce (Mould and Bruce 2012), in their television program *Art: Fake or Fortune?*, presented extensive and convincing evidence for authenticity of this work based on the art connoisseurship of labels, stamps, stock numbers, collection history, and photographic evidence, all supported by the scientific connoisseurship of brushstrokes, pigments, and multispectral imaging using 13 different filters, including infrared reflectographic mode (Mould and Bruce 2012).

The head of conservation at the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne, Iris Schaefer, on reviewing the scientific data, had no doubt whatever that the painting was by Claude Monet (Mould and Bruce 2012). As a result, the late Monet expert John House, whose writings on Monet have been internationally recognized (House 1986), approached the Wildenstein Institute in Paris, the creator of the catalogue raisonné for the artist, with incontrovertible evidence assembled from both the scientific and art connoisseurial community. Despite this, the painting was still rejected by the Wildenstein Institute in 2012, based on the opinion of the late Wildenstein père, who had judged the picture “not by Monet.” An impartial assessment of the two strands of evidence presented in this case would convince any disinterested party that the painting was indeed by

Monet. The Wildenstein Institute has been made to look foolish in the international art world by virtue of its inability to accept evidence of modern connoisseurship from both the art historical and scientific community (Grosvenor 2014).

Increasingly, these two approaches to material authenticity are equal bedfellows, whose intimate relationship will continue to illuminate art historical and archaeological problems for decades to come.

### Some Conservation Concepts

Several key concepts originate from within the conservation sphere, and some of these are of value for the discussions of art and restoration given in the text. The glossary at the end of this book also includes several useful definitions of a wider scope.

The concept of *minimal intervention* is especially important in the arena of restoration because the concept aims to keep to a minimum any physical or chemical intervention to the object under treatment. The aim is to prevent the undertaking of potentially unnecessary interventions with the object beyond those that are strictly necessary for either its continuation to exist as an art object or its aesthetic appearance. These aims may be seen as disparate (Caple 2000:65) or as context dependent. Nevertheless, the concept itself functions well in virtue of the aim to perform the minimum amount of treatment to ensure the survival of the object, or the minimum amount of aesthetic reintegration necessary to enable the artwork to function as a completed image. This is where conflicts with different approaches to restoration can arise, since some observers may protest that too much integration of the image has been undertaken, in opposition to the principle of minimal intervention, while

## Some Conservation Concepts

others may regard the interventions as perfectly in keeping with that notion and as adhering to it. A pertinent question regarding the ontological basis of the concept is posed by Caple (2000:65), who asks: Minimum intervention to achieve what? Attempting to answer this question foregrounds the difficulty in reaching any definitive statement on what is being achieved. In any detailed examination of this question, the answers are going to be contextualized, in which case the following propositions may function in the case of panel paintings:

1. Minimal intervention can be used to reintegrate the aesthetic appearance of a work employing reversible materials for inpainting in virtue of differentiation from the original or present state of the work.
2. Minimal intervention aims to preserve the original support, frame, and ground of the work in virtue of the material authenticity of the original or present state of the work.
3. Minimal intervention as a principle seeks to avoid unnecessary alterations and repaintings to a work in virtue of attempting to present the work of the original artist or to preserve the effects of the passage of time on the work.

What minimal intervention does not do is keep all the discolored varnish intact, and the canvas itself may have to be relined, so many actions that cannot be seen as minimal might be carried out. Caroline Villiers (2004) explores the concept of post-minimal intervention as attempting to demystify the positivist philosophy of impartiality or neutrality in the restoration of paintings and places the emphasis instead on interpretative, negotiative, and

communicative semiotics. Villiers writes that in this context, the concept of minimal intervention is dysfunctional, as it disincentivizes critical scrutiny of conservation methodology and neglects the fact that paintings embody multiple and often contested histories.

A similar complaint is lodged by Muñoz-Viñas (2009b:49), who even considers the expression to be an oxymoron. Instead he suggests the wording *balanced meaning-loss*. Since any intervention, however minimal, implies that something will be lost from the state the work currently presents, the problem is to decide which meanings will be preserved for the future and which will be eliminated. The determination of how the loss in meanings is to be balanced is, once again, a contextualized debate that cannot be universally applied. Once the concept of interfering with the work of art as minimally as possible is analyzed, the question posed by Caple becomes ontologically important. The question “minimum intervention to achieve what?” could also be answered for paintings in the following way: Minimum intervention seeks to re-create the aesthetic appearance of the work by use of the least invasive materials and techniques that current practice allows in virtue of the need for the work to be legible and stable into the future.

The concept of *anastylosis* refers to the reconstruction of buildings or monuments in which original components are visually discernible from later additions. The aim of anastylosis is to allow the visual identification of original fabric, unobscured by efforts to disguise exactly how much of the original remains intact. In terms of restoration of historic or ancient structures, this is a valuable concept because it helps limit arbitrary reconstruction, in which case the original fabric may no longer be able to be identified. In practice, there

may be good reasons why anastylosis cannot easily be carried out, but the statement of the principle is crucial for retaining the authentic materiality of the original.

The principle of anastylosis has a bearing on the concept of *true nature*, which used to be regarded as a self-evident term in the conservation discourse. The United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC 1983), for example, defined it thus: “Conservation is the means by which the true nature of an object is preserved. The true nature of an object includes evidence of its origins, its original construction, and the materials of which it is composed and information as to the technology used in its manufacture.”

As Caple remarks, “Problems in definition of any one exact state of an object as being the true nature led to the demise in the use of the term and it vanished from the ethical codes in the 1990s” (Caple 2000:62). The authentic nature of the object was not a static concept rooted in time, as the concept of true nature suggested, but one that interacted with the artwork in its various states across time. The term *true nature* includes a whole range of concepts, some of which interact with the ideas of authenticity or authentic fabric but that could not be analyzed further, as too many disparate elements were included in the phrase itself.

The next concept of general utility is *reversibility* (Caple 2000:64; Pye 2001:33). The aim of a *reversible* treatment is to allow the treatment to be undone at a later stage in the life of the artwork, allowing for a further intervention that may be seen as more suitable or more in keeping with the authentic aims of the original, or simply removing what had been done in the first place.

For example, all inpaintings in watercolor on Renaissance works of art in oil or tempera

are easily removable with warm water, effecting a treatment that can be designated as reversible. Applied pigments can also be physically separated from the original by a varnish barrier, so that solvent dissolution of them is still an isolated process of removal, without alteration of the original work below the varnish interlayer. That is, these treatments are removable; the physical state of the object itself will not necessarily be fully reversible, as operations such as cleaning and repair of damaged grounds or panels are not actually reversible. The *aesthetic effect* may be reversible in virtue of the ability of the added paint layer to be removed and replaced by another watercolor inpainting that corrects prior errors of interpretation. The principle of reversibility has helped spur the idea of trying to make physical interventions to works of art, such as large stone sculptures, maximally reversible, allowing parts of a sculpture to be dismantled again should it prove necessary. This is the approach taken, for example, by the Antiquities Conservation Department at the J. Paul Getty Museum, where several large stone sculptures have recently been de-restored and reresetored using this tenet (Podany 1994a, 1994b). This is an admirable example of the physical reversibility of separate components.

In a wider context, however, there are problems with the chemical or physical reversibility of conservation treatments (Oddy 1999), and in scientific terms, nothing that is undertaken is ever really reversible (Seeley 1999) because the state in which the object existed prior to conservation intervention can never be regained. The cleaning of the restored parts of the sculpture of Herakles mentioned by Podany (1994a), for example, is not a reversible action, and in consequence of these difficulties, the concept of *retreatability* has come to be regarded as a



## Some Conservation Concepts

pragmatic and achievable aim (Appelbaum 2007), while real reversibility is seen as an impossible concept in terms of its application to the treatment of works of art *sensu stricto*.

The aim of an intervention that allows retreatability is to ensure that what has been done to an artwork in the past does not impede the treatment or retreatment of the artwork in the future. For example, the impregnation of ancient Egyptian monuments with epoxy resin in the 1970s has acted as a major barrier to the retreatability of the monuments, as the epoxy resin cannot be removed from the stonework. It is a cross-linked polymeric structure, insoluble, and potentially stronger than the stone itself. What was once viewed as the latest application of advanced scientific technology to the protection of works of art is now seen as counterproductive to the ability to protect a monument by being able to retreat it in the future.

In the restoration of works of art, there is a tension between restored parts that are *visually discernible* and those that are *visually indiscernible*. In keeping with the ethics of conservation, the observer has to be able to know or to see what has been added to a work of art. Even if these additions are visually indiscernible, they should be detectable by common examination techniques used for works of art, such as ultraviolet examination, X-ray radiography, or infrared reflectography, and all alterations should be fully documented. By this means, restorations that are visually imperceptible can be revealed to an informed observer, while at the same time the visually perceptible features of the work are not impaired by visual inspection alone. To preserve the vestiges of authentic works of art, Italian restorers in particular have made use of *tratteggio*, in which a series of very fine lines of suitably colored watercolor paint are

added to missing parts of a work to complement the overall design or morphology of the image. This process allows for an overall aesthetic integration of the work, while on close inspection, observers can distinguish for themselves what has been added, without the need for special equipment, as the *tratteggio* additions can then be observed.

The notion of *artist's intention* is important for restoration and conservation actions, since the aim of any treatment should be to adhere to the wishes of the artist, his or her stated intentions, or the apparent relationship between the original materiality of the work and what actions are taken to valorize that relationship. In the context of this book, which is much concerned with notions of authenticity across several fields of inquiry, the artist's intention is a complex topic. It will be the subject of several discussions in the chapters that follow, particularly chapters 2 and 3.

Some artworks contain within themselves degradation phenomena that are self-perpetuating and that lead to damage of their own accord. This situation is called *inherent vice*, and the problems created by this kind of decay are common in works of modern art, such as sculptures by Naum Gabo, briefly examined in chapter 2. As a consequence of inherent vice, some pigments may have changed color completely, or objects made of organic materials may disintegrate without any other agency being involved in their decay. They may be saved only through conservation measures that seek to stabilize a work in its current state. Ritual artifacts, on the other hand, may be valorized culturally by use. Therefore degradation can be seen as part of the intent of the original artist. The same argument applies to contemporary artworks for which inherent vice is welcomed as the desired aging of the work, some works being deliberately

## Authenticity and Conservation: An Introduction

ephemeral as a consequence of internal decay.

So what of restoration? Strictly speaking, a distinction can be drawn between *conservation* and *restoration*, although in continental Europe, the conjunction conservator-restorer is a frequent appellation for the conservation professional because of linguistic variations in how the words are commonly employed. In France, curators are referred to as conservators while conservators are referred to as restorers or preparators. In Anglo-American usage, curators are curators and restorers are either conservators or restorers, which seems fundamentally more sensible.

In conservation, the aim of treatment is to maintain the currently existing state of an object, without the addition or subtraction of new or replacement parts or components. This represents a static state; even if in practice this state is metastable, it is the authentic state in which the work presents itself. Conservation, therefore, attempts to present an unaltered or unadulterated work of art in a synchronic condition. Restoration has more ambitious aims. Caple (2000:119) deconstructs the notion of restoration into the activities of *reassembly*, in which as much as possible of the original is stabilized, reassembled, or incorporated into a restored state; and *reintegration*, filling in losses to reintegrate missing parts into the visual image of the whole. Caple (2000:119) makes a further series of delineations, categorizing reintegration into *functional reintegration*, *background reintegration*, *similar reintegration*, and *exact reintegration*. In *functional reintegration*, the working component of a clock may need to be replaced or the binding of an important volume subject to frequent handling may have to be mended, repaired, or partially replaced to retain functionality into the future. *Background reintegration* aims to fill an area

with color and texture to blend with the base or ground of the work, but it is not suggestive of a decorative scheme. *Similar reintegration* is produced by finishing the filled area to give a rough approximation of what was originally present, without fine detail. *Exact reintegration* restores the filled area to its original appearance, with all elements of the design included and correctly color-matched.

Restoration is not only differentiated by the mode of physical intervention; it is contextualized. The consequences and way in which restoration is implemented depend upon: *the type of objects* (nonfunctioning steam engines, damaged paintings, fragmentary marble sculpture, decomposing furniture, and grimy cathedrals all present different contexts of enablement); *cultural context* (Native American totem poles, Aboriginal sand paintings, Westernized museum displays, and Japanese temple-shrines all embody different needs and values); *original materiality* (brushed silverware, cleaned frescoes, and revealed original stonework require different approaches to revelation); and *aesthetic integrity* (retouched paintings, patinated bronzes, worn stones, and reconstructed marbles demand different conservation modalities). The contextual nature of restoration is often omitted in discussions of the subject since it is hard to arrive at a conclusion that the restoration of *Metropolis II* by Chris Burden at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art is analogous to the restoration of the painting *The Entry of Christ into Brussels* by James Ensor at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu. Contextualization of restoration is crucial to its subsequent debates.

From the point of view of problems with authenticity, the extent of exact reintegration, the process of restoration that is potentially the most visually deceptive, provokes many controversies, but other approaches

## Some Conservation Concepts

to restoration are also very germane to authenticity and may impact that attribute in different ways. Sagoff (1978a), whose views on restoration will be discussed later, makes a distinction between *integral restoration*, where new pieces are made in place of original fragments that have been destroyed, and a *purist restoration*, which limits itself to reattaching original fragments and requires that nothing inauthentic, nothing not produced by the original artist can be shown.

It is worth pointing out that a necessary prelude to restoration, especially as regards the restoration of paintings, is cleaning. It is, in fact, the act of cleaning that makes the restoration possible. Discolored varnishes, thick layers of grime, deteriorated linings, poor-quality previous retouchings, and falsifying overpaintings will be removed by cleaning (here justified by the principles of conservation in accord with scientific empiricism) to leave as much of the original work as possible. This original work is then the fundamental basis for subsequent restorations. One reason the restoration of paintings and other works of art can be so controversial is that what has been removed is held by some observers to represent the loss of the authentic state or appearance of the work, which has been subsequently “ruined” by restoration. Cleaning may itself be regarded as involving *total cleaning*, *partial cleaning*, or *selective cleaning*. Even here it might be necessary to differentiate between different modes of cleaning: dry cleaning, wet cleaning, gel cleaning, laser cleaning, and vacuum cleaning. The balance between understanding these details as purely technical considerations and their subsequent impact on discussions regarding the authentic appearance of a work of art is sometimes thrown out of kilter, as when art historians, such as James

Beck (Beck and Daley 1996), criticize the details of the type of cleaning solution used on the Sistine Chapel ceiling without a detailed knowledge of the different approaches to cleaning a restorer has available and whether any pigments have been removed from the surface during cleaning or not, questions that were evaluated carefully in the case of the Sistine Chapel restorations.

The techniques and the extent of cleaning of artifacts, such as historic silver, the facade of buildings, or the surface of paintings, may differ from one institution to another. House styles of different restoration workshops across the globe have not made arguments concerning aesthetic responses to appearance any easier to resolve, because each institution might take a different philosophical position regarding the extent of cleaning or the extent of restoration. Examples of these debates, from philosophical, aesthetic, and art conservation perspectives, will be discussed throughout this book, particularly in chapters 8, 9, and 10.

The Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM 2014) defines restoration as “all actions taken to modify the existing materials and structure of cultural material to represent a known earlier state. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historical value of an object and is based on respect for remaining original material and clear evidence of the earlier state.”

The conflicts with authenticity in terms of actions taken in pursuit of restoration arise due to the presumption that a known earlier state can be re-created during the process of restoration. The representation of a known earlier state may not necessarily be accomplished by using the same materials that the original work employed. In fact, this might lead to deception and the inability to distinguish the restoration from the original.

## Authenticity and Conservation: An Introduction

The art historian whose writings on restoration were to become influential in the ongoing debate between historical veracity and aesthetic appreciation of a restored work of art was Cesare Brandi (1906–1988). One of my own Brandian favorites is:

The legitimate moment for the act of restoration is the actual moment of conscious awareness of the work of art. At this time, the work of art exists in the moment and is historically present; yet it is also part of the past and, at the cost of not being part of human consciousness, is thus part of history. . . . For restoration to be a legitimate operation, it cannot presume that time is reversible or that history can be abolished [Brandi 1977:75].

Another way of looking at this issue is the statement by Brandi (1977:48) that restoration is “the methodological moment in which the work of art is recognized, in its material form and in its historical and aesthetic duality, with a view to transmitting it to the future.” This leads to two important axioms, the first that “only the material form of the work of art is restored” and the second that “restoration must aim to reestablish the potential unity of the work of art, as long as this is possible without producing an artistic or historical forgery and without erasing every trace of the passage of time left on the work of art” (Brandi 1977:49).

The tension, in terms of restoration, between what is possible in leaving historical aspects of a work of art intact and removing them is well expressed here; returning an object to a known earlier state is not necessarily compatible with not erasing every

trace of the passage of time left on an artwork. Several examples that present both sides of the debate concerning how the authenticity of an artwork has been affected by restoration are discussed later in this book. There can be no uniform prescription for how cleaning and restoration are to be applied to a particular work. The remains of the passage of time are sometimes left intact, as in many admired ancient Chinese bronzes with thick green patinas, and are sometimes removed, as in the cleaning of the Sistine Chapel ceilings. Even some enlightened art historians, such as Brandi (1977), did not necessarily agree with the cleaning of the Sistine Chapel ceilings because of the removal of patina, or what they assumed was patina rather than layers of soot and grime over animal glue coatings.

Vexed issues related to patina cannot be solved here, as arguments for and against the elimination of a patina in different cases could easily consume a whole chapter, but examples are fleshed out in later chapters. Prominent conservation theorists, including Brandi (1977) and Paul Philippot, wrote in defense of the patina (especially in connection with paintings). Philippot (1997 [1966]:374) wrote,

The way the object is perceived is continuously evolving as a result of the historic development of a culture, especially aesthetic sensitiveness. . . . It should be admitted that the patina is a part of the object’s original substance as transmitted to man through history and that any attempt to eliminate it will damage the original substance and introduce a historical contradiction, inasmuch as removal will show an old object in fresh, or new looking, material.

## Some Conservation Concepts

The same thought is expressed by Brandi:

In the process of restoration the removal of patina as the evidence of history is a way of falsifying art works: the materials, thus deprived of their age, are forced to acquire a freshness, a sharp edge, and a new aggressiveness that will only belie the true age of the work. Therefore, conservation of the patina—that special dimming which the material acquires over a period of time and which becomes an evidence of passing time— is not only desirable but imperative [Brandi 1977:74].

Both of these views have been very influential and invoke the age-value of the integrity of patina as derived from the subtle interactions between the original materials of the work and its environment. The concept of age-value is a reference to the work of Alois Riegl (1982 [1903]), which will be discussed further below. There is increasingly a respect for patina as a desired cachet of a diachronic interaction with materials in situations or contexts where a less sympathetic approach to cleaning would have removed the patina in the past (Appelbaum 2007). The contextual nature of restoration, discussed above, will have an important bearing on this issue: Restoring a steam engine to working condition is not the same as restoring a painting by Carpaccio in which parts of the sky are falling off.

Instead of thinking about the original work as being inpainted or retouched, another way to look at the act of restoration in general is to provide *compensation for loss*. This is the way that the AIC “Code of Ethics for Conservators” (2012) presents the issue:

Any intervention to compensate for loss should be documented in treatment records and reports and should be detectable by common examination methods. Such compensation should be reversible and should not falsely modify the known aesthetic, conceptual, and physical characteristics of the cultural property, especially by removing or obscuring original material.

Compensation for loss, however, invariably modifies the aesthetic appreciation of a work of art, usually for the better, and rarely are these compensatory effects fully reversible (Podany 1994b). These ethical guidelines, in general, are consonant with provisions of conservation charters that advise practitioners regarding ethical standards of conservation. In an ideal world, every intervention is documented, every compensation is reversible, and no original material is affected. In practice, of course, this may not always be the case. Some documentation now sought after was never recorded, has deteriorated, or cannot be read on modern computing equipment; not all compensation for loss can be reversed or retreated; and in the process of conservation, some original material may be compromised or damaged.

The ethical codes represent an ideal state, something to aim for but something that might not be achieved or achievable. The most dangerous assumption is that what is achievable through compensation for loss is actually reversible. The hermeneutics of non-reversibility have resulted in the realization that not everything can be reversed at a later time in the life of a work.

The interaction between the appearance of works of art and issues of restoration will be addressed in more detail in following

chapters. It is an interesting observation that the terms *true nature*, *reversibility*, and *authenticity*, which could be regarded as essential attributes of works of art and their treatment, have all but disappeared from Western conservation codes, replaced with more nuanced ideas or, in the case of authenticity, with a series of disputations. These will be elaborated on in chapters 2, 3, and 4. Restorers and conservators have increasingly shied away from any definitive statements regarding the nature of authenticity or the true nature of a particular work of art. The fact that the contemporary world is more concerned than ever with notions of authenticity has had the concomitant effect that the term has disappeared from many scholarly works across a wide spectrum of artistic and conservation literature, because to enter into a debate on what is meant by *authenticity* is complex. The debate's quagmire can be seen as a dangerous territory to traverse, but it is one that this book aims to take on.

This problem is particularly apparent in the burgeoning field of contemporary art, which may represent a series of intangible values associated with particular works. These values form an essential but contested notion of what is regarded as real or fake. The intentions of the artist, if alive, may be intimately connected with the values inherent in the work and how the conservator and curator interact with the work. The problems with intangible authenticity are especially salient in discussions of the medieval period in chapter 7, of ethnographic arts in chapter 6, and of the postmodern and contemporary era in chapter 10.

In recent years, significant contributions to these issues have been made by art historians (Geary 1978; Lenain 2011), philosophers (Irvin 2005b; Lopes 2009), and conservators

(Gordon 2014; Hermens and Fiske 2009; Laursen 1999, 2013; Real 2001). These contributions will be discussed in the chapters mentioned above.

### **The Importance of Values and Their Significance**

The need for a discussion of values that could be inherent in terms of how artworks were presented in their preserved state or as restored works was presaged by the writings of Alois Riegl (1858–1905). Riegl (1982 [1903]) saw that the desire for a unified concept of authenticity could work only if the values associated with an artwork or monument were clearly defined in terms of aims, which later international charters attempted to undertake. Riegl's work was one of the first relativistic studies concerning artworks and the values placed on them by the significance accorded to the works by that ubiquitous group of modernists, stakeholders.

Authenticity, which is rarely discussed in the context of values, has a direct relationship or a complex interrelationship with value. Material authenticity has a potential impact on both artistic and aesthetic value; historical or aesthetic authenticity, on aesthetic value; and intangible authenticity on the artist's intent for the work, the artistic value of it. To be valued, it is advisable that objects are in fact authentic. There are cases in which this authenticity is entirely intangible. The corollary to this perception is that, in the absence of criteria regarding authenticity, objects that are considered culturally valued may in fact be forgeries. Consider the object value of the Etruscan terra-cotta warriors in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They were imbued with cultural value as Etruscan masterpieces for more than 60 years and were one of the most admired exhibits at the museum

## The Importance of Values and Their Significance

(Richter 1937). But in fact they were forgeries made in Italy before the First World War, and they are now consigned to storage (Bothmer and Noble 1961), where apparently these impressive works are unviewable, even by scholars.

The disjunction between value and authenticity in this case is a consequence of the failure to consider issues of authenticity in relationship to the value invested in or assumed to be culturally embedded in an object itself, as if it were materially Etruscan. The use-value of the work has been negated by the overriding importance of the historical value.

Riegl's work has been nicely summarized by Sebastiano Barassi (2007) in the context of modern and contemporary art. Riegl (1982 [1903]) distinguishes between two principal sets of values inherent in cultural property: *memory value* and *present-day value*. Memory value can be thought of as *age value*, which promotes a view of a monument as an entity in a potential state of degradation and depends on a visual appreciation of age. Its cult demands no interference with the natural deterioration process, thus rejecting restoration of the monument. *Historical value* views the monument as representative of a particular moment in history. The emphasis is on documentary value and aims to keep the monument as close as possible to its authentic, original state, primarily through preventative conservation.

*Intentional commemorative value* applies only to intentional monuments. The value invoked here is to keep the monument looking "new," which will be achieved by restoration. This value opposes age-value. Intentional monuments, such as the memorial honoring the US dead in the Vietnam War, erected in Washington, DC, are generally kept in as pristine a condition as

possible, because in the present they commemorate an event in the past. A shabby appearance would undermine the valorizing of that past. To inhere respect, these types of monuments must usually appear immaculate, without decay. Those that do show neglect, such as some First World War memorials in the United Kingdom, suggest that the events they commemorate are no longer part of the function of the memorials themselves, which have merged into a historical past rather than representing the events or honoring the dead they bear witness to.

Present-day values are concerned with both practical and aesthetic requirements and include *use-value*, which concerns the daily use and functions of a monument and which may be in opposition to *age-value*. *Art-value* is made up of *newness-value*, the desire to observe what is essentially visible to us in the present, and *relative art-value*, which places a greater emphasis on the purely aesthetic appreciation of the artifact. The desire to enhance or preserve this value may suggest that an object be conserved or even restored to a condition approaching that of the original. Riegl was fully aware that some or all of these values can coexist within the same monument or work of art and that in some instances these different values will be in disharmony with each other.

This is a pragmatic way to examine the problems of restoration in relation to the authenticity of an original monument because it relies on assigning values to the monument or work of art and deciding which set of values has greater significance. It has increasingly been realized that applying fixed criteria of evaluation concerning a monument or artwork and how it is to be restored has become problematic because of conflicting aims, such as the valuing of tradition over function or

of material authenticity over ability to be re-used. At the same time, the appreciation of different approaches as to how restoration can be undertaken and still be regarded as an ethical action, as invoking the integrity of that action, has become more widespread. Stovel (2008), in the context of the built heritage, makes a distinction between authenticity and integrity. He writes that authenticity may be understood as the ability of a property to convey its significance diachronically and that integrity is the ability of a property to secure or sustain its significance over time. This is an interesting distinction that needs to be thought about in different conservation contexts. What is needed from authenticity is different for buildings and monuments, objects of fine art, ethnography, and modern art, but there are also substantial areas of overlap in criteria considered to be relevant to the debate.

What is rarely discussed in these contexts is exactly what is meant by the word *values*. Several philosophical texts, in their discussions of the significance of artistic value as opposed to aesthetic value, fail to address this issue. This is understandable, for the word *value* has several different types of extensive meanings. An anonymous online philosophy text (2014) defines it thus: “(1) a value may be a guiding principle, such as honesty; (2) a value may be a goal, such as happiness; (3) a value may be a quality, such as persistence; (4) a value may be the artistic or monetary worth of something.”

This seems like a good general account of the different functions that the word can fulfill. There may also be a view that intrinsic values are preferred to those that are extrinsic, although in conservation, this idea may imply valorizing some particularly objectivizing view of intrinsic value as opposed

to values that are culturally determined and therefore nominally or normatively extrinsic. Values that are productive and relatively permanent may be preferred to those that are less permanent. In conservation, the value ascribed to a World Heritage Site or Monument is indeed supposed to be viewed as a permanent value. Another common view is that values ought to be selected on the basis of self-chosen ends or ideals: This view could be considered relevant in virtue of the needs of indigenous peoples to self-select their own values and accord them appropriate significance.

In *Values and Heritage Conservation*, Erica Avrami et al. (2000:7) write: “Values and valuing processes are threaded through the various spheres of conservation. . . . Values give some things significance over others, and thereby transform some objects and places into ‘heritage.’”

The conservation community uses the term *cultural significance* to encapsulate the multiple values ascribed to objects, buildings, or landscapes, for which the criteria of Riegl seem very apposite. Bluestone (2000:65) writes:

One of the most useful research themes regarding the role of values in conservation is the characterization of cultural heritage as a dynamic process. . . . Conservation and preservation work would be tremendously enriched if it could be recognized, drawn upon and promote a variety of public engagement with cultural heritage. . . . For example Keith Basso’s anthropological work (Basso 1996) on the Western Apache develops an alluring portrait of the ways in which place becomes meaningful through nomenclature and storytelling.



## The Importance of Values and Their Significance

Values interact with authenticity saliently here, for the preservation of the authentic voice of the Western Apache is through the signification of the stories and names that they ascribe value to. Stories are not usually considered to be of significance in a scientific empirical description because the context is insufficiently labile.

For an extended discussion of values in archaeological and anthropological contexts, the volume *The Construction of Value in the Ancient World*, edited by John Papadopoulos and Gary Urton (2012), is a seminal work. The discussion of values here is organized around four ways of thinking about value: place value, body value, object value, and number value. The most obvious area of relevance for this volume is the discussion of object value, although much of the discussion revolves around the value of objects as commodities and their relative economic and cultural value, such as Renfrew's (2012) description of the fungibility and exchange value of precious artifacts.

An interesting paper is presented here by James Porter (2012), and as Papadopoulos and Urton (2012: 37) write: "Porter suggests that values in a culture generally, and aesthetic values specifically are closely linked. . . . Porter moves well beyond the strictly art historical and problematic use of the 'aesthetics' to the Greek word from which it derives: *aesthesis*. . . . Porter makes a strong and important claim—namely that the aesthetic processes . . . are actually indices of cultural value."

Porter seeks to reconfigure the narrow avenue on which the analysis of aesthetics has been situated by scholars such as Paul Kristeller (1951) and Larry Shiner (2001), both of whom believe there is no concept of aesthetic value prior to the Renaissance period. Human experience and the assignation

of value cannot, in the view of this author, be segregated diachronically by valorizing in particular the high arts of the Renaissance while ignoring earlier cultural values attached to works of art and their appreciation, a view supported by the work of Dutton (2011).

There has been a heady debate concerning the notions of artistic value and aesthetic value and how these are related or conjoined. The concept of aesthetic value as distinct from artistic value has a checkered past and present in philosophical circles, with scores of papers addressing the problem (for examples, see Broiles 1964; Kreitler and Kreitler 1983; Norwood 2013; Seamon 2001; and Sibley 1965), and has recently come under attack by Dominic Lopes. Lopes (2011) strikes many familiar themes in terms of the philosophical nature of the discussion that the writers listed above address.

Lopes argues that there is no characteristic artistic value distinct from aesthetic value and that believers in artistic value have failed to state clearly exactly what it is. Lopes sets out the argument of his opponents as follows: If a work of art is seen as valued only aesthetically, then its value supervenes on its perceptible features. The supervenience of value on perceptible features would mean that no work differs in value from an indiscernible twin but that some works differ in value from indiscernible twins and therefore the value of an artwork is not wholly aesthetic. As a consequence, works of art bear artistic value distinct from aesthetic value.

Lopes (2011:532) says that the denial of this argument would be to deny that the value of an artwork is wholly aesthetic. Lopes then tackles the problem of the exclusion of adventitious values of works of art and paraphrases Nicholas Wolterstorff (1980:157), who writes that there is value in an artwork

## Authenticity and Conservation: An Introduction

to the extent that it serves the purpose for which it was made. Lopes describes as a “trivial theory” the notion that if (V) is an artistic value, it is equivalent to (V) as a value in art—that any value is an artistic value if and only if some work has been made to realize that value. However, a forgery and the original differ in historical value, claims Lopes. The fact that the value of a work of art is not wholly aesthetic has implications for the obvious reason that a forgery and the original differ with respect to some value—they differ with respect to some nonaesthetic artistic values.

The argument here encompasses notions of categories of art that formed the basis of a classic paper by Kendall Walton (1970). Walton said that categories of art are characterized in terms of certain properties of the works that belong to the category in question. Walton asks how far critical issues about works of art can be separated from questions about their histories. He writes (Walton 1970:339): “It is never even partly in virtue of the circumstances of a work’s origin that it has a sense of mystery or is coherent or serene.” Walton argues that an artwork’s aesthetic properties depend not only on its nonaesthetic properties but also on those nonaesthetic properties that are *standard*, *variable*, or *contra-standard*. Walton (1970:339) states:

A feature of a work of art is standard with respect to a (perceptually distinguishable) category just in case it is among those in virtue of which works in that category belong to that category. A feature is variable with respect to a category just in case it has nothing to do with the work belonging to that category: the possession or lack of a feature is irrelevant to whether a work qualifies for the

category. Finally, a contra-standard feature with respect to a category is the absence of a standard feature with respect to that category.

These categories have been influential in discussions of how classes of artworks can be assimilated. For example, *standard* members of a category of paintings would include flat objects with painted surfaces. Paintings with cardboard figures glued to them would have been seen as *contra-standard* until we became accustomed to the idea that paintings are not essentially flat objects but have cardboard figures attached to them as a matter of course. Walton (1970:362) writes: “Works may be fascinating precisely because of shifts between equally permissible ways of perceiving them. And the enormous richness of some works is due in part to the variety of permissible and worthwhile ways of perceiving them.” While Walton appears to place no particular significance on historical events that might influence how his categories are evaluated, he does acknowledge the diachronic effects on artworks when he states (Walton 1970: 363), “It should be emphasized that the relevant historical facts are not merely useful aids to aesthetic judgment, rather they help to determine what aesthetic properties a work has.”

The general interest this paper has generated over the last 45 years led to a review by Brian Laetz (2010). Regarding the modal concept of categories, Laetz writes:

A category could be directly relevant, comparatively relevant or teleologically relevant, independently of how it affects one’s perception of a work. For instance, take the standard example of direct relevance: fakes. Although knowing a work

## The Importance of Values and Their Significance

is a fake should affect one's aesthetic estimation of it—most contextualists will say—that does not mean that it should actually look different to how it would look independently of this knowledge. Whatever the reason status as a fake is aesthetically relevant—if, indeed, it is—it surely cannot be rooted in perception, as Walton's use of categories evidently appears to be.

The problem of forgeries was not really considered in the Gestalt approach to the perception of artworks that Walton employed, which is why the issue was raised by Laetz. Laetz (2010) presents an interesting argument concerning the notion of "perceptual features," previously discussed by Peter Lamarque (2010:61–66). A *perceptual feature* could be a feature that can be accessed by the senses with no background knowledge concerning the work, or it could be any feature that can be discerned from perceptual observation, no matter how much background information is required before that perception can be achieved. Two different artworks may be perceptually indiscernible in virtue of having the same perceptual features in the first sense, but they may be perceptually discernible in virtue of their perceptual features in the second sense. A good example would be the gradual translucency, or even transparency, of an old oil painting in which parts of an underdrawing become visible, revealing extensive pentimenti compared with the painted image above them. To the viewer with no knowledge of the behavior of the materials and techniques of old oil paintings, and the way they age, the underdrawing would be visually confusing and, as a perceptual feature, perhaps unintelligible.

To a conservator or restorer viewing the same picture, the presence of the underdrawing would be visually interesting and an intelligible feature of the work, even if it were superficially distracting from the final version of the painted work.

One of the final conclusions Lopes (2011:535) arrives at is: "V is an artistic value = V is an aesthetic value of an artwork as K, where K is an art form, genre or other art kind."

This is a controversial evaluation of the two concepts; most writers do not accept this proposition as outlined above. In his work, which takes up the challenge of trying to maintain that artistic value is just aesthetic value, Lopes (2011:536) writes:

This theory has several advantages over pure deflationism and the trivial theory. [The trivial theory was the proposition that V is an artistic value = V is a value of an artwork as art.] It delivers a conception of artistic value which is stronger than mere value in art. It does not imply a conception of aesthetic value as realized in works designated as art, but only as designated more specifically.

This analysis regarding aesthetic value as being no more than artistic value has since been attacked by several philosophers, such as Andrew Huddleston (2012). Huddleston (2012:706) writes:

He (Lopes) sets up a dilemma: one either collapses the distinction between values in art and values of art, trivially taking all values of the former to be values of the latter. This would, however, deprive the concept of artistic

## Authenticity and Conservation: An Introduction

value of its ability to mark off the distinctive value of art qua art, or else—as Lopes prefers—one equates the work’s artistic value with its aesthetic value.

Huddleston sets up a thought experiment in which a painting by Giorgione (1478–1510), *The Tempest* (1506–1508), is replicated by a random paint generator, which produces the same aesthetic object as the original work. Huddleston states that surely Lopes would say that only the painting produced by Giorgione has artistic value—that, given the referral by Lopes to Richard Wollheim’s (1987) thematizing concept of artistic creation, the work produced by the random paint generator is not even a work of art.

This argument concerns Wollheim’s analysis of artistic creation—namely that an artist is engaged in a thematizing activity, that the artist has a “reflexive” conceptualization of being engaged in the activity being undertaken (Wollheim 1987:24). Wollheim employs this notion as a way of understanding what makes a painting a work of art. He rejects what he calls *externalist* accounts, which would, in the institutionalist view, make the status of a painting as a work of art dependent on the relationship it enjoyed with the art world. Wollheim proposes an *internalist* account based on the individual psychology of the artist and his or her self-conception of the work. This is in opposition to the views of Arthur Danto (1981) and George Dickie (1974) concerning the validation of an artwork by an art world public, with which Dickie in particular is associated.

What features account for the difference in aesthetic value between Giorgione’s artwork and the duplicate when both of them share many aesthetic values? Huddleston

says that Giorgione’s painting is a great human achievement and that the random painted artwork is not. When aesthetic value is a value of art qua art, it is only because this aesthetic value has been achieved by the artist (Huddleston 2012:713). Huddleston admits that Lopes has a point when he says that the assumption that aesthetic value needs to supervene on perceptible features might well be questionable. But he writes, “If the view I have been suggesting is right, then artistic value, similarly, is realized in the artist’s achievement itself, in being the particular exercise of skill and creativity that it is. It is another matter what values are realised through the appreciation, or potential appreciation, of this achievement.”

By that Huddleston means that aesthetic value is one of the values realized. The paper by Lopes (2011) has also been attacked by Robert Stecker (2012). Stecker (2012:356) considers the example of Sherrie Levine’s photographs of Walker Evans photographs (although he does not mention Mandiberg’s appropriation of Levine’s appropriations, which is discussed in chapter 2). Stecker states that in a way, the photographs made by Levine do have aesthetic value, since they inherit the aesthetic value of the objects photographed by Evans, but that can hardly explain their value as art. However, the statement by Stecker that Levine’s photographs have aesthetic value also seems to apply to Mandiberg’s photographs of Levine’s copies, but one could argue that they have no artistic value but do have aesthetic value. Stecker (2012: 360) writes: “There are valuable artworks which lack any aesthetic value, and . . . even among artworks that have aesthetic value, their value as art is not exhausted by their aesthetic value.” Stecker states, “When he speaks of artistic value (i.e.

## Restoration as a Critical Art of Interpretation

Lopes), he means a type of value not identical with, but that may include, aesthetic value. Artistic value . . . derives from a set of values relevant to evaluating artworks as art, that aesthetic value no doubt is a member of this set but not the only member.”

As far as the conservation and restoration of works of art is concerned, there seem to be benefits in accepting the philosophical status quo that there is a difference between artistic value and aesthetic value. Aesthetic value can be altered by restoration, which may have as a consequence a particular state of the work seen as valorized at a specific time, and as a consequence the observer can then respond to the work in its restored condition. This seems to be more congruent with aesthetic value than with artistic value.

Artistic value may be seen as encompassing a range of values, of which aesthetic value is one. Artworks such as a bath full of rotting offal, as exhibited by British artist Stuart Brisley (1933–) in 1986, do not appear to have any aesthetic value, but they still possess artistic value. To perpetuate the work, another bath full of rotting offal would have to be created to conform with the artistic value of the work. The aesthetic value in this case, should anyone think that the work does have aesthetic value, can in any event only be carried forward by understanding the artistic value or intention of the work.

If actions taken during conservation are seen as a purely aesthetic decision, the way in which a work is assessed may then be discussed in a different context than the unrestored work. The state of the artwork so treated may still differ markedly from that envisaged by the original artist, whose concept of artistic value may be a demarcation of a particular appearance. Some observers

may not regard that view as compatible with the original intention of the work, which may be thought of as encompassing the artistic value of the expression rather than simply an aesthetic value, and so the debate on the instantiation of works of art and their values remains a source of contention in the field of aesthetic studies, which is pertinent to the topics discussed in this book. (For examples, see Carroll 2008; Currie 1989; Davies 2004; and Stecker 1997.)

### Restoration as a Critical Art of Interpretation

John Ruskin (1889) regarded restoration as a process that involved the essential destruction of the authentic fabric of a work of art, especially historic buildings and monuments. Ruskin wrote about his concerns with the activities of restorers from the 1840s through the 1870s because he witnessed the complete alteration of several historic buildings during this period as a consequence of restoration procedures that completely ignored original fabric. During the same period, there arose a series of controversies concerning some of the “cleaned” pictures in the National Gallery of Art, London, and, somewhat earlier, in the Louvre, Paris (Keck 1983). These controversies revolved around the question of the authentic appearance of the paintings concerned, heavily affected by old discolored varnishes used on the surfaces and the desire to clean away the patina of age in a campaign of restoration. Some saw only the destruction of the original work of art, and others saw a cleaned masterpiece, an antinomy that remains unresolved today in the more subtle forms that this argument can take (Glanville 2007, 2009; Reynolds 1929 [1786]:153–154, 158–159; Vasari 1912–1915; Villot 1860; Walden 1985).

## Authenticity and Conservation: An Introduction

Sheldon Keck (1983) has reviewed pertinent information concerning the controversy from the 1840s, when newly cleaned works were reviled by some visitors as “in-authentic,” “flayed,” or “ruined.” The complaint that paintings were being “ruined” by cleaning even goes back to Pliny the Elder (23–79 B.C.E.), who records the story of a painting representing a tragic actor and a boy by the Greek artist Aristides of Thebes that hung in the Temple of Apollo at Rome (Pliny Book XXXV.xxxvi:98–101): “A picture of which the beauty has perished owing to the lack of skill of painters commissioned by Marcus Junius as Praetor, to clean it in readiness for the festival of the Games of Apollo” (Rackham 1995).

It is interesting, in view of the controversy over what paintings are supposed to look like, that a famous contemporary of Aristides, Apelles, is credited by Pliny with the invention of dark varnishes. Pliny (Book XXXV.xxxvi:96–98) writes,

When his works were finished he used to cover them over with a black varnish of such thinness that its very presence, while its reflexion threw up the brilliance of all the colors and preserved them from dust and dirt, was only visible to anyone who looked at it close up, but also employing great calculation of lights, so that the brilliance of the colors should not offend the sight when people looked at them as if through Muscovy-glass and so that the same device from a distance might invisibly give somberness to colours that were too brilliant [Rackham 1995].

It is apparent from this passage that the artist’s intent was to create muted colors,

tempered by the application of a dark varnish, because the freshly painted pigments were seen as too bright. This has some bearing on numerous arguments (Bomford and Leonard 2004:5–7; Glanville 2007, 2009; Gombrich 1956, 1962; Hedley 1990; Walden 1985) that have affected the cleaning of paintings, with some desiring a brighter and cleaner picture rather than one covered with thick layers of darkened varnish, and with others viewing the removal of all varnishes from paintings as destroying the aesthetic balance that has accrued over time (Glanville 2009). Some of these concerns will be discussed in detail in chapters 8 and 9.

In France, artworks confiscated from foreigners, churches, and royal places in the revolution of 1792 were cleaned and restored, and some of these conservation actions resulted in stringent criticism from informed members of the public (Keck 1983). The restorer Jean-Michel Picault, son of Robert Picault, who was well-known for his transfers of paintings from wooden panel to canvas, much in vogue at the time, denounced the work of the contracting artists, claiming they were doing untold damage to precious pictures. These kinds of disputes concerning the nature of the authentic appearance of a work of art rarely go away, and by 1796, when the Louvre opened its doors to the educated elite of France, the authorities had conceived the idea of exhibiting some of the paintings half cleaned to show how much had been gained by the process of restoration (Keck 1983).

### Authentic Cleaning

There were, and still are, dissenting voices regarding the cleaning of paintings. Redgrave and Redgrave (1947 [1866]:4), writing in their work a *Century of British Painters*, stated:

## Authentic Cleaning

As pictures aged and lost the freshness of their youthful complexions, this very defect came to be considered a beauty; the brown hue of successive coats of varnishes was admired as an excellence: "A good picture" said Sir George Beaumont "like a good fiddle, should be brown." If a picture came from abroad in a fresh state of preservation, the dealers were too wise to let it be seen until its pure tints were subdued to the established hue. Connoisseurs believed that pictures, like coins, obtained a patina from age, which mellowed their tone, and made them more valuable than in the state they left the painter's easel.

In 1844 Sir Charles Locke Eastlake, then keeper (later director) of the National Gallery, began a campaign of cleaning pictures (Bomford 1997). His restorer was John Seguier, whose work included retreating paintings with "gallery varnish," a solution of mastic resin in boiled linseed oil. Instead of applying yet more of this gallery varnish, Seguier was instructed to begin cleaning many of the paintings in the gallery. As a result, by 1846 the first National Gallery cleaning controversy had erupted, leading to the establishment of a select committee of the House of Commons in 1853 to consider whether any of the complaints were justified (Anderson 1990). An 1847 cartoon in the magazine *Punch* showed a series of satirical images with uncouth restorers swabbing paintings with a broom and bucket of water on the floor, mashing them in a tub, and applying rough-and-ready chemical cleaning treatments to panel paintings (Leech 1847).

The select committee of the House of Commons later agreed in respect to one of the disputed paintings that "discolored and

decayed varnish had been removed as far as was prudent." After the investigations were completed, a report of more than 1,000 pages was produced. It suggested that some precautionary measures to be taken (Anderson 1990): that no picture cleaner employed by the gallery fail to give a full and distinct explanation of the mode and materials of his procedure; that no varnish be used in the gallery without permission of the director; that any picture to be cleaned be the subject of a previous written report from the director to the trustees; that, if necessary, a painting be examined by three experienced persons, one being a practical chemist (Anderson 1990).

These recommendations were ahead of their time in terms of establishing a consensus among a group of expert observers as to the appearance judged to be authentic and the need for a full record of the cleaning and chemicals used during a restoration campaign. The need for documentation expressed here is now a cornerstone of conservation practice (Appelbaum 2007) but would have been entirely novel in 1853.

Cleaning is an irreversible process in art conservation that is intimately connected to revelation or nonrevelation of discernible features of the work. Cleaning has a strong interaction with the concepts of damage, patina, dirt, and authenticity because the conception of what clean actually means in different contexts is not straightforward or of universal applicability. For example, to conform with a Western museum's attainment or adherence to the ideals of cleanliness, African sculpture in some collections has been cleaned and polished to a pristine finish, which may misrepresent the desired surface aesthetic and ritual signification of the original work (Rubin 1984). In other cases, such as the surface of a painting from the Brancacci Chapel, Santa

## Authenticity and Conservation: An Introduction



**Figure 1.1.** An apparently complete *Madonna and Child* by Rogier van der Weyden, the majority of which had been lost through damage. Oil on panel; 38.5 x 28.8 cm. The painting was completely restored by Jef van der Veken. It now appears as a completed and apparently undamaged work by van der Weyden (*Vierge a l'Enfant, dite Madone Renders*, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tournai). The problem with the restoration was the desire to disguise the fact that any restoration had taken place; even the craquelure is painted in to match the old craquelure of the remaining bits painted by van der Weyden. (Image courtesy of Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique, Brussels)

Maria del Carmine, Florence, illustrated in Figures 8.7 and 8.8, a decision to clean the painting resulted in features of the work that were supposed to be discernible to the viewer becoming more visible. The extent to which cleaning achieves this aim is a subject continually exposed to controversial assessments; some observers maintain that too much cleaning has taken place, while others maintain that not enough has occurred, while yet others think the amount of cleaning is perfectly acceptable. Philippot (1997 [1966]:220) writes: “From a critical point of view, cleaning then becomes the search for an achievable equilibrium that will be most faithful to the original unity.” The notions

of an *original unity* and the attainment of an *achievable equilibrium* are context-dependent and aim to view the work sympathetically, with the unity of the work connected to its desired aesthetic properties, and with the achievable balance between what is removed during cleaning, what can never be regained, and what is kept, in terms of honoring the patina or other features of the work, seen as desirable diachronic interactions. Koller (2000:6) writes: “Cleaning served as a purgative for religious purposes—for example, as a component of the rules for the dressing and the food of priests or the immaculate presentation of venerated statues.” Cultural associations mark

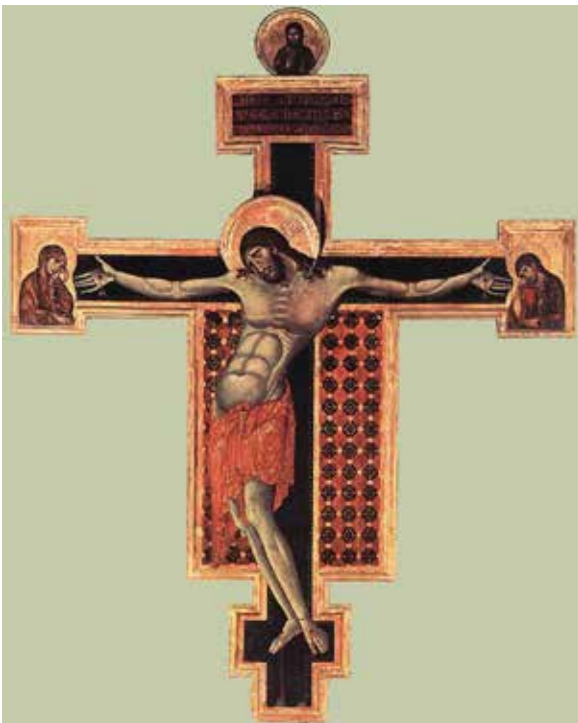


## Authentic Cleaning

individuated consequences. The surface cleaning of dirt from an ethnographic work can reflect deleteriously on its conceptual authenticity, which may be presented to the observer by dirt-encrusted ritual affirmations of its authentic presence (Greene 2006).

On the other hand, the cleaning of European works of art, such as panel paintings, might require the removal of tobacco smoke-, smog-, and dirt-encrusted layers to observe the vestiges of the original work of art. Decisions regarding cleaning and the retention of evidence of time's footprint on an artwork are seen as early as 1702, when during restoration of the wall paintings by Raphael in the Vatican, Carlo Maratta (1625–1713), head of the academy in Rome, left an uncleaned area in Raphael's *School of Athens* (1509–1511), Raphael's impressive fresco in the Stanza della Segnatura in

the Apostolic Palace of the Vatican (Koller 2000). The deliberate retention of patinated or uncleaned surfaces in selective areas of works of art acts to preserve historical events that have afflicted the work and have subsequently been mitigated or removed by processes of irreversible cleaning. Similar philosophical modes of thought regarding the retention in some areas of an artwork of what was either unrestored or uncleaned are reflected in Hanna Jedrzejewska's 1976 paper on the cleaning of Egyptian bronze antiquities, which in one sense updates the simplistic approach to cleaning of an earlier epoch, as evidenced by the older textbook on art conservation by Plenderleith and Werner (1971). Evidence of authenticity may be compromised or removed during cleaning, which is another reason there is always a tension between the acts of cleaning and noncleaning. Total cleaning can be



**Figure 1.2.** Crucifix by Cimabue, in the Basilica di Santa Croce, Florence, circa 1268–1271. Distemper on wood panel; 448 x 390 cm. The crucifix had already been damaged in floods in 1333 and 1557. In 1966 severe flooding badly damaged the work, and 60 percent of the painted surface was lost. A complete restoration was undertaken. It took 10 years to complete and required the reapplication of nearly the entire painted surface as well as complete dismantling and reconstruction. According to Waldemar Januszczak, after the work was finished, the piece was taken across the globe in a curious post-restoration state—part original work, part masterpiece of modern science—a thirteenth-century/twentieth-century hybrid. (Image courtesy of Wikipedia Commons, Web Gallery of Art)



**Figure 1.3.** Detail of the Madonna from the crucifix by Cimabue shown in Figure 1.2. Distemper on wood panel. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, the Yorck Project. Zenodot Verlagsgesellschaft mbH)

instituted by forgers to remove any traces of the passage of time on a work, so that its assessment can be made independent of time's effect upon it, although rarely is this a satisfactory situation that results in absolution.

Gerry Hedley (1990) was one of the first to articulate the possible relationships and modalities connected with different approaches to cleaning. Cleaning, in his view, could be *total*, *partial*, or *selective*. The control or interpretation of what cleaning was supposed to accomplish was returned to the conservator or restorer, who assessed what was most beneficial to the aesthetic properties or stabilization of the artwork into the future. Partial cleaning implies that some vestiges of alteration products or deteriorated surface features will remain on the work following the conservation intervention.

Selective cleaning is used to indicate that only some parts or components of the work are cleaned, while others are deliberately kept in the condition they presented upon initial observation.

Total cleaning might be necessary in the case of works completely obscured by dirt or filthy varnishes, in which case the only recourse may be either total removal or total nonremoval. Some works are so damaged that they cannot be safely cleaned at all, and other measures, such as environmental control, preventive conservation (Caple 2000; Pye 2001), or storage in inert atmospheres, may be necessary to ensure their survival (Daniel et al. 1993).

Condition assessment is a *sine qua non* of survival into the future, whether an artwork is cleaned or not.

### Restoration and Hyper-Restoration

The dual aspects of restoration and cleaning form part of the important and ongoing dialogue between the aims of restoration and the impact it might have on the authenticity of the artwork concerned. When Italian art historian Cesare Brandi was writing in the 1930–1940 period, there were many paintings being deceptively restored, so that the repainted areas were indiscernible from the original work of art—part of the presumption of the abolition of history on the part of the restorer. As Brandi (1977) says, the restorer must refrain from assuming that he can insert himself into the creative process of the artist, an all-too-common approach to restoration in the past. In fact, hyper-restoration of works of art may grade all too easily into the creation of a forgery.

A typical example of this approach to restoration are some forgeries produced by the highly skilled art restorer Jef van der Veken (1872–1964). *Madonna and Child* by Rogier van der Weyden (1399–1469), of which the majority of the painted surface had been lost, was completely restored by van der Veken (Figure 1.1) and now appears as a completed and apparently undamaged work by van der Weyden (Verougstraete et al. 2005:62–77).

This is an act of hyper-restoration, effectively synonymous with a forgery in that the restorer did in fact insert himself into the creative approach of the original artist.

Van der Veken used the same media as van der Weyden, attempted a complete match with the pigments, and created a craquelure to blend with that of the original, which results in confusion concerning what is original and what has been restored.

If limited to small areas of a work of art, the decision to restore may be legitimate, usually in a completely different medium. But if 70

percent of a painting is repainted, with use of the same materials the artist used and with inking in the craquelure, then one could judge the work to be inauthentic and not original. Or, at the very least, an observer would have to be able to visually distinguish between what was original and what was repainted if the work were not to be considered a forgery.

There are additional reasons for confusion here, as none of Rogier van der Weyden's paintings are dated (Campbell 2004), he employed many assistants in his studio, and several versions of the same authentic work exist, along with the fake restored *Madonna and Child* by Jef van der Veken. Because of the admired completeness of the aesthetic unity of the work, even if most of this is entirely imaginary, there would be no desire to remove van der Veken's repainting and retouching: the image is now a hybrid of van der Veken and van der Weyden, and that is how it will be appreciated into the future, from its authentic state from 1940 onward. There is no point, apart from an overarching desire for scientific purism, to attempt to return the picture to a former state, even if van der Veken has achieved fame here as essentially working as a forger.

### Visual Discernibility and Restoration Reconsidered

Part of the legitimacy that Cesare Brandi envisioned was the use of visually discernible repainting and retouching methodologies applied to works of art to eradicate the kind of restoration exemplified here by Jef van der Veken's work. This approach resulted in the development, from 1945 to 1950, of a variety of inpainting philosophies. The least integrative method was that of *neutro*, which involved retouching using watercolor only with sepia, to which a little ocher, burnt sienna, and natural umber would be added (Rothe 2003:16). This

uniform approach gave way to the *tratteggio* (*rigatino*) retouching technique, developed at the Istituto Centrale del Restauro in Rome, which has already been referred to above.

*Tratteggio* and associated techniques result in an infill consisting of a series of fine lines of paint, chosen to match the original in terms of color and intensity. From a distance, they help integrate the appearance of the whole image while respecting the authenticity of the original, with which it cannot be confused on close inspection (Grenda 2010:4).

This technique was used to complete missing areas of the Giotto di Bondone (1266–1337) frescoes in Padua, which seemed very appropriate to this observer. A Florentine variant, developed by Casazza and Baldini (Casazza 2007), is known as *selezione cromatica* (*selezione del colore*). In *selezione*, the painted lines may not be vertical but are filled in according to the image composition. Chromatic selection means finding characteristic features of the desired hue and recomposing it by creating the impression of a color that reintegrates the image. Another Florentine derivative of *tratteggio* is *astrazione cromatica* (Casazza 2007), consisting of primary colors and black, used in an interweaving style, and employed in the restoration of some paintings damaged in the Florence flood in 1966. These include *The Crucifixion* (circa 1268–1271) by Cimabue (circa 1240–1304) in the Basilica di Santa Croce, Florence, which had lost about 60 percent of the painted surface and whose restoration took 10 years to complete (Baldini and Casazza 1983; Viladesau 2005), illustrated in Figure 1.2.

The Byzantine influence on the faces here is more apparent in the close-up of Figure 1.3. In restoring the image, the conservators reattached the lost paint flakes but did not restore

many of the missing areas of the surface in a visually indistinguishable manner, which would have been the technique employed in the United States or the United Kingdom for areas of design that could be readily extrapolated. Some of the fills are toned to match the painted detail, but no inpainting has been carried out over some of the filled losses, this approach abiding by the Brandian conception of the retention of the authentic image of the damaged original without making it appear aesthetically unified.

The story of the historical damage to the Cimabue Crucifix marks a departure from the general consensus that if 60 percent of a painting is reconstituted or restored, one might regard it as a fake or a pastiche. The honest *intention not to deceive* is the principle of this action that can be considered authentic here, not a summation of percentages, whereas a similar amount of a genuine painted surface restored by van der Veken represents an *intention to deceive*. The philosophical question that remains to be answered is: If we are ignorant of the intentions of the restorer, does that have an impact on the aesthetic appreciation of the artwork when the painting is viewed? We will return to that question in a later chapter.

As mentioned above, Brandi (1977) proposed two axioms that any attempt at restoration should abide by. But first he defines his own view of what is understood by restoration: “Restoration is the methodological moment in which the work of art is appreciated in its material form and in its historical and aesthetic duality, with a view to transmitting it to the future.”

This is an interesting definition, because it speaks of the work of art in terms of the conscious awareness that one may have of it, at the moment when restoration is about to take

## Intertextuality

place. There is no prohibition here on using particular approaches to carrying out the restoration. The practical and ethical problems in deciphering the restoration histories of ancient stone sculpture and the conflicting demands for aesthetic understanding and authentic fragmentation of falsifying reconstructions will be highlighted in chapter 5.

In discussing the impact of Brandi's thought, Sebastiano Barassi (2007) extracts four principal axioms of significance: (1) the unacceptability of creative conservation; (2) the imperative need to preserve the patina; (3) the complete reversibility of any conservation work; and (4) that conservation of a work of art has to consider the individual characteristics of that work, with a decision based not just on general principles but on the individual needs of the work at hand. Of these tenets, the first two are directly related to the retention of the authentic original. A variety of arguments can be advanced here concerning the retention of patina, as representative of historical events that have occurred to the work over time, or the removal of patina, as revealing more closely the original intentions and work of the artist.

Part of a modern trend is that intellectuals of all persuasions are prepared to embark on a sustained attack on present-day conservators, particularly art restorers, who are apparently lacking in any philosophical grounding whatever, the clay feet of the 1960s object–subject dichotomy having been swept away from them in the tempting waters of postmodernist anxiety concerning the independent nature of the artifact itself, whether mediated or not, which is part of the interaction with a human agency, a semiotic process much emphasized by many commentators. Some discussion of these views will be given in chapters 8 and 9.

## Intertextuality

An argument could be made that authenticity is not an independent unitary creation but an activity that relies on *intertextuality*—that is, on references to an entire complex web of past and present discourses within a particular cultural setting. This is a process that Bakhtin, writing in 1934, called heteroglossia. Heteroglossia works against an establishment view of culture by calling into question some of the precepts on which an interpretation is based, which may not be immediately apparent without careful analysis (Holquist 1981). Bakhtin thought that language was pervaded with different intentions and meanings and that authoritative discourse creates a series of differentiated texts or meanings that must be assimilated by the observer. Bakhtin was largely concerned with the ways in which readers interact with texts, but the concept could also be of interest in the field of the visual arts and conservation.

Intertextuality and intertextual relationships can involve a number of different approaches to the subject–object interaction (Agger 1999; Fairclough 2003). Intertextuality may depend on the intention of the artist and the significance attached to a conservation decision to reference that intention in how the work is treated. For example, a fifteenth-century Renaissance triptych may be framed in a fine nineteenth-century gilded ornate frame, which may be subsequently replaced with a plainer version to simulate a sixteenth-century appearance. The meaning of the work in its various frames is influenced by the intertextuality of the restorative events that have altered our perception of the work as either conforming to a view seen as authentic by the Victorians or a view from the twenty-first century that now regrets having taken the decision to remove the nineteenth-century



**Figure 1.4.** Eighteenth-century portrait of Pope Innocent XII before and after restoration. Artist unknown. The restoration was commissioned by Din I-Art and sponsored by PricewaterhouseCoopers. (Image courtesy of Pierre Bugeja and PreArti, Malta)

frame in the 1970s. Dodd (personal communication 2016) comments:

With regard to the Victorian frame mentioned above, intertextuality would include the visual reference to other frames of valued works of art at the time, or connected to museum curatorial practices, or to the effect of descriptions of high value in literature or poetry being transferred to the instance in which a decision to use a more ornate frame was made. So here, authenticity is really a form of cultural relevance at a given moment of restoration. There are two possible centres of discourse—one is diachronic, one is synchronic.

There are different ways of thinking about intertextuality. The painting by David Bailly shown in Figure 2.16, *Vanitas Still Life with a Portrait of a Young Painter*, can be seen as an example of *obligatory intertextuality*, since

knowledge of what the artist intended, independent of the observer's own interpretation of the work, could be considered essential for a proper understanding of the painting and what was intended to be conveyed to the viewer by the artist.

Most pertinent for art conservation is *optional intertextuality*: The way in which a work of art is restored may shift understanding of the work and how it is perceived by an observer. For example, an early Renaissance painting might display angels with black wings on which a whole series of arguments and observations are based, but after restoration, it might become known that there were no black-winged angels: they were blue-winged angels that had turned black due to *inherent vice*. Consequently, since it would be unethical to restore the blue wings by repainting them, the textual reading of the work becomes dependent on the restoration intervention or the revision of what the perceptible properties of the work are.

## Intertextuality



**Figure 1.5.** Victorious Youth, Greek bronze retrieved from the Italian coast of the Adriatic Sea near Fano, 300–100 B.C.E. Bronze with inlaid copper; 151.5 cm height x 70 cm width x 27.9 cm depth. The bronze has been cleaned not to its original yellow-bronze color but to a corroded form that closely matches the “original surface” of the bronze, now preserved in a disparate corrosion crust of variegated color and composition. In this case, we have no desire to see the bronze as it was originally viewed in its golden yellow color. The work is contested: reclaimed by the citizens of Fano as a stolen and looted work of art, a legality now endorsed by the Italian state. (Image courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu)

Works may also be appreciated for what they signify to the observer in terms of an admired aesthetic experience. An example is Gentile Bellini’s circa-1496 painting *Procession of Fragments of the True Cross*, shown in Figure 7.2. The painting commemorates an event that took place 50 years earlier, on April 25, 1444, when a Brescian tradesman knelt before the relic and prayed that his dying son might recover. When he returned to Brescia, his son had indeed recovered (De Vecchi and Elda 1999). The subtext is the spiritual power conferred upon the supplicant and reflected self-referentially on Venice by the gift, purchase, or theft of the fragment of the true cross, whose origins were to be found

in Constantinople and which were more valuable than gold or precious stones could possibly be. The True Cross, in particular, was imbued with intangible spiritual strength and agency. Knowing nothing of these (sub)texts prevents the observer from the realization of an experiential veracity: an *optional intertextuality* of interpretation.

*Accidental intertextuality* might elaborate a cultural connection in a work of art with a personal experience that might be independent of the intention of the artist. For example, a painting by Mondrian might remind me of my mother’s square tablecloth with red and yellow borders around white rectangles with black lines, but this experience of

mine concerning Mondrian's work is completely unintended by the artist, who knows nothing of this particular tablecloth, which predates his work.

The writings of Kristeva (1980) could be adapted to reference the visual arts here, since she is principally concerned with literary semiotics. Kristeva's concept of horizontal and vertical axes of discourse in relation to intertextuality could be used to state that the horizontal status of the discourse in terms of the visual arts is its simultaneous orientation toward the artistic subject and the observer. The vertical status would then be seen as the simultaneous orientation of the discourse between the art historical description of the image and its current (re)situation in the contemporary context.

### Contemporary Developments

Postmodernism may seem particularly daunting to conservation theory, as it tends to refute the concept of a grand narrative, and aspects of these modern and contemporary issues have been thoughtfully reviewed by Salvador Muñoz-Viñas (2011), some of whose writings will be referred to in later chapters.

The old certainties of the Venice Charter of 1964 have been buffeted by the philosophical tide of the present. Aspects of this charter will be discussed in detail in chapter 3, the principal criticism being the scientific empiricism assumed within its boundaries. Deconstruction, promoted by Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), views on narratives by Roland Barthes (1915–1980), the anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), the strictures against some kinds of anthropology by E. E. Evans Pritchard (1902–1973)—all affect views of the authentic or the authenticities of the present. During his lifetime, Derrida (Bennington 1987) created a series

of more than 40 volumes, whose intentions are to unravel the metaphysical presence behind apparently simple readings of texts or documents to understand the basis on which they have been previously assumed to rest; his work has been received very critically by Anglo-American philosophers in general.

Barthes (Culler 1983) analyzed the structure of language, probing the narrative authenticity of texts to expose underlying assumptions and culturally related bias that influences the way in which a text is read or understood. For example, the language of ethnography as it relates to ethnographic arts is an area widely seen as problematic because of the cultural bias of Western writers and conservators in describing a work. Another example is that of an Australian conservation description of a rock art site. It is discrete as a site in itself, and the anthropologist described it as a rockshelter containing images of the Wandjina and some kangaroos, turtles, and snakes (MacLeod 2000:32). An elder, David Mowaljarlai, told how:

The site was sacred to the initiation rites of the indigenous population, and demonstrated how the cave site was a focal spot in a whole range of hills, part of a massive land form that reached back into the sea and the surrounding islands. Having stated that the site involved initiation rites he took a sharp stone and cut open several wounds in his hand and covered them with earth from the site [MacLeod 2000:33].

The native interpretation of the site would not have been evident to the Western mindset. Levi-Strauss (Doran 2013) is an important figure in anthropological studies, being the first to really question if there is any real



## Authenticity, Overpainting, and Overcleaning

difference between the “savage” mind and the “cultured” mind. This structuralist approach to the nature of society and kinship was of fundamental importance to the way in which native societies, kinship, and culture were understood. Evans-Pritchard (1965) thought that anthropology was not a natural science but, because of its interpretative nature, should be classed with the humanities. This was because of the translational and culturally influenced activity of anthropology in its interpretation of primitive societies, which Evans-Pritchard saw as fundamentally flawed as an objective phenomena, a view that has become highly influential over the past 50 years. For example, in terms of ethnographic arts, the voices of indigenous peoples themselves are now recognized as increasingly relevant to any discussion of what happens to such artworks. The incorporation of different cultural stances in many ethnographical displays is now a trope of the modern museum and its aims and audiences.

More recently, the increasing prominence given to the object itself, in terms of its own interrelationship with culture, has resulted in a reassessment of the importance of materiality and how materiality may itself shape cultural interactions (Paine 2013).

### Authenticity, Overpainting, and Overcleaning

In general, if a painting has been overpainted, the overpaint might be completely removed or kept in situ, depending on how observers want to interpret the work and value it aesthetically (Foister 1991; Wieseman 2010). An example is *Portrait of Alexander Mornauer* in the National Gallery of Art, London (NG6532), painted by a unknown artist with the appellation Master of the Mornauer Portrait, circa 1460–1488, and overpainted to appear,

perhaps, as a work of Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543). *Portrait of Alexander Mornauer* had been overpainted with a smaller hat and a blue background entirely invented in the nineteenth century to conform to the taste of the time. The decision of whether to remove or leave the overpaint is not necessarily based on the authentic condition of the original work but on a complex of factors that have to be evaluated by a group of multidisciplinary experts before a consensus can be reached.

On the other hand, the patina of a Roman bronze, created by centuries of slow corrosion in the soil to form a complex green-colored corrosion crust, does not represent the authentic aims of the original artist, who valued a bronze with a golden-colored surface, not an encrusted and corroded green object that no longer even looks metallic. There has been a consensus that ancient bronzes should not look new and shiny; they should not be cleaned beyond a certain point, because we have come to value the patina as representative of a historical process in itself and as an aesthetic entity, as the Greek bronze in Figure 1.5 illustrates, a desirable product of interaction between the corrosive environment in which the bronze was buried, the historical veracity that it represents, and the alloying constituents of the bronze itself (Scott 2002).

The obscuring patina, in a manner of speaking, has become part of the object from an aesthetic perspective. Retention of patina is also useful for the scientific evaluation of condition, as it provides evidence for the authenticity of ancient bronzes; without this patina, a great deal of evidence of age has been removed. There are complexities here that can be explored further. For example, Scott (2011) in a detailed study of Chinese bronze mirrors,

## Authenticity and Conservation: An Introduction

provides several categories of potentially varying authenticities concerning these mirrors, which span 4,000 years of production.

There can be a distinction between what the general public is presented with as an authentic work and what an informed conservator can see as being only partially authentic when utilizing infrared or ultraviolet radiation. These techniques may reveal areas filled by recent attempts at compensation for loss, or old overpaint or retouching. Different approaches to this problem have been invoked by conservators, depending on the artwork concerned. Some employ *tratteggio* for frescoes. Others complete design elements in ways that do not always respect the ability to distinguish the original by visual means. There may still be doubts about the extent to which aesthetic reintegration of a work has succeeded or has tried too hard to recreate the appearance of the original. Figure 1.4 is a typical example of a restored work of the eighteenth century that most observers would regard as conforming to expectations of what a restored work of art should look like.

David Phillips (1997) has written a salient text here on the connotations of the exhibition of authenticity. He points out that there are three different sets of information which are encompassed in this matter, the first is the evolution of novel perceptual ways of looking at works of art, such as the development of perspective, or of cubism, secondly, there is the history of the ways in which time and later practices of re-presentation have transformed perceptual anomaly and meaning with it, and thirdly, variation in current approaches to conservation. Phillips (1997:190) writes that the first set of developments is acknowledged in museum presentations, the second is only rarely presented in detail, and the third is almost always passed over in silence within the

museum context. Phillips (1997:191) states, "It is not obvious in the permanent displays of each museum, in which house style in conservation is presented as the model of authenticity, but it is very much on show, though never acknowledged in major loan exhibitions. This uneven pattern of emphasis and reticence is, of course, sustained in the name of authenticity."

In the restoration of archaeological materials, a stricter interpretation of what authentic remains actually are, compared with restoration, means that it is highly problematic to create an entire *compensation for loss* that is not immediately visually apparent. In the case of paintings on panel, the restoration aims to create a visually indistinguishable holistic union of compensated and original parts. Approaches to this question may rest not only on the material nature of the object; they may also be culturally influenced.

### Contemporary Authenticity

Cesare Brandi was opposed to the concept of replication in art or conservation, and this entails severe limitations for the applicability of his theories to modern art. Replication denies part of the historical reality of a work of art, which Brandi (1977) sees as being an essential part of its nature. He maintained that replication is a forgery and emphasizes the difference between an original object and a modern replica, "which cannot replace the original in its full phenomenology, and cannot but result in a historical and aesthetic falsification."

In terms of what has happened in modern art, the replacement of the original by a copy, however certified, is quite a common occurrence, and one that brings with it a number of concerns regarding authenticity and what actions conservators can legitimately take in creating an indistinguishable copy to be placed on display. Illuminating philosophical

## Contemporary Authenticity

explorations of the problems of indistinguishability are provided by Arthur Danto (1981:115–164), Sándor Radnóti (1999:103–154), and more generally Nelson Goodman (1968) and Martin Heidegger (1935–1937).

In some cases, these replicas themselves have to be replicated as they decay and disintegrate, especially if the concept of decay is part of the manifestation of the artwork itself, as with some works of Dieter Roth (1930–1998), who used chocolate, sugar, yogurt, mince, spices, and other foodstuffs to create his art. They slowly transformed as they become infested with beetles and microorganisms, a process of degradation deliberately accelerated by Roth (Skowranek 2007). As the artist was very interested in the structural morphology of decay and the natural mutation of things, this process of degradation is an essential component of the authenticity of the work of art itself. As far as the preservation of this kind of art is concerned, there are a number of possible options: (1) create a replica for exhibition purposes; (2) create a replica as a replacement (in the case of lost or damaged elements, this could be compared with inpainting [Skowranek 2007:3]; (3) create a replica as a duplicate that can be shown contiguously with the original, which may now be unrecognizable; (4) create a replica of the original in terms of materials and aging conditions as a starting point for a new aging process; (5) preserve the memory of the work by documentation using a digital recording from installation to complete decay (this would be a very long recording); and (6) allow the artwork to decay until it is thrown out with the garbage. These are just some of the authenticity questions that, intriguingly, now haunt the conservation of modern artists' materials and work, whether ephemeral, conceptual, installation-based, self-decaying, slowly aging, or never intended to degrade.

Modern artistic production encompasses works with inadvertent *inherent vice*, such as the sculptures of Naum Gabo (1890–1977). He believed, erroneously, that when some of his works disintegrated, it was the fault of the collector, which it clearly was not. There are auto-destructive works of art and art that is deliberately self-destructive, such as several works by Jean Tinguely (Tinguely 1988). Some artists are dismayed by *inherent vice*, and some are not worried by alteration and decay, while other artists do not wish their decaying works to be restored and others do. Many artists never intended for *inherent vice* to destroy their art, while some do not care. Some artists have thought about the problems of decay and have deliberately sought out high-grade art conservation materials; some artists would like to do so but cannot afford the materials suitable for longevity. Some artists never realized that the supposedly stable modern materials they were using were in fact unstable. Most problematically, some artists deprecate conservators' attempts at documentation of their original work and state that no archived documentation of their work is permissible.

In many cases, the wishes of the artist must or should be adhered to by the conservator, and as many modern artists are still living, there are a huge range of authenticity problems related to the conservation, restoration, duplication, reenactment, recording, emulation, preservation, and destruction of modern art (Darby 2012; Degen 2012; Downey 2012; Szmelter 2012; Vere 2012).

But what can be done with objects whose true condition renders them undisplayable or whose *inherent vice* results in their unpreventable disintegration? Brajer (2010) advocates “authenticity of condition” over any other form of authenticity, whether it be authenticity

## Authenticity and Conservation: An Introduction

of materials and substance, form and design, use and function, tradition and technique, location and setting, or spirit and feeling.

This might not always be possible with modern art objects, which might have to exist as surrogates of themselves into the future. This could be a problem with ethnographic artifacts, where the cultural requirements of the tribe elevate the spiritual requirements of the object over its present condition, resulting in the artifact being re-coated with unguents, resanctified, and then reburied (Clavir 1994, 1998, 2002; Moffett et al. 2002). The authenticity of condition moves forward in time as the object moves forward, representing a different condition for the object concerned, but it may still be a useful concept. Utilization of the authenticity of a condition of a work of art has been of help to highly skilled art forgers. For example, lacking any original lapis lazuli, Eric Hebborn (1991, 1997) produced his own versions of eighteenth-century oil paintings, using correct pigments, such as burnt sienna and raw umber taken from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century paint jars, applied to eighteenth-century canvases pared down to the lead white ground layer. Hebborn would then deliberately damage a canvas in the one area where the lapis lazuli was essential. He would take the damaged canvas to a professional restorer, who would reline and restretch the canvas, carrying out visually indistinguishable restoration for the damaged blue paint, now completed in Prussian blue in acrylic medium, before the restored picture was revarnished with dammar resin (Hebborn 1991, 1997).

When the painting came up for auction, art connoisseurs could see that the style and paint of the picture was correct for the presumed period of fabrication and that

the painting had recently been relined, restretched, and fully restored, all testaments to authenticity. The fact that on visual inspection of the reverse, the relining, framing, and tacking would disguise potential evidence of fakery was another boon for Hebborn's skilled creation.

In the eighteenth century, Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (1716–1799) recognized that the ostensibly authentic condition of a restoration was best faked by making it appear broken and fragmentary, and subsequently “repaired.” His Roman bas-relief of Nessus and Deianera in the Townley Collection is one example (Vaughan 1992:42, 1996). A large proportion of this bas-relief is eighteenth-century marble restoration work, which convincingly imitates an antique relief, making it appear to have been broken and skillfully reassembled. These are just two examples of the interaction between conservation, restoration, and fakery. The aura (Benjamin 1970) of legitimacy of a work by Hebborn can be enhanced if the viewer is made aware of the fact that the work is so potentially valuable that several hundred pounds have already been spent on its restoration, disguising its authentic condition by creating another to structurally obscure the fake painting, giving the work a semblance of a genuinely restored work before it reaches the auction house.

Despite the increasingly sophisticated use of scientific evaluations of authenticity, a considerable amount of work to integrate art historical and scientific connoisseurship remains to be done (Bucklow 2009). Technical art history (Bomford 1988; Hermens and Townsend 2009) strives toward this aim, but there are difficulties in the wider sphere of art conservation because the evidential bases of the two disciplines are quite different and may be in conflict with each other.

## Chapter 2

# The Cult of Authenticity

Concepts of Authenticity	Intention and Representation
Contexts and Practices	Authentication
The Platonic Ideal	Collecting and Exhibiting in History
Illusionism and Form	The Artist's Intention
Philosophers on Authenticity	Fakes and Forgeries

*We now add to the concepts of individuality and novelty, a further and probably more general notion: the aspect of historical authenticity. This means the assumption that, in a manner that is partly revealed and partly concealed . . . the original work of art contains its own history.*

—Sándor Radnóti, *The Fake: Forgery and Its Place in Art*

### Introduction

Authenticity remains one of the most desirable attributes in the twenty-first century, but it remains ever more elusive and evanescent. When we try to define authenticity, it slips from our grasp like an eel, falling back into the lake of our longings for a real life, a genuine picture, a faithful representation, not a reflection of reaching out for what cannot be

attained: the real, the genuine, the authentic. The *cult of authenticity*, as it is often called, is the result of this upsurge in dissatisfaction, frustration, and longing in the effort to acquire the authenticity a person may desire but often fails to find. As a result, we increasingly turn to experts—their labels, documents, and pronouncements—to assure us that what we are eating, thinking, or looking

at is authentic. Simultaneously, we express anxiety as to whether the thing or sensation is actually authentic or not. There may be a concern that a Max Ernst (1891–1976) painting bought for \$20 million is not by the artist at all but by a German forger; that authentic identities are not really that authentic; that our personal details, credit cards, and driver’s licenses have been copied or forged; that our Gucci handbags are actually mass-produced in a Chinese factory and our Maori relics made in Somerset by an English woodcarver.

The word *authenticity* is used in an astonishing variety of contexts, from discussions of the authenticity of one’s own self and culture (Heidegger 1935–1937; Sartre 1943; Vannini and Williams 2009) to considerations of authenticity in rock music (Moore 2002), folklore (Bendix 1997), early musical renderings (Kenyon 1988), linguistics (Coulmas 2008), African art (Allen and Charfi 2003), antiquity (Brilliant 2005; Lowenthal 1989; Tilley et al. 2000), anthropology (Filitz and Saris 2006), archival studies (MacNeil and Mak 2007), sociology (Peterson 2005), photography (Banks 2006), psychology (Huang 2001; Newman and Bloom 2012), philosophy (Baugh 1988; Dutton 1983a, 1983b; Radnóti 1999; Sagoff 1978a), and conservation (Brandt 1977; Brooks 2014; Muñoz-Viñas 2009, 2011; Philippon 1997 [1966]), to name only a few examples.

The questions in relation to authenticity relevant to our discussions here include: What does authenticity mean? Who defines what an authentic or inauthentic artwork is? How has the concept of what constitutes the authentic changed over the past few thousand years and how might this concept interact with conservation and restoration? Do different cultures have different views on what authenticity is, and if so, how does this difference affect the notion of forgery or restoration?

Can the postmodernist approach to art entail a meaningful discussion of authenticity or is the concept irrelevant to conservation actions taken on behalf of these objects? How can the scientific nexus of authenticity be integrated into a wider approach to the subject? Are there degrees of authenticity or inauthenticity rather than an absolute? How can the notion of authenticity be applied to ethnographic arts, such as those from Africa, or to the intangible cultural heritage that conservators are more concerned with than ever before? What about restoration of art? Do alterations of substance affect the material authenticity, conceptual authenticity, or meaning of art objects?

This chapter includes diverse content that seeks to examine the connotations of the concept of authenticity and its applications to art objects. Many philosophers, including Emmanuel Kant and David Hume, are not included in the discussion. This is partly because of necessary space restrictions and partly because these writers are more directly concerned with art and aesthetics rather than with notions of authenticity. More recent philosophical writings related to authenticity and restoration are discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

The topics included in this chapter are intended to be foundational and of use in later chapters in this book, as well as avenues for future thought on the part of the reader.

No field of inquiry is currently safe from the intrusions of scholars who wish to apply the concept of authenticity to its context, content, aims, materials, and manifestations. It is noticeable how many of the papers and books cited above, representative of a tiny fraction of published literature, were produced post-2000. The reader is currently besieged with new works that explore authenticity and associated problems in every imaginable realm.

There is also a renewed interest among scholars and the general public in the problems of the inauthentic, namely the world of fakes and forgeries. In this book, the topic primarily concerns the art world: works of art and their condition, restoration, replication, emulation, appropriation, and falsification, all of which may be implicated in or enhanced by the forgery of the works themselves. The postmodern period ushered in a new hermeneutics regarding the evaluation, reverence, or dismissal of replicas and copies, which has impacted the sheer number of books devoted to the topic.

The great majority of the papers and books mentioned above take it for granted that there is general agreement as to the meaning of the word *authenticity* and that no further discussion of the concept is necessary before delving into a detailed exposition.

There are exceptions to this general observation, however, including how notions of authenticity affect the fields of literature, philosophy, and art restoration. For those concerned with literature, the concept has to be manipulated and examined rather carefully from many different perspectives because of the mediated nature of the interpretation of texts. For the philosopher, disentangling the concept in its various fields of operation involves extensive hermeneutical debates, especially discussions of the supposed differences between a perfect fake and an original work of art, the problem of indiscernibles. For art restoration, the way in which authenticity is defined, or its operational parameters, has direct implications for the conservation and restoration of historic monuments, ancient works of art, and the places or landscapes of significance associated with them.

Art historians are much concerned with the topic as it relates to spoliation, reuse, and

whether an artwork is actually by the artist it is attributed to or is a copy, a pastiche, or a fake. Although these fields rarely talk to each other, all have been instrumental in refining how perceptions of what is and what is not authentic are negotiated, and whether authenticity is a definable concept or subject to continuous culturally related revisions that undermine the supposedly objective nature of our study.

Inquiries related to authenticity go back to ancient Greece, with the works of Plato (423–348 B.C.E.) and Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.), and continue through the major philosophers to the writings of J. J. Rousseau (1712–1778), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Karl Marx (1818–1883), Denis Dutton (1944–2010), Nelson Goodman (1906–1998), Arthur C. Danto (1924–2013), Mark Sagoff, Sándor Radnóti, and others too numerous to list here.

### Critics of the Authentic Past

Many scholars have voiced criticisms regarding the concept of authenticity as it relates to cultural heritage and art preservation. One of the most vocal and effective has been David Lowenthal, whose work has sought to deconstruct the concept of authenticity as applied to cultural heritage. Lowenthal's work spans several decades, and he has written eloquently of the problem "What do we mean by authenticity?" Under the category *faithfulness to original form and substance*, Lowenthal (1992:82) includes the material authenticity of original artifacts, noting that all art decays or disintegrates, losing the identity that once made it seem authentic. "The authentic worth of unrestored objects divested of recognizable form," writes Lowenthal (1992:82), "is solely academic; aesthetic defence of time's erosions is a quixotic passion for pentimenti and limbless torsos."

## The Cult of Authenticity

From the perspective of 2016, it could be pointed out that some curators have embraced the mystique of broken fragments of ancient art as worthy of display, celebrating the authentic purity of the fragment in itself. Lowenthal, however, is right to raise the question of the aesthetic value of unrestored fragments, a subject that particularly affects the conservation of ancient marble sculptures, which have often been extensively damaged, restored, de-restored, and reresetored in different periods of history, sometimes changing the identity of the sculpture in the process, which will be discussed further in chapter 5.

Lowenthal's second category is *faithfulness to context*. The question is: Which context is authentic? The artist's personal and cultural milieu? The locale that inspired a work's themes or forms? Items and icons characteristic of an era? Perhaps all of these are important, but Lowenthal sees each context as potentially including or excluding the other. The conservation evaluation of the relative value assigned to each context is today, one could argue, less rigid than when Lowenthal was writing in 1992, which is now more than 20 years ago. Nonetheless, there are valid concerns regarding contexts that frame the authentic nature of different artworks.

Paul Philippot (1997 [1966]) wrote, "The big failure of archaeological conservation was that it could not re-establish the continuity of lived history." The recognition of the historical progress of time as an essential component of the authentic story of many ancient works of art would be acknowledged by most conservation decisions taken today. What might seem to be an authentic work of art in one context could easily become an inauthentic work of art in another, but Lowenthal is wrong to imply that considerations of these questions do not form part of the conservation dialogue. Lowenthal (1995) writes:

In art as in architecture, ruinations of time and misfortune were routinely repaired. . . . Only in the late eighteenth century did wholeness succumb to the contrary cult of fragments and ruins. . . . To be authentic, an object, a structure, or a landscape must be truncated or fragmented. In contrast, nineteenth-century conservators "restored" venerable structures and traditions to what they ought ideally to have been. Authenticity meant replacing defective original remnants with modern realizations of the spirit of antiquity. Anti-scrape advocates altered the principles of restorers more than the practices; most who claimed to respect original works were, consciously or not, beautifying, antiquating, or modernizing them. Not until the mid-twentieth century, in most of the arts, did improving the past give way to archeological exactitude, a scholarly purism that deplored tampering with what was original. Honest authenticity now came to mean intervening as little as possible and making manifest every unavoidable alteration, even to the sacrifice of visual integrity.

The lessons of each successive conservation policy may well be those learned in future years by generations to come, but at least there is now some historical perspective on decisions made in the past and on how these decisions were reached. These debates help frame the increasingly sophisticated discussions that works of art engender in the twenty-first century, particularly regarding the problems of authenticity of ethnographic and postmodern art.

Lowenthal's third category is *faithfulness to aims*, which he thinks is as wayward as contexts: Aesthetic intention may grant art a



deathless status unaffected by context, decay, or changing taste and cumulative experience, (Lowenthal 1992:83, 1998). By placing greater emphasis on the artist's intent, other approaches to authenticity are denied. The aims of artists, patrons, and rulers may be negated in the approach taken to what is considered authentic, and Lowenthal cites the artwork of Piero Manzoni (1933–1963), whose white linen squares were supposed to be periodically washed or overpainted to retain their pristine whiteness. However, museums and collectors ignored the artists' wishes and value the unrestored yellowed linen.

What is undocumented in past restoration treatments may remain unknown today, and for that reason modern-day conservation theory puts great stress on the value and preservation of documentation of current states of existence. Not only must the artwork itself be preserved, but its accompanying documentation must be preserved with it, and the medium on which the documentation exists must be preserved as a corollary. A further category of faithfulness could be added to Lowenthal's insightful list: *faithfully made by the original artist or producer*. Those artworks made by the artist himself or herself may be thought of as intrinsically authentic. Problems arise with artworks that have to be replicated by conservators, from originals that have decayed or suffered from inherent vice, to create a displayed work. Objects produced in series derived from an original form may not be faithfully made by the artist but made by assistants or later craftsmen using models made by the artist. A deeper appreciation of the authenticity of the aims of the artist could be provided and made visible in such cases, but this is seldom on display; debates concerning these matters, as well as more complex and nuanced issues regarding authenticity, are generally

not in the public domain in terms of museum exhibitions.

An example used by Muñoz-Viñas (2009) serves as a reminder of the sacred aims of much early Italian Renaissance art. How happy would curators in a national gallery of art be if an Italian nun knelt in front of a heavily restored fifteenth-century panel painting of Saint Ursula, lit candles around it, and prayed for hours in front of it? The answer to this question is quite obvious: even in the Sistine Chapel, this would not now be allowed. The aim of the original artist has been subsumed in the modern appreciation of the restored artwork as an aesthetic entity. When it is realized that the entire face of Saint Ursula has been badly damaged and repainted by a restorer, there is an understanding that the faithfulness to the original aims of the artist have been superseded by the aesthetic desire for a completed image, unaffected by original context or decay.

In museum contexts, encouragement of minority ethnic groups has become a political objective. Venerations of works of art held in museums are now happening in the United States and the United Kingdom; this would not have been tolerated in the past (Paine 2013), although there are several exceptions. For example, the Newark Museum in New Jersey, founded in 1909, contains a large and significant collection of Tibetan Buddhist art for which an altar was set up for devotees in 1935 (Paine 2013).

The Sultanganj Buddha in the Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, acquired in 1867, stood for years at the top of a staircase with a simple label, but in 2006 it was removed to a shrine-like niche. Since then, local Buddhist groups venerate it in the gallery every year during the Buddhist festival of Wesak (Paine 2013).

### **Authentic Survival**

When viewed as products of commodification, art objects might be valued and might survive into the future, or they might become devalued and be discarded as just so much cultural detritus. If a work of art reaches the point of being of no value, it will be discarded. But objects frequently go through a series of transitions, from being admired works to becoming rubbish to becoming valued again as authentic vestiges of the past. Examples include Bakelite telephones, Victorian plaster casts, and rusting steam locomotives, all of which will be rescued in the twenty-first century from their early twentieth-century demise as being of little worth.

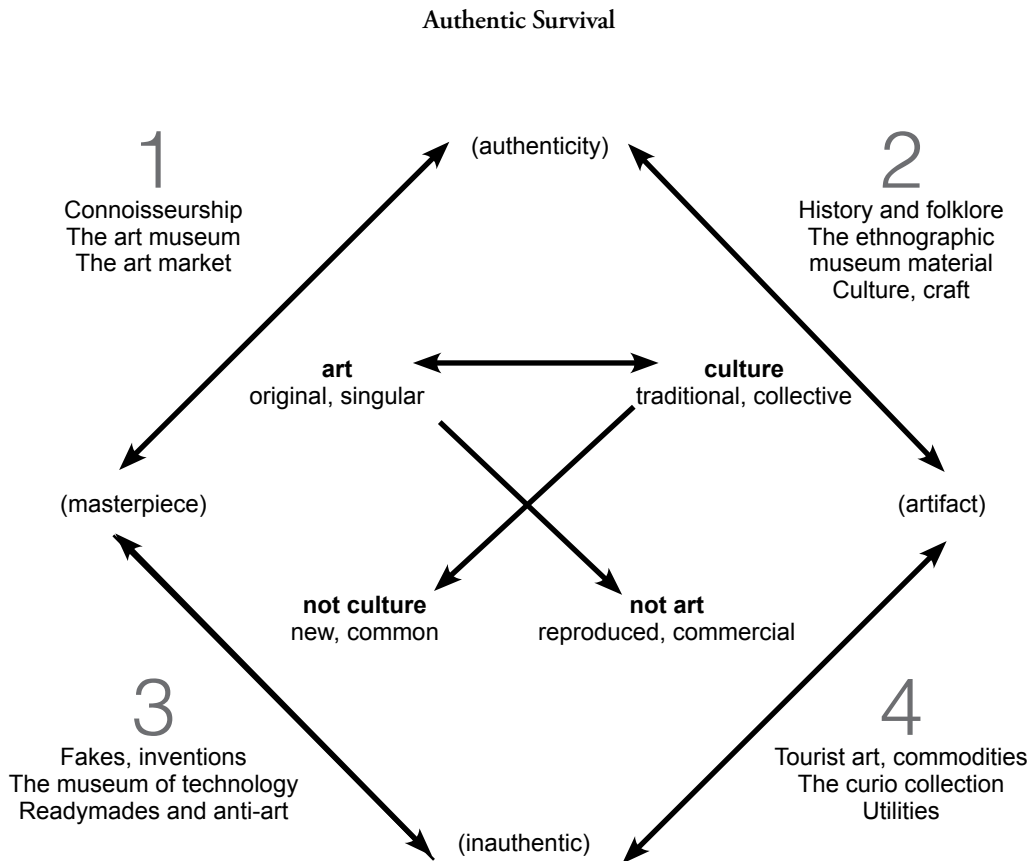
The view that art can be preserved into the future as authentic remnants of the present without any philosophical problems existing in such an endeavor is well critiqued by Arthur C. Danto (1999:10–11):

It is a distinctive trait of our culture that in addition to such inadvertent ruins and remnants that may survive as a matter of chance, we deliberately endeavour to conserve a certain portion of our culture, specifically in order that the future might see us much as we see ourselves. And this is because we try to see our own culture from a historical perspective as well—to see ourselves as we will be seen by future generations looking back. For structural reasons inherent in the asymmetry of history, the future is now as blank a leaf as a past culture would be that left nothing behind. Part of what is hidden from us is precisely what interests the future will have in us which, we may be quite sure, will differ from the interests we have in ourselves. Countless truths about the present will be available to the

future, which we have no way of knowing about now, however much we conserve. This does not mean that we should not conserve what is meaningful to us. At the very least, this serves the task of bringing to consciousness the question of what we are: a self-conscious image of our culture is a good thing to pursue, even if it turns out not to coincide with whatever image of us the future will form. The history of modernism in art since 1860 as it evolved, enfranchised folk art, Oceanic art, African art, children's art, the art of the insane, thrift-shop art, the family snapshot, trash, animals in tanks, etc. The history of Modernism is the history of such enfranchisement but take any moment of that history and it would be impossible to know what should have been preserved for the future.

In terms of the interaction of different modes of production of art objects, or the values attached to the enfranchisement of them, Clifford offers his version of a machine for making authenticity. In *A Machine for Making Authenticity*, Clifford (1988:224–226) argues that cultural materials move through authenticatory systems. He constructs four zones in opposition, creating horizontal and vertical axes.

Objects can be located in a specific zone, ambiguously in transit, or oscillating between zones. Objects can move from the bottom, inauthentic realms to the top, achieving an authentic aura, which is considered a positive movement. Tourist art, fakes, and readymades occupy the least authentic parts of his diagram. These may be reclassified as masterpieces or as genuine artifacts as they ascend toward realms considered more authentic. They may be reassessed by art connoisseurship and the



**Figure 2.1.** The art-culture system: a machine for making authenticity. (Diagram after Clifford 1988:224)

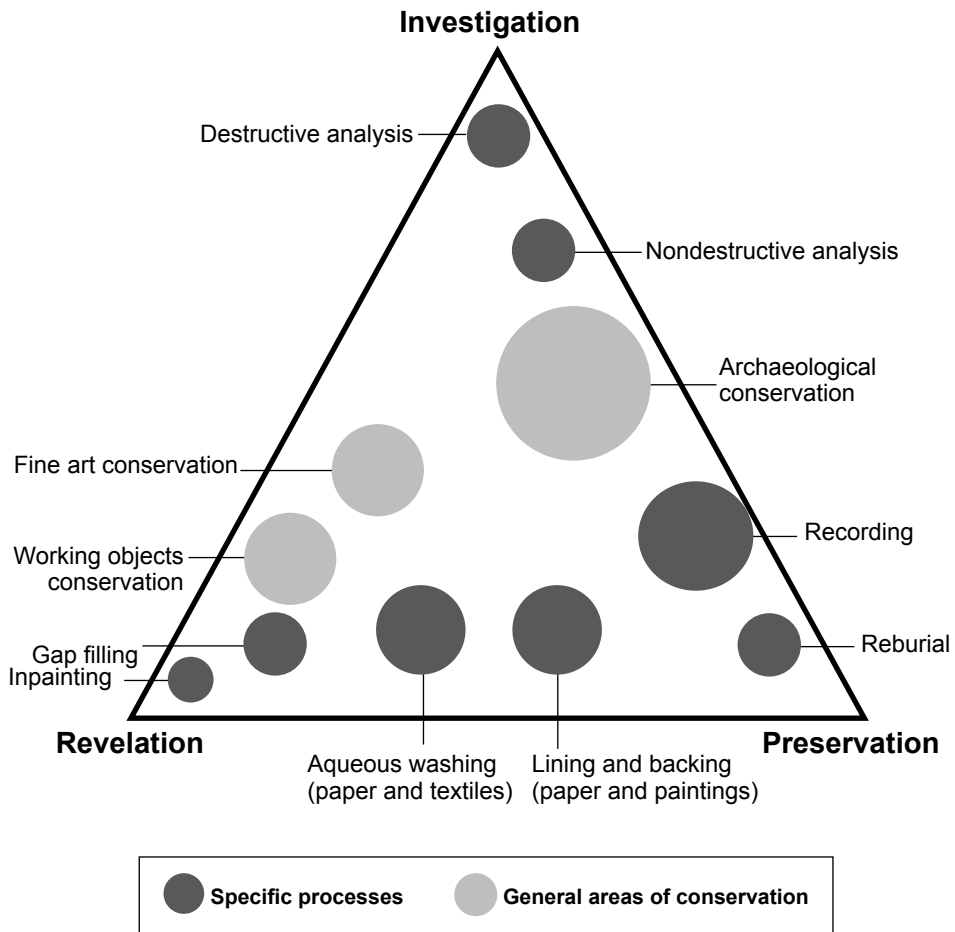
art museum as they make their way toward becoming authentic objects.

Clifford (1988:224) illustrates change in value with Kuskokwim Eskimo masks from the Museum of the American Indian shockingly sold to surrealists in the 1940s. The surrealists placed them on exhibition, shifting their value from objects of science to objects of art. This shows how objects can be reclassified. Clifford does admit that his view is procrustean and represents a historical view of a system in constant flux.

The actions taken to alter or investigate a work of art are subject to a host of possible different interpretations of what conservators or restorers actually do with them. The RIP triangle (Figure 2.2), proposed by Caple (2000), which represents a discussion

between revelation, investigation, and preservation, may have implications on what is and is not considered authentic. To authenticate a work of art, it may be necessary to subject it to destructive analysis; a small sample of the object might be taken to investigate either its chemical composition or its age. Revelation may be akin to restoration here, as the inpainting of a work of art may completely disguise any losses it has suffered. Preservation may imply that an attempt is being made to keep the object in its present state for as long as possible into the future, and one option for doing this, especially with an archaeological monument, is to rebury it. It has been found, located, excavated, examined, documented, and published, and now it will be reburied so that the same procedure can occur at some

## The Cult of Authenticity



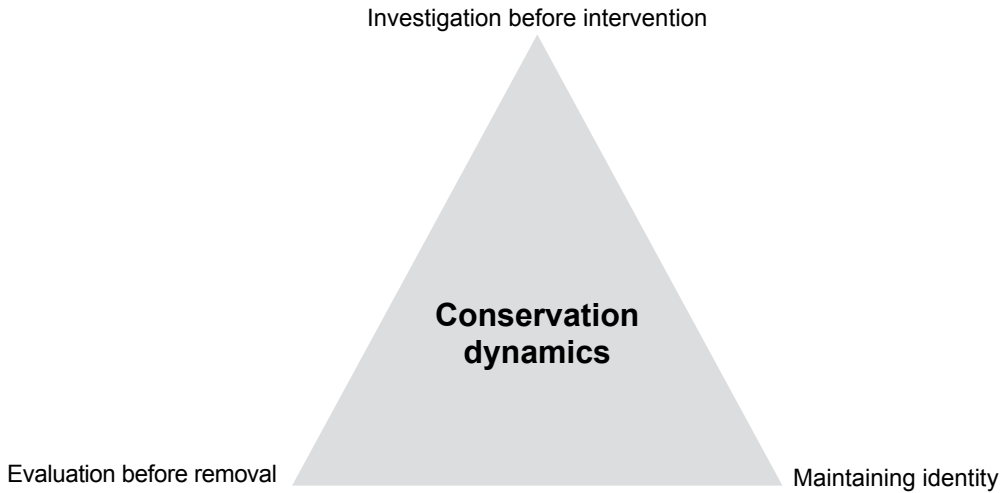
**Figure 2.2.** The RIP triangle of Christopher Caple, which maps out the activities of preservation, revelation, and investigation. We can envisage different types of activity in relation to these three components. For example, the inpainting of pictures, on the far left of the diagram, close to the revelation corner, concerns actions of restoration, while reburial, on the far right, involves potentially no alteration to the existing artifact or monument except the act of reburying it. (Diagram after Caple 2000)

indefinite time in the future. This action creates a time in the future when such an event could be contemplated.

A tripartite distinction between concepts important for the study of authenticity in relation to restoration is presented by a diagram of Kemp in Figure 2.3, which examines the nature of techniques executed over time. His node, *maintaining identity*, represents an attempt to

deal with the issues of safeguarding authenticity, here understood as an epistemologically relative term associated with the kinds of things this volume reviews. Kemp (2012) includes here authorship or intention, conjoined with the obligation to execute minimal physical intervention to aid reestablishment of structural and aesthetic legibility and meaning while allowing future treatment options for the artwork.

## Authentic Survival



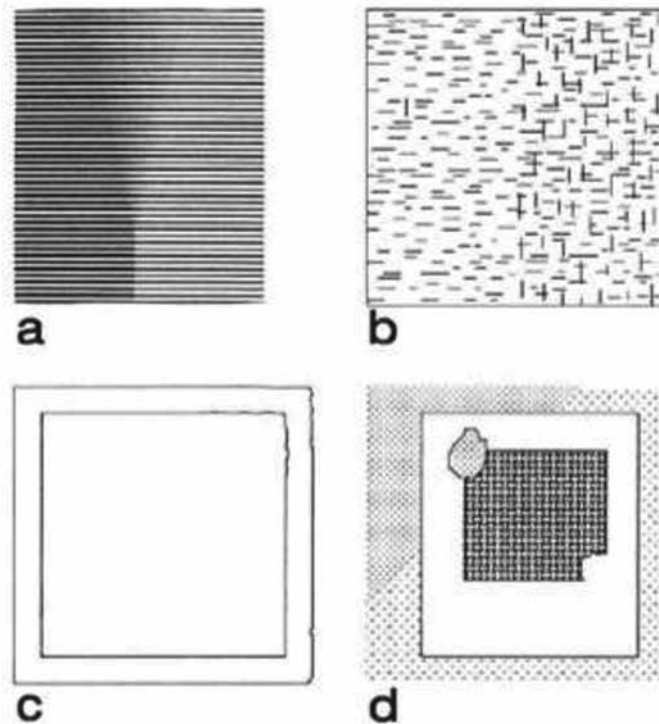
**Figure 2.3.** Conservation dynamics. Kemp uses the same kind of triangular concept to express the dynamics involved in executing conservation actions. Investigation before intervention: the injunction to perform research on, and documentation of, all relevant evidence before and after any intervention. Evaluation before removal: respect of the process of history in its cumulative record of activity reflected in the object and identified as denoting varying cultural beliefs, values, materials, and techniques executed over time. Maintaining identity: safeguarding authenticity, understood as an epistemologically relative term associated with the material in an object and its authorship or intention, conjoined with the obligation to execute minimal physical intervention to help reestablish structural and aesthetic legibility and meaning while allowing future treatment options. (Diagram after Kemp 2012)

A more ambitious effort to relate a series of values in relation to actions taken regarding a work of art is discussed by Michalski (1994), who takes issue with the conventional means by which works of art are restored, pointing out that many historical repaintings did not stop abruptly at the physical join between two parts, the contiguous nature of the original and the restored. Figure 2.4 illustrates part of this perceptual problem, while a gradation of tonal values disguises an abrupt transition between what is original and what is restored, enhancing the aesthetic appreciation of the integrated image.

Michalski (1994:figure 19.3) presented another way to examine the problems of the value of objects in relation to the characteristics of the art itself and its place in our perceptions of the real as a way of investigating

values related to works of art and our appreciation of them. The first plot deals with relative axes of emotional value, knowledge value, and perceptual value. The second plots impersonal narrative value, personal narrative value, and scientific value. The third shows a plot of remaining original value with re-created value. Michalski's second plot in particular is successful in illustrating the values attached to a personal X-ray image, as compared with the X-ray image of the *Mona Lisa*. The intersection of the plane of pure restoration with re-created value in terms of how the significance of copies and replicas can be assessed makes clear that this aspect of the physical nature of an object can be a matter of gradation from a clear case of a replicated work to one that has undergone an honest restoration.

## The Cult of Authenticity



**Figure 2.4.** Aspects of perceptual defects that should be viewed from 2 m away. (a) The wide transition on the top makes the contrast between left and right much less visible. At the sharp transition at the bottom, we see only the difference. We also see dark and light bands as part of the visual enhancement. (b) We see one disorientated element distinctly, but in sufficient number, such elements reduce to a pattern. (c) We see intermittent defects in edges and corners distinctly. In large numbers (top right), these defects reduce to surface texture. (d) Prägnanz, a term from Gestalt psychology: Defects are seen as superimposed entities, not absence of the original. We see a triangle of dots partly covered by a white square. We see that the center area was once perfectly square. The left blob is ambiguous. Is it a hole or a patch? (Diagram after Michalski 1994:figure 19.2)

### The Platonic Ideal

Plato, in the *Republic* (X:X:595–601) sets out to show that the products of an artist are themselves imitations of a life, which is an inferior kind of reality compared with the ideal forms that are so much a part of Platonic thought, and he shows that a single essential *form* corresponds to each class of particular things (Lee 1955). Plato uses the analogy of a mirror held up and turned around by the observer to create images of all the objects in one's view. On hearing the objection that

these are only reflections, not real things, Plato agrees and states that a craftsman creates objects exactly of this kind, mirroring reality but unable to grasp the essence of it. Plato sees art as a form of representation, and as such it cannot begin to portray the ideal forms it strives after. It is a long way removed from truth. According to Plato, art objects involve three fields of inquiry for the painter: *use*, *manufacture*, and *representation*. The artist can have no direct experience or incorporation into his art of how things are

## The Platonic Ideal

actually used, or of the techniques of manufacture of the things he paints, of which he is usually ignorant. The resulting representation is just that, an inferior version of things or an illusion created by the artist.

The Platonic concept of an ideal object or form has been an influential reference point in many discussions concerning art, fakes, and forgeries. It is particularly relevant to this book, which deals with representation in different contexts, from the “original” representation of the artist to the copied representation of the forger and the desire for legitimate replicas of famous works that invoke a Platonic sense of a real form, even if that form is distant in time, space, or both from the replicas that carry the message of the artwork with them (Malenka 2000).

For example, Plato’s philosophy regarding the idea of pure form has had an important influence on Renaissance and neoclassical preferences for marble sculptures to be pristine, smooth, white, and translucent. Many philosophers have set up a dichotomy between the activities of painting and sculpture, with the distinction being that the two activities are fundamentally different and that sculpture does not utilize color, because to do so would negate the search for the ideal abstracted form of the body, which can be revealed only by contemplation of a pristine marmoreal absolute. However, the majority of ancient Greek and Roman marble sculptures were painted with polychromatic finishes; this is true for both Archaic and classical sculpture and also for Cycladic figurines (Gill and Chippindale 1993). The existence of these colored sculptures was mostly denied, ignored, or forgotten in the past, although in the twenty-first century, the polychrome features are attracting attention (Brinkmann 2007). During the past 500

years or so, pieces were actively cleaned or scoured with abrasives and mineral acids to remove the ancient surface, damaging what polychromy was left.

Before the First World War, many German scholars were aware of this situation and debated the meanings of ancient polychromy (Brinkmann 2007), but this knowledge and subsequent restorations ignored the scholarly past to such an extent that many volumes on ancient sculpture by such luminaries as John Pope-Hennessy (1913–1994) and Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968) never mentioned pigmentation. Pope-Hennessy (1958) and Panofsky (1964) simply pretended to be blind to polychrome classical and Renaissance sculptures and discussed them at length without ever mentioning their painting, coloring, or polychromatic decoration. One can only suppose that they thought painted sculpture to be rather vulgar and lacking in taste.

In an attempt not to be completely overcome by ancient polychromy, some scholars resorted to a blue–red bichromatic option for Greek coloration, but scientific connoisseurship reveals that this art historical finesse does not represent the truly polychromatic authenticity of the past.

Conservators and restorers have been complicit in the loss of polychromy on some of these artworks. In their cleaning campaigns, they used hydrochloric or other strong mineral acids and extensive scrubbing or scouring of surfaces to get back to the assumed state of stark white purity, the ideal form. In the process, restorers falsified evidence of vestiges of colors of the past (Oddy 2004).

Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), whose most famous work dates from 1764 (Irwin 1972; Potts 1994), recognized

## The Cult of Authenticity



**Figure 2.5.** Above, left: Marble sculpture of Augustus Caesar as the Augustus of Prima Porta in the Vatican discovered in 1863. White marble, 204 cm high. (Photograph courtesy of Till Nierman) Above, center: A remarkable polychrome version published by Ludvig Fenger in 1886. Above, right: A more recent polychrome version cast by Brinkmann in 2007, in the Vatican Collection. Reproduced by permission of the Vatican Libraries.

that some Greek sculpture might have been painted, and several German scholars of the nineteenth century reported on examinations of ancient sculpture that showed traces of paint or gilding (Brinkmann 2007; Panzanelli et al. 2008). The scientific veracity of empirical observation of these sculptures, influenced by the logical positivism of that time, was largely forgotten after the First World War; certainly British and American scholars rarely mentioned the topic.

### Illusionism and Form

In keeping with this tradition, both Hegel (1770–1831) and Schopenhauer (1788–1860) opposed the illusionism of color in works of art such as sculpture, following on from thoughts of the Platonic Ideal. Instead they held firm to the idea of the purity of

the form of the sculptural entity, which color would only ruin or detract from. Hegel takes a particularly dim view of much non-European classic art and holds that defects in art of other cultures are not necessarily due to unskillful fabrication but due to a fundamental inability of these art forms to develop toward the ideal form, a thought then much in vogue among European writers. Hegel (1974–1975) states: “Defectiveness of form arises from defectiveness of content. So, for example, the Chinese, Indians, and Egyptians in their artistic shapes, their forms of deities, and their idols, never got beyond a formless phase, or one of a vicious and false definiteness of form, and were unable to attain genuine beauty.”

This excerpt shows that however great a mind Hegel was, he was unable to see past



## Illusionism and Form

the deeply embedded Eurocentric concept of what constituted authentic artistic creation. For Hegel, writing around 1820 (1974–1975:706–708), sculpture was one of the arts that “present the classical idea in the spiritually permeated human figure and its abstractly spatial form,” and “consequently it avails itself not of a painter’s colours but only of the spatial forms of the human body.” This concept—the view that the use of polychromy in sculptural works subverts the appreciation of the essential aspects of sculpture or the ideal of its formal existence—was to become very influential.

Schopenhauer, writing in 1851, in his *Parerga and Paralipomena* (2000:422–424), states that the primary function of art is to “bring us to a knowledge of the (Platonic) Idea. It is therefore essential to the work of art to give the form alone without matter. . . . Here is to be found the real reason why wax figures make no aesthetic impression and are, therefore, not works of art.”

Schopenhauer goes on to admit that wax sculptures are still to be preferred in terms of their actuality over a mere painting, but it is perplexing that Schopenhauer should have singled out wax sculpture in particular. Even in the nineteenth century, works of art made in colored wax were rather highly regarded. Examples are the originals of the many small dancers shaped in wax by Edgar Degas (1834–1917). They are correspondingly more authentic, one could argue, than the numerous bronze castings subsequently made by various foundries and successors from the wax originals long after the artist’s death, which sell for about \$40 million each. Here Degas saw wax as an interesting medium that could be pared down, added to, manipulated, colored, or reshaped as desired, as something distinct from a cast bronze, which

leaves the artist several degrees removed from the handling of his wax originals.

Theodore Reff (1971) highlights the innovative use of multiple media in Degas’s creation of his wax figurines, incorporating pigments, satin, dolls’ hair, and linen. A patinated bronze version can be only a simulacrum of the pigmented wax original. It cannot be aesthetically an equivalent instantiation of the original work, which is what Reff (1971) implies.

In fact, Degas thought that his wax figures would have no useful afterlife in the event of his death, but the very opposite has come to pass. The afterlife of the wax figures, which Degas saw as a means to represent and refine movement, has been reified in a static and unchangeable bronze cast that was never the artist’s intention.

Making bronze copies from Degas’s wax originals involves very careful application of molding material over the delicate wax sculptures. A plaster model of an original is made from a master matrix. Molds are then taken from this plaster intermodel to create wax models for lost-wax casting. The wax in these castings is melted out and bronze is poured in. Castings are then finished by hand and patinated. As can be seen from the details of this procedure, the artist cannot retain the tactile feel of the original wax models, especially as it is a multistage process to create the bronze replicas, which are several stages removed in the cycle of production from their wax origins.

Most of us would not be able to accept Schopenhauer’s views regarding art today; nor would we accept his insistence that sculpture cannot be seen as a work of art if it is trapped in a mirage of colored images, which could be viewed as inauthentic due to the desire to see sculpture as monochromatic and purely representative of an ideal

form. Schopenhauer (2000) took the view that common objects in still life seem transfigured and that paintings resulted in everything appearing

in a supernatural light . . . then we no longer look at things in the flux of time and in the connection of cause and effect. . . . On the contrary, we are snatched out of that eternal flux of all things and removed into a dead and silent eternity. In its individuality the thing itself was determined by time and by the [causal] conditions of the understanding; here we see this connection abolished and only the Platonic Idea is left [2000:424].

Aristotle (Richter 1989) did not employ the Platonic Ideal in his description of the relationship between art and nature, although he too uses a threefold separation in his discussion of art: *medium*, *mode*, and *object*. The medium is what the artwork is created out of. The mode, which is more applicable to dramatic written works, pertains to the field of human activity with which it is engaged, whether tragedy or comedy. The object is what is created by the representation. While art was still seen as a mimetic event, Aristotle views the disparate nature of the world as observable phenomena. Aristotle does not dispute the idea that imitation does not create admired copies of an original form, but he describes imitation as a creative process of the artist, who may use a particular selection, translation, or transformation of a work into a different medium to achieve an artistic creation. In that sense, although art is seen as an endeavor that is flawed by its mimetic nature, Aristotle allows for the production of a work of art to

be seen as a more authentic act than does Plato, although Plato may have had ambivalent notions as to whether things such as poetry were good for one or not.

### Authenticity in Sartre, Heidegger, Adorno, and Benjamin

There is not space in this volume to flesh out this short historical account without concentrating on just those authors who are particularly important for the subject matter of this book. For example, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) had strong views regarding actions of the authentic self and the consequences of bad faith, but while these views may pertain to the actions of the art forger himself, the awareness of *bad faith*, and the loss of an authentic mode of action as a human being, they do not necessarily have immediate application to the subject of authenticity in art per se. In terms of the intention of the artist, *bad faith* could be seen as a possible intention in its own right, one that is then legitimized by the fake itself; the fake is the authentic expression of the *bad faith* of the faker. The complexities of discerning the nature of an artist's intention will be discussed later.

The philosophy of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), on the other hand, has much to say about the subject (Heidegger 2008 [1935–1937]), and as a consequence his views concerning both the tangible, material reality of works of art; alterations of them through time; and the intangible associations of authenticity (which have become more important to consider in terms of ethnographic art, modern art, and contemporary art), have become influential. Those parts of his *The Origin of the Work of Art*, written around 1935, that are devoted to this subject are among the most understandable of his writings, which tend to be hermetic to the uninitiated. These

writings are especially germane to conservation and restoration of art because Heidegger views the art object as a *being in time*, as a historical entity, the conceptual and physical origins of the work being important in the continuing life of the object. However, equally important is the ongoing, dynamic life of the work, which is an essential part of its being within the sphere of art. For Heidegger (1935–1937), these alterations with time are evaluated as events that are not reversible. He writes: “World-withdrawal and world-decay can never be undone. The works are no longer the same as they once were.”

The issue of nonreversibility has relevance for the restoration of works of art, since many ethical codes pronounce that nothing that cannot be reversed may be done to alter a work of art; that reversibility is a tenet of ethically sustainable conservation; and that conservators should strive to create reversible solutions to any treatment they undertake. However, it began to be realized that there was, *sensu stricto*, no such thing as a fully reversible conservation treatment—that world-decay could never be undone. The emergence of the artwork that occurs as its creation, says Harbin (2008:65), summarizing Heidegger, represents only the beginning of a series of ongoing emergences, which will take place over the span of an artwork’s life. Heidegger distinguishes between “the object being” and the “work being” in the authenticity of art. The *object being* of a work of art refers to the properties and materials of the artwork itself. This term describes the physical existence of the art object. *Work being* refers to the ongoing development of authenticity as a historical event, a diachronic phenomenon, which cannot be interfered with without artificial consequences for the work of art. As Lloyd Jones (2010:xiv) writes, “In placing death at

the centre of the authentic self, Heidegger created, in Adorno’s words, a theodicy of death. For the inexorable consequence of this move is the negation of that self—the dialectic of being and non-being is dissolved, and death, the principal of non-being, reigns triumphant. Adorno states his conclusion starkly and unambiguously—Authenticity is death.” For many artists, the aging, dying, and ultimate death of their work is of crucial importance. The death of an artwork is hard to reconcile with conservatorial or curatorial desires for institutionalized preservation into the future, and it is usually these latter voices that are listened to, not the voice of the artist.

Harbin (2008:66) writes:

Heidegger’s distinction makes possible his further claim: when considering the role of preservation, excessive focus on the “object being” of an artwork threatens its authenticity, while attention to the “work being” of an artwork furthers it. . . . If only the “object being” is preserved, the artworks are not allowed “to be” at all, their lives are stunted and their authenticity oppressed. If the “work being” is preserved, the artworks and the truth involved in them emerge newly over time.

This puts the case for the interaction between authenticity and our intentions. It is the stakeholders, not supposedly objective criteria, who will decide what judgment they will make concerning the authenticity of a work of art. The natural degradation a work of art may undergo is part of its continuing authenticity over time. Heidegger’s work presages the importance of the concept of the intangible authenticity of art objects. This has become a matter of some significance in

## The Cult of Authenticity

the twenty-first century, as Western nations try to decide what to do with stolen Native American art, unearthed skeletal material, commissioned ethnographic arts, commercial shrunken heads, postmodern art, and completely rebuilt historic buildings; the intangible authenticity of place or artistic intention is of special importance and needs to be preserved or recognized as an essential element of the work of art or artifact. Artistic intention is, however, not an unproblematic concept in itself, in terms of what constitutes the intention or intentions of the artist, or how conservators or restorers should preserve the artist's intention, or even what is meant by an artist's intention.

Can the relationship between the existence of the artwork and its object being and work being be definitively separated out, as Heidegger seeks to do? The object being may have a strong influence on the work being in the sense that some materials resist degradation almost entirely. Consider a pre-Hispanic gold effigy figurine from Costa Rica dating to 500 C.E. Made of 92 percent gold and 8 percent silver, it is practically immune from corrosion. The *work being* carries this museum artifact long into the future, way past our own life span. As apart from being molten in a fire, the effigy is practically indestructible and uncorrodible. On the other hand, works of art whose *object being* involves their own destruction, such as *Homage to New York* by Jean Tinguely (1925–1991) (Tinguely 1988), fulfill all too well Heidegger's view of an authentic work of art as being allowed to undergo deterioration. As *Homage to New York* saws itself into pieces when set in motion and bursts into flames, resulting in its total disintegration, here the *object being* implies and contains the *work being* within its essential existence as a work of art.

Onlookers have taken away fragments of the destroyed work, so the memory of the event is contained in the materiality of the dispersed fragments, the reminiscence of the entire event being only the conceptual memory of it. Statements of present-day ephemeral artists, such as Andy Goldsworthy (1956– ), echo the Heideggerian perspective, Goldsworthy writes: "Each work grows, stays, decays—integral parts of a cycle which the photograph shows at its height, marking the moment when the work is most alive. There is an intensity about a work at its peak that I hope is expressed in the image. Process and decay are implicit." There is a difference, however: Goldsworthy envisages the work as most alive not when it has begun the process of deterioration but fixed within the photographic image of itself at the presumed moment of its perfect state of existence, perhaps an equilibrium between newness and aging.

One of the most effective critics of the views put forward by Heidegger is Theodor Adorno (1973:27), who writes:

It is nonsense to appeal to some sort of primal experience, some basic human qualities. In the universally mediated world everything experienced in primary terms is culturally preformed. Whoever wants [to contact] the other has to start with the immanence of culture, in order to break out through it. But fundamental ontology gladly spares itself that, by pretending it has a starting point somewhere outside. . . . It claws itself firmly into its blindly social fate, which—in Heidegger's terminology—has thrown one into this and no other place. That was according to the taste of fascism."

## Intention and Representation

The absolutism of Heidegger is clearly something that has to be tempered in the field of art conservation because of the different cultural assignments of value, which does not enter into Heidegger's views. The way in which Rovira (2003) reviews these issues is relevant here. He writes: "Authenticity, says Adorno, is a word that tends to shift definition depending on context. In Heidegger, the subject is authentic to itself, the very definition of authenticity, so one's own subjectivity is the judge of what is authentic."

This is the principal problem with the pervasive notion of authenticity that Heidegger espouses and that acts to differentiate his views from those of Adorno, whose criticism of the jargon employed by some philosophers is itself hard to follow because of the dense style in which he writes about authenticity. A useful interpreter here is Harris (2015), who writes:

I am struck by the continued relevance of the critique to current notions of authenticity or personal sincerity. Authenticity has been extensively discussed in tourism studies, for example, especially "existential authenticity" . . . a cult of sincerity affects a number of recent efforts in social science, such as auto-ethnography, the ideas of performance or narrativity in a number of areas, including education and ethnography.

Harris (2015) makes the point that the social context of authenticity in tourism and site visitation seeks some vestige of a nostalgic past in which "indigenous folk are to be allowed to benefit from authentic tourism by setting up craft stalls to sell 'authentic' souvenirs." . . . This is an intertextual phenomenon which runs counter to the analysis offered by Heidegger. The acceptance of internal decay

of the work of art in terms of its authentic existence may be a sympathetic notion, especially in its connection to modern and contemporary art, but there are limitations to it, as Adorno reveals.

### **Intention and Representation**

Intention and representation in works of art are the subjects of a well-known paper by Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) dating from 1933 (Benjamin 1970). It is often quoted by art historians, as his views were written some time ago, have permeated widely, are not stated very clearly, so there is latitude in the interpretation of what he says. He proposes that original works of art contain an "aura" that copies and replicas lack. Benjamin (1970) holds that copies and reproductions undermine the authenticity of a work of art in "its unique existence in the actual place it happens to be."

Here Benjamin seems to be referring both to the singularity of the original work and the historical location in which it is currently situated. There is no doubt that the authentic location of a medieval triptych is as a religious installation in the church in which it was dedicated rather than the National Gallery in London where it might currently reside. In the church, the triptych fulfilled an important religious function as well as being a work of art. The test of authenticity of a work of art or a relic in the medieval period was the artwork's ability to create miracles rather than to conform to a modernist notion that to be authentic, it had to possess the correct material manifestations. So from the medieval perspective, the triptych should reside in the church; in the twenty-first century, there is an increasingly strong consensus in the preservation and conservation field that the original location of the work of art is an important component of its authentic state, and should not be transposed

## The Cult of Authenticity

without good reason. There are similar problems with returning some artworks to an earlier, more authentic condition today. Artworks that have been repainted and kept on display in a church setting for 200 years may be viewed as devotionally authentic works, even if they represent a completely fictitious version of the medieval original. The congregation's collective memory will have no point of reference to the original, and the intangible associations of the repainted surface, not the original work, demand its survival and reverence.

In echoing some of Heidegger's thought, Benjamin's view of the authenticity of an artwork encompasses the entire historical eventuality of the artwork, laying an emphasis on changes in the physical state and condition of the work. Benjamin (1970:23) writes:

Precisely for the fact that authenticity cannot be reproduced, the intensive advance of certain copying methods of a technical nature helped differentiate between the various grades of authenticity. One of the important functions of the art business was the establishment of such differentiation. . . . We might say that with the invention of the woodblock printing the quality of authenticity was attacked at its roots, before it was able to burst belatedly into blossom. At the time of its making, a medieval Madonna was still not "authentic"; and only became that in the course of subsequent centuries, in the last century perhaps more intensively than at any time before.

Woodblock printing could produce a number of equally authentic originals from the initially carved block of wood, usually signed in the block by the artist and with a

characteristic blind stamp, but there were much earlier master forms from which many copies could be produced. Examples are Hellenistic plaster molds of earlier Roman or Greek sculpture, which enabled the production of scores of copies, identical to the original, and master molds of Moche ceramic jars, in which clay could be pressed, dried, and fired, reproducing the original many times over. Benjamin was much concerned with "mechanical reproduction" rather than handmade reproductions, but since an aura must accompany each print made from a woodblock carved by the original artist, so must the aura of each version of a Moche pot accompany each successive ceramic version molded after the original matrix, taken from a master form by the original artist.

A mechanical reproduction of a woodblock print involves the artistry of paper, pressure, variety of ink and its viscosity and stickiness, medium, colors, and a uniform rate of drying in the same way that the artistry of a ceramic reproduction involves the right kind of clay, tempering, forming, drying, firing, and surface decoration. Both processes are mechanical only in the sense that successive stages of production need not concern the original artist, who may have moved on to create other works of art. These historical antecedents to the concept of aura in terms of reproduction are not considered by philosophers of art, but they seem equally viable in terms of their application to Benjamin's work. In his reference to the "various grades of authenticity," Benjamin (1970) suggests that authenticity may not necessarily function as a set of fixed criteria but rather as a series of possibly variant authenticities that would function with the work of art in different contexts. As a consequence of the phenomenological

## Intention and Representation

problems currently of relevance to works of art, this may be a significant approach to the examination of what authenticity means in a particular setting, which will be explored further in this book.

In considering the passage from Benjamin quoted above, Sándor Radnóti (1999:66) writes that it contradicts the view of authenticity that Benjamin had himself described earlier. Radnóti writes that when Benjamin

talks about authenticity, he does so at times in the ontological sense, as if it had general relevance to every object and at others in the sense of attributing a characteristic historical role to authenticity, one which is connected to the belated blossoming . . . when the various techniques of copying undermine material permanence and in consequence also endanger the historical testimony of the works. According to Benjamin, this danger sparks off the consciousness of the works: this is why “authenticity” belongs to the modern world of art.

The question of whether techniques of copying undermine the material permanence of a work of art is not straightforward. Some copies of an original may in fact present a more permanent version of the original than the original itself. An example of this problem is the re-creation of decayed originals of Naum Gabo’s (1890–1977) cellulose acetate or cellulose nitrate sculptures (Heuman and Morgan 2007).

The Tate Gallery in London has removed some of the original Gabo works from display, and reproductions have been placed on public exhibition in their place; these surrogates may or may not carry labels that clearly

indicate that they are not original works by Gabo. The surrogates are fabricated to mimic the original cellulose acetate or cellulose nitrate construction but are constructed from a modern acrylic polymer instead, not from the same materials that Gabo used. In that sense, a replica displays only the visual appearance of the work but does not attempt to replicate the materials used by the original artist. This difference will have subtle consequences for the viewer, as the refractive index, translucency, hardness, sheen, polish, touch, and smell of a surrogate cannot be the same as that of the original work. The breakdown, as Figure 2.6 clearly reveals is self-perpetuating and non-reversible (Hackney 2007). As for the existing authentic sculpture, should it be preserved in an oxygen-free case and kept on display, be removed to storage where its acidic decay products might affect other materials, or simply be discarded? Here, decay is nonreversible: the fragments of this sculpture cannot be glued back together to reconstruct the original shape. There will be additional conservatorial problems with the surrogates in that they will age at a different rate than the original work. Their aging process began in 2007, and they themselves might have to be replicated in another 50 years if they start to discolor or lose physical stability.

The decision to replicate, or the making of a surrogate as it is sometimes called, resulted in several papers addressing this topic at the Tate Conference held in 2007 in London. For relevant texts concerning the replication of modern works of art, see the online papers, all published in 2007, by Harry Cooper, Christiane Berndes, Lydia Beerkens, Margaret Iverson, Ulrich Lang, Sebastiano Barassi, Jackie Heuman, and Morgan Lyndsey. Some of them wrote statements defending a Gabo replica, while others remained critical.

## The Cult of Authenticity



**Figure 2.6.** Naum Gabo artwork in cellulose acetate or cellulose nitrate. The circular relief (1925–1928) and other works have undergone autocatalytic degradation, resulting in the sculpture disintegrating on display. The sculpture shown here is *Construction in Space: Two Cones*, 1927, Philadelphia Museum of Art. In this example, inherent vice destroys the artwork without the need for human agency. (Image courtesy of Luke Barley, <http://architizer.com/blog/naum-gabo-plastic-sculpture-decay/>)

For example, Margaret Iverson (2007) writes, “In practical terms this might mean that Tate should display Gabo’s plastic sculptures in such a way that the history of their failed experimental material is acknowledged.” Ulrich Lang (2007) believes that “rebuilding a work of Gabo’s would crucially deny [the] historical component, and if the degradation is unstoppable, we might reconstruct it for educational reasons but not for display as a work of art in a public exhibition.” The diverse opinions regarding the authenticity of this replica are part of the tension in this discussion.

The reproductions, it could be argued, do not undermine but carry forward

diachronically the aura of the original. In the creation of an honest exhibition of the replica lies the crux of the public perception of what has happened to the original. If ontological, knowledge of the substitution may be an important aspect of perpetuation of its aura, since the historical veracity of itself as a replica remains problematic. The authenticity of display has been the subject of an insightful text by Phillips (1997), which will be discussed later, but it is pertinent to the problems posed by this kind of museum exhibit, because Phillips is much concerned with the kinds of information that should accompany each exhibit, in which the authenticity of condition is often glossed



## Intention and Representation



**Figure 2.7.** Modern replica of *Construction in Space: Two Cones*, 1927, shown in Figure 2.6. The Gabo project at Tate, which sought to create a modern replica of this and other works by the artist, is discussed by Heuman and Morgan (2007). (Image courtesy of Luke Barley, <http://architizer.com/blog/naum-gabo-plastic-sculpture-decay/>)

over in the name of an artistic purism in terms of informing the viewing public exactly what they are looking at.

It is interesting to note the point made by Radnóti (1999) concerning these ontological and historical aspects of authenticity in respect to Benjamin's work (Benjamin 1970), as these are not often discussed by art historians, who have tended to focus on the aura as a concept in itself, vested in every original work of art, rather than on the intricacies of the argument on which the notion is based. Benjamin (1970) wrote, "The authenticity of an object is inherent in the totality of all its intrinsically transmittable aspects, from its material permanence down to its historical testimony," but these thoughts have limited application in the transmittable properties of a work that has to be substituted by another example of it (Beardsley 1983).

Radnóti takes issue with Benjamin's idea that the individuality of a work of art is equivalent to its embedment in the interconnections of tradition. Radnóti (1999:70) thinks the opposite is true, namely that the growing awareness of individuality can be linked to the

abandonment of the interconnections of tradition. There are arguments on both sides of this issue. For example, Picasso's (1881–1973) painting *Luncheon on the Grass* is in a sense embedded in the tradition of the painted image *Luncheon on the Grass* by Édouard Manet (1832–1883), which dates from 1863. From this one traditional source, Picasso produced 200 drawings, 27 paintings, and five linocuts—individuality born of an interconnected tradition, a classic case of intertextuality. One could argue that this work also abandoned traditional painting to create the 27 versions of the original source of Picasso's inspiration.

Figure 2.9 illustrates a painting by René Magritte (1898–1967), of which there is an exact replica created by the artist. One is in Brussels, and the other is in Birmingham City Art Gallery. In other cases, works of art are duplicated without any limits; all the replicas may be considered authentic. There are, for example, works by Magritte that were copied by him and used to create variant works or exact copies of the first work. In postmodern art theory, there is a trend in favor of the

## The Cult of Authenticity



**Figure 2.8.** *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.K. Version)* by Pablo Picasso, 1911-12. Oil on Canvas; 244 x 234 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. The painting was inspired by Manet's 1863 work *Luncheon on the Grass*. Picasso produced 200 drawings, 27 paintings, and five linocuts of this work: a good example of intertextuality. (Image in the public domain in the United States)

unlimited reproduction of the original work, which still retains its interactive status between the subjective nature of its reception and its material existence.

Radnóti (1999) is surely correct in drawing attention to the emulation of Greek art by Roman artists, who reproduced copies of Greek sculptures to create Roman versions of the originals. Although some of these Roman

sculptures were direct copies, others were adaptations suited to Roman cultural norms and the altered societal meanings that the works now assumed. In the abandonment of the Greek tradition could be said to be the emergence of Roman authentic sculpture. Emulation or even copying does not necessarily preclude originality. A revamped hermeneutics in the interpretation of copies

## Authenticity and Authentication



**Figure 2.9.** *La Saveur des Larmes* (The Flavor of Tears) by René Magritte, 1948. The work has a replica, also by Magritte. One version is in Brussels, and the other is in Birmingham, England. Magritte wanted the verisimilitude of his art to become problematic in its own right. (Image courtesy of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham. Reproduction rights held by Bridgeland Inc., New York)

has been gaining renewed credence, writes Radnóti (1999:71). New, albeit assimilative, original works are created through the imitation or emulation of the prototypes, which are seen by art critics or informed postmodern observers as authentic works of art. The controversies generated by these modern emulations will be discussed in chapter 5.

### Authenticity and Authentication

As for authenticity, one can recognize problems with the way the word is used without necessarily avoiding being drawn toward the desire for “authentic” works or being encouraged to uphold a particular version of “authenticity” that could be as loosely defined as a semiotic construct, as sought after and as

## The Cult of Authenticity

hard to define as the aura of a work of art, or as singularly authentic as a Rembrandt self-portrait that has been enthusiastically endorsed by the Rembrandt research committee after five years of study.

If authenticity is seen as a purely subjective concept, then there are difficulties with works of art that one person may regard as authentic and the next as inauthentic. If authenticity is regarded as a completely objective concept, then further disputations arise in persuading people with conceptual views of what authenticity means into accepting that there can be any such thing. The title of an article by Richter (2009), "Authenticity: Why We Still Need It although It Doesn't Exist," betrays the modern preoccupation and anxiety with the attractions and repulsions of the concept. Richter is concerned here with the notion that observers do not have direct access to reality, that everything that is observed and discussed is mediated by linguistic, representational, and cultural conventions, particularly as it applies to works of literature. The paradox of authenticity, as seen from a literary standpoint, has been articulated by Culler (1988:126), who writes, "To be experienced as authentic [an object] must be marked as authentic, but when it is marked as authentic it is mediated, a sign of itself, and hence lacks the authenticity of what is truly unspoiled, untouched by mediating cultural codes."

The work that Richter discusses in her article is drawn entirely from the field of literary studies, where the concept is often avoided altogether and may present inherent problems, exposing often contradictory assumptions and beliefs. Although the term is deeply flawed, due to its mediated nature, even after decades of deconstructivism and anti-essentialism, it has proved impossible to get rid of it, says Richter. Where issues such

as difference, identity, and nationalism are being discussed in connection with postcolonial studies, the problem of authenticity is often ignored, but it might be quite important to address.

This is one of the crucial concepts this book has to grapple with: what to make of the words *authentic*, *authenticity*, and *authentication*. *Authentication* can be used in a more defined context, compared with the wider usage of *authenticity*. Authentication may be thought of as a particular process of evaluation of a work of art and an attempt to decide if it is authentic, original, or unadulterated. This might be viewed as a tautology or a universal truth: authentication is sought to decide if something is authentic or not. A mediated danger exists in this process. Within the limited field of the art market and the conservation of art, authentication can be thought of as a kind of empirical and scientifically objective process of establishing the properties and constitution of a work of art, whether these properties are consistent with the object being from the presumed period of manufacture, or whether evidence suggests that it dates from an entirely different period.

Authentication may also encompass a host of other voices, such as indigenous peoples, ethnic groups, or religious devotees. These groups or commentators might pronounce something to be authentic in their terms, while Westernized, scientific cultural groups might declare it to be inauthentic. Cornet (1975) proposes that an object may be considered authentic when it is created by a traditional artist, conforms to traditional forms (exhibits meaningful canons that are recognized and accepted by individuals within a culture), and was created for a traditional purpose or was culturally used. From this definition one can proceed in a seemingly straightforward manner to look

## Authenticity and Authentication

for the physical properties of authenticity. Is a Dogon figure modeled with the required reverent pose and iconography and appropriately patinated indicating use on a shrine? Among the Yoruba peoples of Nigeria, girls commonly carry plastic *ibeji* figures, representatives of deceased siblings that are fed and cared for to placate the spirit of dead relatives (Chemeche 2006). In former times, *ibeji* figures were hand-carved wooden effigies, much sought after by the Western art market. Now that they are made of Western-style plastic dolls, they are still imbued with the same cultural authenticity, but Western markets regard them as inauthentic, as not an artistic expression of the Yoruba people, implicitly divorcing aesthetic authenticity and material authenticity from the conceptually authentic.

As modern African art begins to encounter the Westernized concept of what art designed for museums and private collectors is actually for, these plastic dolls might eventually become authenticated, collected, and preserved.

In the traditional Western sense, the process of authentication rests not on cultural norms but on art historical connoisseurship and scientific connoisseurship, concepts introduced in chapter 1. These usually function in concert with each other, and the work will be examined by sets of experts, with a report detailing conclusions and evidence on which this is based. The resulting document becomes a “certificate of authenticity.” The certificate itself may be held up to scrutiny as containing debatable evidence, which could be validated or confirmed by the opinion of several other experts, potentially invalidated by further research, deemed to be inadequate and inconclusive, or discovered to itself be a forgery, therefore requiring a certificate or document denying that the certificate of authenticity is itself authentic and presenting a

different account of the evidence in yet another document.

One of the few writers to draw attention to the fact that scientific truths may be necessarily tentative as regards artworks and their evaluation is Arnheim (1983:242), who reminds us that scientific statements hold until new facts call for a revised interpretation. This is scientific connoisseurship because the results of the examination are not a new theory but involve the application of scientific knowledge to works of art. This work is dependent on a rigorous understanding of materials and their terminus post quem, degradation, restoration, and dating techniques.

In prior decades, a commonly accepted practice was for an art historian to write an opinion on the reverse of a large photograph of an artwork. This process conjoined the individual work examined with a dated and handwritten evaluation of the authentic nature of the work. The only problem was that this document was sometimes insufficient to allow all the available evidence to be stated. This was not an issue in more definitive times, when authorities were absolutely certain of the veracity of their pronouncements and when the opinion of a recognized “authority” was all that was needed for the trade to be quite sure that a work of art was authentic. In a more relativistic age, authorities may need to present very comprehensive documentation of a work of art to substantiate any claim to authenticity, and even this might not be sufficient. In the case of particular paintings, the supposedly impartial Wildenstein Institute in Paris may regard the old-fashioned handwritten assessment of authenticity as the final word on the subject and ignore the detailed work of many experts. One could argue that this constitutes an intangible authenticity: The aura and historicity of the

## The Cult of Authenticity

Monet expert in 1925, and his pronouncements about a painting, long held in reverence, trump the scientific and documentary evidence of 2012, as exemplified in chapter 1. It is not a very convincing argument, but if the intangible association is allowed to be a method of evaluation of authenticity, then it is necessary to define the terms under which it is allowed to operate.

If the objects in question are African sculptures, which 100 years ago were carved, modern African carvers who create versions of the same sculptures today are not regarded as being engaged in making authentic traditional sculpture. This is not how present-day artists define their work: To them, their work is equally authentic and imbued with an intangible authenticity based on their rights and privileges as wood carvers. Thus tourist art and authentic primitive art may conceptually be of the same status.

David Lowenthal recounts a story in which a woman complains about a work of art she has purchased. It was thought to be authentic but was subsequently condemned as a fake. The work of art came with a certificate of authenticity. "That should have been your first clue," writes Lowenthal (1992), condemning the modern view of what authenticity actually is: all too often, simply a fictional state to satisfy current desires. It is certainly true that artworks whose status is hard to define as being either inauthentic or authentic in this sense gain considerably from the procurement of a certificate of authenticity, which may represent only an opinion about a work, although most such opinions are given not in the sense of "bad faith" as viewed by Sartre but as honest expressions of art connoisseurs' appraisals of the nature of works of art.

A statement commonly used in such certificates is: "The scientific and technical

examination of the work strongly supports the opinion that the work dates from the eighteenth century; no indications for the use of pigment, binders, or other materials inconsistent with an eighteenth-century date were found." In other words, no evidence for modern manufacture was determined during the study and the materials from which the work of art was constructed are in accordance with what one would expect from an eighteenth-century work. However, if the work is an eighteenth-century fake of an earlier eighteenth-century original, there may still be doubts about the significance of the statement contained in the report; it may be as far as one could go without a full-scale investigation lasting weeks or months. Neither the integrity nor the professional knowledge of the person signing the certificate of authenticity constitutes any certain proof in this matter, which is why the famous art connoisseur Bernard Berenson did not necessarily place any credence on certificates of authenticity, documentary history, or signed statements of ownership. These are all fungible statements about a work of art, not the work of art itself.

Descendants of the artist, especially in France, hold a very firm grip on what, in their view, constitutes the authentic production of the artist concerned, and they might decide collectively that an unknown work is actually by the artist himself, or decide that it is a forgery, without the transparency of public debate on the issue. If deemed a forgery, under French law the work may be confiscated, returned as a fake, or destroyed, as occurred recently with a very presentable version of a painting supposedly by Chagall, which had been purchased in good faith for \$165,000. It was retained by the Chagall authenticating committee and destroyed under the provisions of French law rather than being returned to

## Authenticity and Its Agency

its English owners (Mould and Bruce 2012). As Lowenthal (1992), remarks, any a posteriori family declaration may indeed have the same value as testimony regarding the work in question and may condemn the work without a fair hearing. Another example is a typically French one: In 1984 a Paris court issued a ruling concerning three paintings attributed to Mondrian that the Centre Pompidou had purchased for \$675,000. A later investigation discovered that the three paintings were forgeries. An elderly artist and critic, Michel Seuphor, who had been a friend of Mondrian's, was entrusted with the task of authenticating the paintings. He pronounced them to be perfectly genuine and issued a certificate of authenticity accordingly. When the Centre Pompidou discovered that the three paintings in question were actually forgeries, Michel Seuphor was arrested for fraud (Isbell 1984).

However, it rapidly became apparent that Seuphor had actually believed that the three paintings were authentic and that the certificates had been issued by him honestly and in good faith (Isbell 1984). The court stated that he was not capable of judging the authenticity of the Mondrian works, even though he had known the artist well; there was no Sartrean "bad faith" or desire to deceive involved in this case. The individual concerned was neither an art connoisseur nor a scientific connoisseur of Mondrian's work. Even if Seuphor had known the artist, he was unable to distinguish between the authentic and the inauthentic. Michel Seuphor was released.

### Authenticity and Its Agency

It is not easy to define authenticity in art beyond its dictionary definition of "reliable, trustworthy, original, and of undisputed origin" (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1956). A more

recent definition (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2005) offers "authentic as true to oneself," "authentic as original," or "authentic as trustworthy statement of fact." The emphasis on *original* is part of the crux of the matter for art objects, except since what constitutes the "original" or "original condition" of a work of art is often a matter for dispute, depending on what is regarded as the desired or significant state of the object concerned.

For our discussion here, authenticity needs to be considered on a more multidimensional platform. Indeed, Denis Dutton (1944–2010) refers to *authenticity* as a dimensional word (Dutton 2003:135), a term whose meaning remains uncertain until what is being discussed is defined and described. A useful question to ask, writes Dutton, is: Authentic compared to what? Rm. Shanmugam Chettiar's 2010 poem *Authenticity Is Not Art* is relevant to our discussion here:

Authenticity is not Art.  
Reality as such is not Art.  
Art should highlight something  
From the remaining in shape.  
Art should pinpoint something  
From the remaining in acts.

Narration of occurrence  
And rendering of incidence  
In authenticity  
Without any artificial twists  
Will render the Art  
Lifeless and spiritless.

A cartoon is a perfect art.  
It differs vastly from the real  
And yet reminds of the real.  
Imaginary is an art.  
Romanticism is an art.  
Don't mar the art with authenticity.

## The Cult of Authenticity

Dutton (2003) divides authenticity into “nominal authenticity” and “expressive authenticity.” Nominal authenticity is the honest identification of an origin, the authorship or provenance of an artwork. Expressive authenticity is connected to an artifact’s character as an expression of a person’s or culture’s values and beliefs. This analysis is potentially helpful in art conservation, as the observer may think of the need to probe into the original and provenance of a work of art as part of its nominal authenticity. The identification of the artifact may imply that one aspect of that identification is the material comprising the identified artwork, while the intangible authenticity that cannot be seen, of a sanctified African idol, for example, as compared with its physically identical tourist double, constitutes part of its expressive authenticity.

Expressive authenticity involves aspects of intention. For example, playing a historic piece of music may involve the creativity of the performer and the authentic rendering of the notes laid down on the score. But the performer cannot ape the style of another. Those who wish to give an honest performance, must find their own way to making a genuine expression of the original. Dutton cites Coote and Shelton’s account (1992) of the art of the Huichol from northwestern Mexico. Huichol art is bound up with rituals. It may invoke exchange relations between human and supernatural beings and between wife-givers and wife-takers. Huichol “yarn paintings” are wooden tableaux that depict mythological scenes. The yarn is brightly colored commercial material embedded in beeswax. Work is also made for the market, but Coote and Shelton (1992) regard this as inauthentic, lacking continuity and audience. But native makers regard the work as authentic productions, regardless of what Western art experts

decide are authentic Huichol works of art. So here the personal creation is what gives these objects their expressive authenticity.

Dutton (2003) makes the point that in many discussions concerning the authentic, it is the audience that has been relegated to a purely passive role but that the involvement of art in its social connection is also a factor that has to be discussed. Even here there are major problems: It is all very well Dutton deciding that in this case the audience is relegated to an onlooker status, but in many contemporary situations, regarding, say, Aboriginal artifacts in an Australian storeroom, it is the native audience who collectively decides that the objects in question must be returned to them and reburied; the museum experts are overridden by participation in a wider social context of what happens to authentic art.

The nominal and expressive categories may not quite be enough for us. Concern with articulating the philosophical dimensions of the topic is also evident in a discussion offered by Lawrence (personal communication 2013), who writes:

In its application both to the person and to the artist and artwork, in practical philosophy and in aesthetics, and in their interconnection through the concept of human creativity, the notions of human action as a fundamental form of creativity, and of artistic action as a central expression of that notion, the terrain—the typography—of the concept of authenticity is complex in philosophical terms. It is more a matter of “family resemblance,” with both “internal” and “external” variety. Internally, “authenticity” is deployed, even within a single area, like aesthetics, in a variety of related ways. Externally it varies in its



## Authenticity and Its Agency

interactions, similarities and contrasts with other concepts: creativity, integrity, authority, genuineness, purity, spontaneity, “bad faith,” exploitation, stultification, alienation; mere respectability and conformism; plagiarism, adulteration, copy, fakery and forgery.

This is a much richer and more nuanced way of thinking about the issues of authenticity in art than, for example, the analysis provided by Muñoz-Viñas (2009, 2011), in which the use of the appellation *authenticity* is reduced to a fiction if it does anything but regard the current state of the object as that which is designated as its authentic state of being. The consequence of this argument is that the word *authentic* regarding the condition of a work of art has to refer entirely to its present condition; other previous states of the object are therefore regarded as entirely fictitious.

Muñoz-Viñas (2011:37) gives the example of the Diego Velázquez (1599–1666) painting *The Toilet of Venus* (1647–1651) in the National Gallery, London, which was slashed by suffragette Mary Richardson (1882–1961) with a meat cleaver in 1914.

The painting is now displayed with the slashed canvas completely restored. By recovering the authentic Velázquez, what has been relinquished is the historical authenticity of the state of the painting in 1914. Some aspects of the concept of authenticity have been gained by this immaculate restoration, while others have been lost. What is important here is regaining the aesthetic authenticity of the original work, not retaining evidence of damage to the painting.

Rather than thinking of the events of 1914 as they impact the Velázquez painting as a problem of authenticity, some philosophers

approach the question through the examination of *essential* and *contingent* properties of a work of art (Gracyk 2012). The facts that the object is a painting portraying Venus and is an erotic work form the *essential* properties of the artwork, while the property created by Mary Richardson by slashing the painting with a meat cleaver and slicing through the canvas is seen as a *contingent* property. Contingent properties are part of the history of the artwork that do not form part of its identity and are seen as less important than essential ones. So here there are two competing analyses: The first maintains that the authenticity of the work has been altered by returning the painting to a state prior to 1914, except of course this is not really possible, because extensive and very skillful restoration has been employed to disguise the fact that any damage occurred in 1914.

The second argument proposes that the essential properties of the painting have not been impacted because the events were only contingent ones and the restored state brings back the essential characteristics of the work. The problem with the contingent view as being of secondary importance in terms of properties of the original is that it takes no account of restoration and the effect that restoration may have on properties considered to be essential for the identity of the artwork. Many restored Roman sculptures, for example, have parts created in the Renaissance, which some observers might view as contingent but which have become essential parts of the way in which the works of art are perceived. On the other hand, historically important contingent events, such as a bullet hole through Admiral Nelson’s tunic, will not be repaired and rendered visually indistinguishable from the undamaged tunic (Muñoz-Viñas 2011). Although a contingent event, the shooting

## The Cult of Authenticity



**Figure 2.10.** *The Toilet of Venus*, also known as *Rokeby Venus*, by Diego Velázquez, circa 1647–1651. Oil on canvas; 122 x 177 cm. National Gallery of Art, London. The painting was slashed several times in 1914 by suffragette Mary Richardson. Expert restoration has removed all visible traces of this event in the life of the artwork, and the brief notes accompanying the image on the National Gallery website make no mention of the authentic state of the work in 1914. (Image in the public domain)

that punctured the tunic killed the admiral and is one of the momentous events in the life of the jacket, which is now valued as a testimonial of the event itself.

Restoration in itself may not be able to create a more authentic condition for the work of art than what currently exists, but restoration does not operate in a field in isolation; it interacts with art history, artist's intent, aesthetics, museology, art connoisseurship, restoration, and scientific authentication. A conservation intervention may not be able to produce a more authentic work of art, but the consequences of the action taken impinge on a wide variety of concerns about our perception of authenticity. Despite these problems and the potentially vast terrain over

which this discussion could roam, the concept of authenticity continues to be of importance in relation to the appreciation of art of the past and the present, theories of restoration, the production of fakes and forgeries, the present appearance of works of art, and their physical or metaphysical reality.

In the field of literature, interest in the mediated nature of the written word, compared with events described as occurring in the real world, has revealed the complex nature of the relationship between our own writings as a subject of inquiry and how others may interpret these writings. Funk et al. (2012) give a synopsis of the postmodern view of authenticity, especially as it pertains to literary and artistic writings. Here many authors have

contributed to the current debate concerning why authenticity is still an important concept in literary studies: Anton (2001), Guignon (2004), Haselstein et al. (2010), Lindholm (2008), Richter (2009), and Vannini and Williams (2009), have important things to say about the topic, to name only a prominent few.

Handler (1986) discusses the place of authenticity in an anthropological context. He takes authenticity to be firstly, a cultural construct of the modern Western world, and secondly, a cultural construct closely tied to Western notions of the individual. He says that the bonds uniting authenticity and individualism remain congruent in both commonsense and anthropological ideas about culture. Handler (1986) writes, "In summary, the concept of authenticity is as deeply embedded in anthropological theory as it is in the self-conscious ethnic ideologies of many of the groups that we study." From Handler's analysis, it is clear that anthropologists may regard authenticity as something of a fiction, even though it is an integral concept in terms of the societies that form part of anthropological theory and on which the observations of those societies inhere. Handler does not discuss how the problem of forgeries might interact with this anthropological analysis. If the construction of authenticity is seen as a Western branding of native works, does that legitimate anthropological or ethnographic works we regard as forgeries? The answer might depend on the relevant cultural setting.

Funk et al. (2012) grapple with the problem of authenticity and recognize that there is no simple solution to the problem of defining the terrain over which the concept may operate. Funk et al. (2012) arrive at three principal conclusions: that authenticity is *fragmented*, *contested*, and *performative*. It is fragmented because instead of representing

a unified inherent quality, an aesthetic analysis reveals it to reside in multiple sources, in the piecing together of disparate elements. In the field of art, the fragmentation stretches across and between the disciplines involved, from the ethnographer to the medievalist, from the restorer to the art historian. It is contested because it is debated in academic discourse, implicated in power structures, ideological constructions, and the politics of signification. It is performative because as an aesthetic construct, it is deeply implicated in the process of communication that is realized in the relationships between production, an aesthetic object, its context, and its reception. Dutton (2011) also considers the notion of performance to be important and remarks that all art includes an element of human performance that is admired and esteemed in a way that a false work cannot be. Forgery is therefore misrepresented performance.

One way of visualizing the dimensions of authenticity is shown in Figure 2.10. The implications for conservation are germane to the argument here: Authenticity is *contested* between artists, restorers, conservators, museums, and audiences, each of whom may have a different viewpoint. It is *fragmented* because the discussion regarding authenticity is not transdisciplinary: It does not at present bring together the different voices of the art historian, the conservation scientist, the restorer, the philosopher, the aesthetician, and the general public. It is *performative* because the exploration of the nature of a work of art or its interpretation for the viewer, or the artist's intention as represented in the work, involves a mediated process of potential interpreters or presenters of the artwork. Each of these concepts may involve a discussion of how assessing the authenticity of the work of art under these rubrics incorporates or ignores

## The Cult of Authenticity

the origination, restoration, and degradation outlined above, and each may be dependent rather than mutually exclusive.

The idea that authenticity is not a unified field of inquiry pertains to works of art, just as it does to literature. The concept can be viewed as operating over many different authenticities or as a synopsis of many disparate elements. It is performative and contested, one could argue, because in its embedment in fields of communication, it encompasses the intangible authenticity that is part of the modern dialogue between objects and their cultural representatives.

There are also factors to be considered in the expression of authenticity in “real” virtual terms—for example, in virtual reconstructions of ancient monuments or sites (Kensen et al. 2004): How far can digital

reconstructions retain ambiguity of interpretation? How far can a virtual world escape contested notions of how original monuments looked in light of patchy evidence of their materiality?

As far as artworks themselves are concerned, there are three arenas of importance to us here: *conceptual authenticity*, *material authenticity*, and *aesthetic authenticity*. Conceptual authenticity refers to the intangible associations of the work, which may have no physical basis for existence but which forms an essential role in the function, purpose, or meaning of the object. Material authenticity refers to the constitutive properties and compositions of the artwork and how it is fabricated or prepared, and its potential alteration through degradation, inherent vice, auto-destruction, restoration, or



**Figure 2.11.** Concepts of authenticity. The differentiation of concepts of authenticity across many fields of inquiry results in the concept becoming *fragmented* because it fails to represent a unified inherent quality; *contested* because it is a matter continually under debate within the fields of conservation, restoration, connoisseurship, and art history; and *performative* because it is an essential component of aesthetic, literary, and conservatorial discussions and affective states, particularly in literature and music. These three categories are not mutually exclusive, and debates about authenticity may, for example, extend across the performative–contested spectrum or any of the other axes of the fields involved. (Diagram by the author; after Funk et al. 2012)

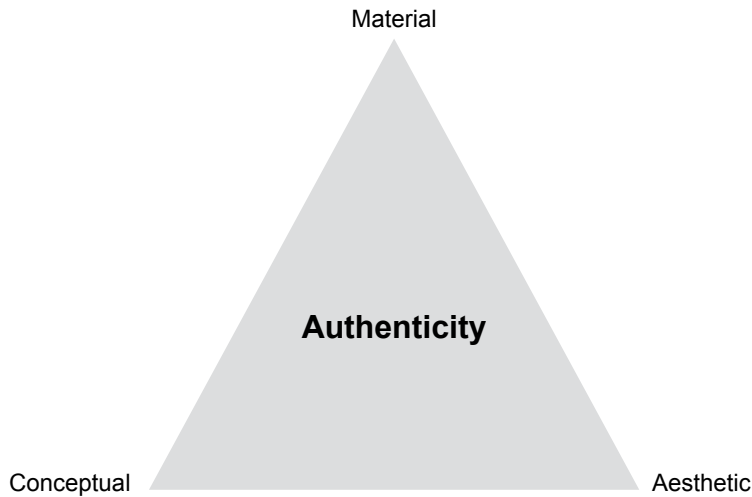
## Authenticity and Its Agency

alteration over time. Aesthetic authenticity refers to appreciation of the artwork in its current state, as an entity that is recognized as a work of art and that is in a sufficiently legible condition to be understood and valued. As far as gradations between these various states are concerned, Sartwell proposes a 21 step gradation between authenticity and inauthenticity and writes: “The authentic and inauthentic are continuous with one another . . . cases can be adduced to any desired degree of intermediary” (Sartwell 1988). Elkins (1993) disagrees with this analysis and states that in his view, the sequence from original to copy is not continuous but proceeds in historically determined stages. The subtle arguments concerning the difference between *originals*, *strict copies*, *reproductions*, *imitations*, *variations*, and *versions* are the crux of the argument presented by Elkins, which aim to undermine the easy dichotomy between what is authentic and what is inauthentic. Knaller joins her terms *referential authenticity*, the attribution of objectivity and facticity, and *subject authenticity*, represented by the attribution of subjective composition and individual artistic expression, to formulate her version of what is meant by *aesthetic authenticity*, which is perfectly reasonable. The presumed *historical authenticity* of a work of art can be seen as part of this formulation, since it relates to both the material of which the work is composed and the artistic expression of the producer who made the artwork at some time in the past. The desirability of these attributes cannot be approached in a linear way by adding up the different criteria and arriving at the conclusion that one work is more or less authentic than another, because of the many dimensions in which the concept is operating. From our own personal perspective, there might be conflicting views on how a work of art is

valued and its condition, or what has happened to it, or how its historical life is perceived, and these views can be debated using some of the criteria outlined here.

It may well be that the conceptual authenticity of something is opposed to the material authenticity of the object involved. A good example is a Japanese Shinto shrine, rebuilt every 20 years of entirely new materials but conceptually absolutely authentic. In the opposite case, an African idol may be exactly the same in composition, style, and materiality as its neighbor, yet one is authentic and the other is not. Aesthetic authenticity may trump material authenticity in the case of works of art by Naum Gabo, where the original has suffered from *inherent vice*, but an observer may still be desirous of seeing what the work of art looked like, so a replica carries the aesthetic value into the future. Fervent desire for material authenticity may involve a purist revelation of only those materials regarded as original, with the result that a reconstructed marble sculpture may have its remodeled arms and ancient head from a different sculpture removed, destroying part of its aesthetic and historical authenticity in the process of revealing its material authenticity. Dodd (personal communication 2016) makes the point that virtual reconstructions create a useful tool in such cases, allowing the observer to address the relationship between “evidence” of the original and its reconstruction and experience in virtual terms, or virtual forms of reconstructions that are more “really” experienced or able to be experienced as such. As digital products, these reconstructions are subject to processes of inherent vice, degradative effects that are all too common in attempts to preserve laser disks or the authentic testimonies of Holocaust survivors via the University of California Shoah Project.

## The Cult of Authenticity



**Figure 2.12.** Arenas of authenticity. The important arenas over which authenticity operates as far as works of art are concerned are the material authenticity of the original and its possible alterations with time; the aesthetic desire for completed works whose value lies in their visual appreciation, which may also be a historical event; and the conceptual, which relates to the increasingly important function of works of art to exist independently of any physical form or fixed materiality, as in ethnographic and postmodern contexts, where the intangibility of the artwork is of paramount importance. (Diagram by the author)

The mediated nature of the discussion based on the fragmented and contested nature of the subject must also be factored into these conceptual pictures. Thus these three criteria—*aesthetic, material, and conceptual*—may be subject in turn to being evaluated in the context of their fragmentary nature or level of understanding and their contested nature, in which a variety of arguments favoring one or another approach to the object can be put forward, often influenced by different philosophical positions, or can be performative in different contexts, requiring a variety of approaches to the object for different cultural needs or art historical significance. It is also important to be mindful of the points raised by Sagoff concerning individualizing—*relational, historical, and cognitive criteria* for the evaluation of authenticity (Sagoff 1978a), which are discussed later. It is this level of complexity that creates such a rich field of inquiry into art and authenticity.

Suzanne Knaller (2012) examines the concept of authenticity in terms of normative and non-normative narratives. In philosophical terms, normative statements make claims about how things should or ought to be and how to value them. Normative claims are usually contrasted with positive, descriptive, or explanatory claims when describing types of theories, beliefs, or propositions. Knaller (2012:25) writes that the referential and empirical components of the meaning of authenticity that have determined the concept from the beginning are perpetuated in terms of aesthetic value; that an artistic object can be authenticated when it is not adulterated. In terms of our discussion here, this straightforward assertion cannot accord with the multiplicity of states that restoration may mean for a particular artistic object, so the issue of authentication may not always represent an unadulterated state as Knaller suggests. It might also

## Authenticity and Its Agency

depend here on what aspect of authenticity is being considered and what is meant by not being adulterated. In fact, many works regarded as authentic have been heavily adulterated over the centuries, but that does not usually stop us from considering that they are authentic. Knaller (2012:26) states that authenticity is employed as an ontological concept to determine the difference between art and non-art:

At the bottom of this normativity thus lies the differential relationship, constitutive of a modern concept of art, between authenticity and inauthenticity. The constructedness of the same is recognized by Umberto Eco, who notes that every conception of authentic art as something irreproducible and singular is legitimized through “authorial authenticity” and presupposes an abstract and conceptual notion of truth. Adorno was the first to describe consistently how the notion of authenticity, as an aesthetic concept of validity and value, mediates between the empirical, form, and transcendence. For Adorno, authenticity is also not simply some subjective category of expression: “No artwork, not even the most subjective, can completely merge with the subject that constitutes it and its content.”

That important point has been stressed by several authors; the separation between a work of art and its subject that results in consequences for concepts of authenticity that function on different planes.

The capability of authenticity to be used in the sense of supporting the validity of a work of art and to carry out aspects of its certification is one basic strand in this argument. The other, argues Knaller, is to determine a recursive dynamic between the subject and

the object. This creates a tension between an individual or subjective viewpoint, the nature of the subject–object relationship, and the objectifying process of authentication. In *Words from Abroad*, Adorno (1991) writes:

It is supposed to be the characteristic of works that gives them an objectively binding quality, a quality that extends beyond the contingency of mere subjective expression, the quality of being socially grounded. If I had said simply “authority” using a foreign word that has at least been adopted into German, I would have indicated the force such works exercise but not the justification of that force by a truth that ultimately refers back to the social process.

Knaller argues that the strength of authenticity lies in its possible application as both a normative and a non-normative critical concept. Authenticity is normative when the concept as a category of singularity makes the claims of subjective impressions explainable and describable. Authenticity is non-normative when it relates to a spatial and chronological concept reflecting both medi-ality and formation. In this case, the concept of authenticity retains its validity even when the traditional implications of the artist as someone constituted by craftsmanship and creativity no longer form the basis of art. In the case of photography, Knaller (2012) gives an example of the attribution of objectivity and facticity, which she calls *referential authenticity*. The attribution of subjective composition and individual artistic expression, called *subject authenticity*, are fused into and constitute an aesthetic concept, hence *aesthetic or artistic authenticity*. In spite of the delegation of manufacturing work from the artist to

professionals, the demand for the work and the author to be original is upheld, and there is psychological evidence, one could argue, to support this point of view (Newman and Bloom 2012).

Minimalist artists who worked with industrial materials rejected the replications of their work put together for an exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in the 1990s. They issued the following statement: “Neither the objects themselves nor the plans were sufficient to create replicas equal in value to the originals, because chance can unexpectedly change the appearance during production, so that the materiality of the individual work has significance and the necessary authenticity can therefore only be attributed by the artist” (Tietjen 1998:43; translation by Knaller 2012). This is only one way of looking at intrinsic problems related to authenticity in modern art; a plethora of interesting cases and conflicts are to be found. For example, there is “destruction art,” in which the artwork is part of a performance of destruction or has the inherent intention to destroy itself.

Artists Gustav Metzger and Raphael Montanez Ortiz are well-known in this field; Ortiz ritually smashed old grand pianos to pieces with a hammer (Stiles and Selz 2012). Stiles (2005) remarks that destruction art is interdisciplinary and multinational and that it combines both media and subject matter. Destruction art addresses the phenomenology and epistemology of deliberate degradation. Ephemeral art represents another problem in this regard: whether a reenactment can ever be authentic in the sense that the original has irrevocably decayed, while some art is purely conceptual and, according to the commentators’ point of view, cannot be authentically re-created. Some of these themes will be examined further in chapter 9.

### The Exhibition of Authenticity

Ameri (2004) considers how the authenticity of artworks relates to their disjuncted lives as art exhibits in a museum setting. He sees the museum as institutional resistance to representation; spacing is authenticity’s indispensable alibi, and the museum is seen as its incessant realization. According to Ameri, the art museum is only about 200 years old, dating from the opening of the Louvre in 1793, and this aspect of the concept of the museum is important for his argument concerning the way art has been recontextualized since the Renaissance. Ameri states that the desire for the private practice of art collecting traces its history back to the beginnings of the Renaissance, but it seems that even here, ignoring the collections formed by ancient Egyptian and Babylonian elites renders this view very doubtful.

In 1925 Sir Leonard Woolley (1880–1952) discovered an astonishing collection of 2,500-year-old artifacts while excavating a Babylonian palace that once belonged to Princess Ennigaldi-Nanna, who had careers as a school administrator, museum curator, and high priestess. This is a site of memory, very much a premodern example. Some of the collection of this museum was excavated by King Nabonidus, the princess’s father, and many artifacts were from around 2000 B.C.E., long before the museum exhibition was made and 2,500 years before the site was excavated by Woolley (Wilson 2009; Woolley 1982).

The exhibited material included a *kendurru*, a Kassite boundary marker inscribed with a snake and emblems of several gods, and part of a statue of King Shulgi (ruled 2029–1982 B.C.E.). Remarkably, the museum exhibits were labeled with tablets or clay cylinder drums with descriptions in three different languages, a multilingual approach that most



## The Exhibition of Authenticity

museums today could not match. The works of art in this museum were from many different times and places and were neatly arranged and labeled. Some of the artifacts were as old to the princess as the fall of the Roman Empire is to us. This remarkable discovery by Woolley, in its neatly labeled Babylonian museum context, shows that the human desire for forming museum collections of artifacts from past societies, which performed functions within those societies that the artifacts were now separated from, predates the Western conception of the desire for collecting artifacts of different civilizations. The rarity of the survival of this kind of archaeological evidence suggests that this is not a unique case, just one that managed to survive and be recognized for what it was.

According to Ameri, the Middle Ages were as unaware of the nature of “art” as were ancient Greece and Egypt, an idea not everyone would agree with. Nor would everyone concur with Benjamin’s observation concerning the reclassification of statues from their “cult value” to their “collectible” status as being part of a modern interaction with artifacts of this kind. However, the museum collection of Ennigaldi-Nanna also included statues, seen as collectible artifacts 2,500 years ago, and the multilingual labels suggest that visitors to the museum were able to read the labels in the language of their choice to obtain information concerning the cultural affiliation of the artifacts and where they were from. Ancient Babylonian documents show that Ennigaldi-Nanna’s father, King Nabonidus (reigned 556–539 B.C.E.), was one of the first examples of an elite personage engaged in *restoration*, in repairing a statue of Sargon of Akkad (died 2215 B.C.E.), and that Nabonidus built a new temple over the old (Grayson 1973) “without altering it [the

foundation] one finger-length,” which provides a very early example of preservation: an attempt to keep something in the state in which it was found, without undue alteration of form or substance, an ethic entirely modern in archaeology and conservation.

A sixth-century B.C.E. cuneiform tablet (Grayson 1973:47) reads: “He also discovered inside that old foundation a statue of Sargon, father of Naram Sin. Half of the head was missing, crumbled so that no one could discern his face. On account of his reverence for the gods and respect for sovereignty, he brought expert craftsmen and had the head of that statue and its face restored.”

Not only does the evidence indicate that the concepts of both *restoration* and *preservation* can be traced back at least to King Nabonidus, the *intangible authenticity* associated with the artifacts as cult objects in Babylonia resulted in spoliated statues being removed, usually to Assyria, where they remained in captivity until their possible return to the original shrines (Beaulieu 1993:241–242). Rather than incur the capture of their gods and the resulting implications of such capture—namely, that the gods were abandoning the city and calling for its destruction—cities often tried to prevent the transfer of the statues to enemy territory, as the statues were imbued with the sacred essence of the god himself. This is a well-documented example, but there are probably many others that are less well-known or that have been destroyed in the course of time.

The Great Sphinx, probably erected during the reign of Pharaoh Khafra (circa 2558–2532 B.C.E.), has been the subject of several campaigns of restoration (Hawass 2005). Pharaoh Thutmose IV (died 1391 B.C.E.), who around 1400 B.C.E. freed the Sphinx from the desert sand that had almost completely buried

## The Cult of Authenticity



**Figure 2.13.** Ruins of the city of Ur, site of one of the first museums in the world, dating from about 530 B.C.E. The museum was formed by Princess Ennigaldi-Nanna, who had been tutored by her father, King Nabonidus, an antiquarian and antiques restorer. (Image by M. Lubinski, courtesy of Creative Commons Share Alike 2.0)

it, erected his famous “dream stela,” built a retaining wall to hold back the sand, and carried out restoration of part of the body of the Sphinx, with limestone blocks carved to hold up part of the surface. This restoration campaign, some 3,500 years ago, may be one of the earliest such interventions with a work of art, and how fitting that this should be for the great enigma of the Sphinx.

Ameri highlights the importance of the collections of the Wunderkammer and Kunsthammer, the cabinet and the gallery, which catalyzed the demand for works of art, spurring the creation of numerous fakes for the collector and in turn creation of the field of art history to determine if collected works were authentic or not. Amir states that the emphasis

in forming a collection for a cabinet was on the authentic. However, this did not prevent collectors paying huge amounts of money for entirely spurious forgeries made from different animal components, as Figure 2.14 illustrates. The object is a merman. In the medieval period, these were collected as real beings. They were also collected as authentic, or at least extraordinary, artifacts, for cabinets of curiosities in the Renaissance period as well. The fact that they still reside in museum collections testifies to their historical existence as real artifacts from a different time and culture of belief.

Regarding the desire to collect only original works of art that are not copies, Ameri (2004:84) writes, “The copy poses no apparent threat so long as it is in reference to

## Authenticity: Contingences and Intentions



**Figure 2.14.** Ningyo specimen; papier-mâché body and fish tail. The medieval period is a complex one in terms of its relationship with material authenticity. This merman entered the Wellcome Collection and was purchased by the Horniman Museum and Gardens on September 2, 1919. (Image courtesy of Horniman Museum and Gardens and Heini Schneebeli)

another reality, at the end of the journey, in another place, so long as its origin is on the outside. The museum is, in other words, the indispensable reserve to the economy that regulates the widespread and free circulation of images outside the museum.” This is a museological view of the nature of the problem of copies, which will be examined in greater detail in a later chapter.

### Authenticity: Contingences and Intentions

The conservator-restorer may still be largely wedded to the material authenticity of a work of art, but even within the conservation field, that is not true for many kinds of objects. Conservators create surrogates of modern

artworks because an original is undisplacable or has been totally lost to degradation. Some of these surrogates and their public display as works of art often prove controversial. In ethnographic conservation debates, the intangible significance of what is authentic may be greater than the material authenticity (Clavir 1994; Jadzinska 2012; Mundy 2007; Skowranek 2007; Starling 2007).

To expand upon the theme of the contingent nature of authenticity, it can be regarded as a concept that is valid within a certain cultural milieu, a semiotic embedding of the nature of what authenticity is; that is one way of looking at the problem. Vanlaethem and Poisson (2008), quoted in Hermens and Fiske (2009:10), write of a pragmatic semiotics that

## The Cult of Authenticity

offers a theory of production. They argue, “Authenticity is not a particular quality of [a] monument—the continued existence of its material or its ‘prime’ signification (the one invested in it by its creator)—but a judgment, a semiotic construct, inseparable from the context in which it is developed with the involvement of people and from the aims being pursued.”

This puts the case for the interaction between authenticity and our intentions; it is the stakeholders who will decide what judgment they will make concerning the authenticity of a work of art. As far as works of art are concerned, it is also highly relevant to think of the problems inherent in authenticity debates to be analyzed in terms of conceptual, aesthetic, or material authenticity rather than as semiotic constructs based on aims and context alone.

An essential question here is: How revered is the artist’s intent and what is meant by reference to an artist’s intent? Is the intent explicated by the created work of art or is it only understood by referring to the psychological state of the artist? Can an intention be fully revealed by the artist or does the intention only become obvious when the work is explained to you, the viewer? These kinds of questions gave rise to a famous paper published in 1946 that sought to define the problem of intent as “The Intentional Fallacy” (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946).

The intentional fallacy is the assertion that the meaning of a work of art does not necessarily reside with the intention of the artist and that artists may not be capable of deciding what their works mean to a viewer or exactly what their intentions were or how effectively these intentions can be interrogated. Wimsatt and Beardsley also argued for an “Affective Fallacy,” which proposes that the

subjective or emotional reactions to a work of art are irrelevant to the authentic nature of the work itself, since its objective structure itself should contain the meaning of the work.

This has resulted in the formation of two schools of thought regarding the issue of the intent of the artist: the intentionalists and the anti-intentionalists. An early pragmatic stance invoking neither camp was taken by Henry Aitken (1955), who thought there was nothing mysterious about artists’ intentions. They were not, in Aitken’s view, private entities to which no one could gain access. He believed that knowledge of intentions regarding a work could be arrived at in dozens of ways to allow a synthesis of relevant information concerning an artist’s intentions.

Intentionalists argued that the creation of the artist, his or her psychological state, and his or her personality affected the disposition of the artwork itself and that the art could not be understood without that inquiry. Anti-intentionalists argued that the relevance of intent is only to be found within the artwork itself, not in the unknown inner workings of the psyche of the artist (Dykstra 1996). A related issue here is the view that when an artwork leaves the artist, it is in the state that defines the original; this is known as ontological contextualism. The opposing view is that of the constructivist approach to art, which sees the ongoing relationship of the work of art with time as defining its meanings, not necessarily related to its time of creation (Gracyk 2012).

In terms of both ethnographic art and modern art (Gordon 2014) the artist’s intent may be viewed as desirable if not fundamental to the conservation of contemporary artistic creations. However, this aim may be compromised or liable itself to various disputes concerning “intention” over and above the

## Authenticity: Contingences and Intentions

problem of the so-called intentional fallacy. Dykstra (1996) enumerates 11 different states or agencies that may have import on the problem of intention, namely: the biographical motives of the artist; aims and outcomes; expression in terms of media; inherent creative spirit; the artist's speaking; the artist's telling; the artist's expressive character; the artwork's aesthetic expression; the artwork's appeal for reference and characterization; the artwork's aesthetic agency; and the moral effect of the artwork. On the subject of biographical motives, there may be ulterior motives connected to fame or commercial success. Dykstra (1996) writes that when curators and others approach an artwork with this perspective, they are motivated to uncover evidence of artistic, social, cultural, or romantic influences on the life of the artist, which tends to affirm the ontological contextualism of the object as a single fixed entity. Under aims versus outcomes, Dykstra (1996) writes, "When we think that the artist aims at a certain result, we may be thinking that the artist conceives the work in his or her head and is confronted with the problem of realizing it in a chosen medium. This way of thinking divides artistic creativity into two parts: purely technical skill with media follows a purely mental formulation."

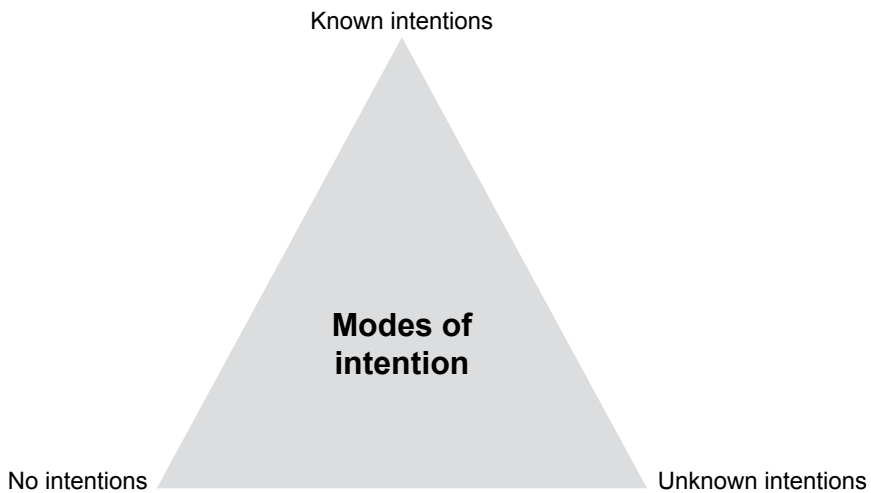
By expression in media, Dykstra (1996) includes the characteristics of a chosen media, which may itself influence the development and realization of the creative concept. From this point of view, a pentimento becomes an incidental disclosure that reveals the course of the creative effort of the artist.

*Inherent creative spirit* relates to the conception of artistic creativity as broadly purposive; artistic creativity can be viewed as a personal quality. From this viewpoint, artists and their media share equal responsibility for the

realization of aims and inclinations. Under the category *artist's speaking*, artists can be thought of as interlocutors who communicate to viewers through their work, making an analogy between artwork and language. The *artist's telling* refers to another sense of conveyed meaning, in which artists are uniquely situated to be seen as the authentic interpreters of the meaning their work conveys. The *expressive character* approach to intention maintains that the artist's personality and worldview are reflected by his or her work and represented in it. The artwork's *aesthetic expression* is often stated to relate to the artwork exhibiting an intention itself. This approach reflects the contemporary hermeneutical idea that a work of art is a potential source of discourse that interacts with the viewer in different ways. The artwork's *appeal for reference and characterization* is related to Gestalt art theory. A work of art may be thought to have an intention because it makes analytic demands on the viewer. The power of an artwork to make an *appeal for relevance* is determined by its ability to create a reality common to the viewer and the artwork itself. The artwork's *aesthetic agency* can be seen as part of idealist art theory in that a work of art in itself possesses the means and ability to act and create particular effects. The *moral effect* of the artwork is taken from the work of Kuhns (1960), who finds that some works of art, in all their artistic and aesthetic qualities, are subject to evaluation of what they ought to do or be. The artwork has an intention in that it exhibits moral and intellectual content.

Dykstra (1996) draws some interesting conclusions from his work: that following the artist's intention could not be a basic principle of art conservation; that its narrow focus brought it into conflict with art connoisseurship, the degradation of artist's materials, and

## The Cult of Authenticity



**Figure 2.15.** Modes of intention. The problem of artist's intention interacts with the construction of authenticity in the work. The artist's intention can be framed in a variety of ways, from an ontological contextualism as a fixed entity, from the intentionalists to the anti-intentionalists. Even the declaration that the artist has no intention in creating a work, especially in the postmodern milieu, can be taken as an intention in its own right. With artists who are no longer alive, or who lived a long time ago, we may only be able to guess at their intentions. (Diagram by the author)

different historical explanations. According to Dykstra (1996:24), "Critical debate surrounding the intentional fallacy illustrates significant obstacles to defining and judging artist's intent, and philosophical explanation of the autonomy of artworks contradicts its authority over the artwork as a whole." In calling for an informed interdisciplinary debate on this subject, Dykstra had to wait several years before seeing these concerns as increasingly critical to the preservation, destruction, and replication of modern and contemporary artworks in the twenty-first century. Meanwhile, the philosophers have been engaged with this topic extensively, especially since the 1960s (see, for example, Carroll 2000; Livingston 2005; Noordhof 2002; Olsen 1977; Savile 1968; and Scruton 1974). Paisley Livingston (2005) has devoted an entire book to the subject of art and intention. It reviews the post hoc constructions

of interpreters, the epiphenomenal nature of intentions if they have minimal importance in terms of description, and the desire of intentionalists to overcome these arguments. Livingston notes that, on the other hand, an exclusive focus on the self-understanding of the artist can obscure crucial dimensions of the context of creation. An alternative view was presented by Roger Collingwood (1938), who thought that all art was a collaborative venture and who was heavily critical of "aesthetic individualism," emphasizing the debt that the artist paid to the cultural milieu and the material reality of the work.

Intentionalist psychology is used to refer to an attribution of conscious or unconscious mental states, while *intention* could be defined as a subjective probability that a person will perform some behavior. These minimalist views have been criticized, since not all intentional activities are motivated or created by

a single act of volition. Livingston (2005:4) writes, “We could say that if a sculptor intends to create a statue, what this means is that the artist desires or wants to create the statue and has some relevant beliefs about means to that end. It may also mean that the artist believes that they will create the statue, or at least try to do so; in another version . . . what the artist believes is only that it is not impossible to create the statue.”

The complexities of the intention of the artist in terms of literature and music are more closely related to the activities of philosophers, who deal primarily with words, so it comes as a disappointment that the insightful book by Livingston is completely preoccupied with literary text, fiction, authorship, works, versions, and fictional truth, despite being called *Art and Intention*.

Livingston discusses only three artworks in the entire book, noting that it is quite common to draw a distinction between complete and unfinished works of art, giving the example of a painting by Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675), *View of Delft* (1660–1661), which was covered with layers of colored varnish by “inept” restorers to give the picture an allure of age. Vermeer had added several pentimenti (Wadum 1996), including painting over a figure in the foreground. Livingston writes: “Such beliefs orientated a costly and elaborate restoration that was begun in 1994 and terminated two years later.” In fact, there was nothing particularly inept about the historical restorations carried out on this seminal work by Vermeer, which was restored several times after 1822. The painting suffered an accident in 1876 when a curtain rod collapsed on it and created a hole in the center (Wadum 1996:69), which was subsequently filled and restored. The painting was relined in 1875. In keeping with the desired aesthetic of the

nineteenth/early twentieth century, a colored varnish was added over the painting after the discolored varnishes of previous restoration campaigns were removed. The most recent restoration operation was in 1994, when removal of the varnish layer applied in 1956 was carried out and damaged areas of original oil pigment were retouched in water color pigments over a protection varnish (to allow for later removal if necessary). The fully restored painting was then varnished with dammar resin with the addition of a UV stabilizer. In all probability, the *View of Delft* will have to be cleaned and revarnished again in 50 to 100 years. The problem with the philosophical evaluation of this action by Livingston is the pejorative view that the action constitutes “such beliefs.” In the context of trying to remain true to the artist’s original intention, the belief in the necessity for yet further restoration procedures is well founded. It is based on a critical appraisal of the surviving evidence of the nature of the work and what has happened to it over its several campaigns of restoration.

The material authenticity of the desired restorations underlies the perpetuation of the conceptual authenticity of the painting itself as a work of art. When a work of art is considered to be completed and possesses all the characteristics desired of it, Livingston (2005:54) describes it as an example of “aesthetic” completion without assuming that this completed image is purely a matter of sensual recognition or validation. He contrasts this with Romantic and Baroque monumental or sculptural fragments that deliberately lack aesthetic completeness. The work is aesthetically complete qua ruin. Livingston calls these examples of “genetic” completion and says that a work is genetically complete only if its maker or makers decide it is so. How

## The Cult of Authenticity

helpful these distinctions are is debatable. Another way of looking at the intentionality of works is to invoke the concept of age-value (Riegl 1982 [1903]): that incomplete works are actually aesthetically complete because they incorporate the conception of time's effects on a hypothetically complete column, arch, or sculpture.

In any event, Livingston does not engage with the language of restoration or its attendant hermeneutic concerns, which are in fact more subtle than the analysis he presents here. In discussion of the appreciation of aged monuments, Riegl (1982 [1903]:73) writes, "Imperfection, a lack of completeness, a tendency to dissolve shape and color, characteristics that are in complete contrast with those of modern, newly created, works." These follies can be enjoyed as a historical trope as part of an associative longing to experience the effects of age on materials as they become embedded in a landscape or garden, appearing to have stood there for generations. There is less sympathetic understanding of paintings that are deliberately unfinished, with missing portions that have fallen from rotten canvases or worm-eaten wooden panels. These paintings, if created by well-known masters such as Vermeer, will be restored to complete the images of the works. Similarly, if an admired ruin begins to crumble away, it too may be restored to allow the original intention of the fragmented work to remain on view for the century to come, which does not imply that it will be re-created in more than its ruined state.

In the intellectual battle between the intentionalists and the anti-intentionalists regarding works of art, one of the most influential figures of the twentieth century has been Michel Foucault, who has questioned the authentic existence of the author as such. Foucault (1979:145) writes:

The author-function is not spontaneously created as the attribution of a discourse to an individual. It results from a complex operation that constructs a certain rational being called the author. Of course critics try to give a realistic status to this rational being, discerning in the individual, psychological "depth," creative power, a "project" and the originating site of writing. But in fact what in the individual agent is designated as author (or what makes an individual an author) is but our projection, in more or less psychological terms, of the treatment to which we subject texts, the connexions that we make, the traits that we establish as pertinent, the continuities that we recognize, the exclusions that we practice. All these operations vary according to periods and types of discourse.

Livingston (2003:67) objects, remarking that if the psychology of the author is a projection and never a discovery, how can Foucault (1979) claim that the psychology of readers and interpreters is any different? Should Foucault speak only of reader functions or interpreter effects? But this could result in an endless series of regressions, and Livingston clearly does not agree with Foucault here regarding the intention of the author and trying to come to grips with it. The only salient example Livingston discusses in the visual arts is the painting by David Bailly (1584–1657) *Vanitas with Self-Portrait*, 1651, whose production, in terms of the artist's intention, cannot be authentically deduced from a visual examination of the painting itself, however many other significant inferences or aesthetic judgments an observer could draw from trying to understand it.





**Figure 2.16.** *Vanitas Still Life with a Portrait of a Young Painter* by David Bailly, 1651. Oil on wood; 89.5 x 122 cm. (Image courtesy of the Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden, and Jan Arkesteijn, uploaded from Web Gallery of Art)

The painting shows a youngish man sitting next to a table arrayed with numerous objects that signify the transience of life. He holds up what is almost certainly a painting of himself as an older man, in keeping with the *vanitas* subject matter of the work. The image is replete with dying flowers, a skull, a snuffed-out candle, an hourglass, and many other objects. The bubbles are a symbol of the impermanence and fragility of life. The viewer can tell he is a painter by the maulstick he holds in his right hand. The stick is padded with leather and used to support the brush close to the canvas. The man holds a portrait, perhaps a painting actually by the artist himself, in which he is shown as a much older man. Hanging from the table is a piece

of parchment with the artist's signature and a date of 1651.

If the viewer assumes that this is a self-portrait made when the artist was young, the viewer will naturally think that this is a self-portrait showing an artist who has depicted himself holding up an image of his aged self in a time to come. The painter therefore shows himself as anticipating a future of aging, transience, and death. But the picture may not be correctly interpreted in this sense. In fact, when Bailly painted this picture, he was actually much older than the young man sitting at the desk; the present moment depicts the image of the painter as his younger self. His actual appearance is shown in the portrait of the older man he is holding.

## The Cult of Authenticity

There is a further complication here: Bailly was 67 years old when he painted the picture and would have looked even older than the oval portrait of himself, yet another reflection on the passage of time and a very clever allegory by the painter, invoking several states of being at different times of his life on the passage to death. As Livingston points out (2003:172), the interpretation of the painting is dependent on the historical facts of the life of the artist and when he painted it. An interpretation of an anti-intentionalist sort would not be able to decide if the depictions of the painter were prospective or retrospective. There is a further question here: Since many *vanitas* paintings were made in Calvinist Leiden, is the viewer supposed to ascribe to the Calvinist philosophy that our present lives are simply degraded and venal? Is our appreciation of the skill of the artist in depicting our vanities yet another layer of our inability to see beyond the surface of things to their ultimate meaninglessness?

This account privileges the factual historical intent of the picture over the viewer's phenomenological understanding of the painting for himself or herself. If an experience of viewing the painting is an authentic event for those concerned, if they derive an aesthetic reaction qua the painting, does it invalidate their response to the work if they see it as a picture of a younger man holding up a portrait of an older and think it is a self-portrait of the young artist as he existed at the time the painting was finished? After all, the numerous levels of symbolic meaning attached by the artist to the objects on the table cannot all be recovered and are debated by art historians. What is the significance of Saint Sebastian? Is that related to the plague that took Bailly's wife from him? Does it have significance in terms of self-sacrifice or death in general?

The small portrait may well be of Bailly's wife in life, but it is not possible to know the full extent of the artist's intentions here, so our own ponderings are our own thoughts on the work, not the intentions of the artist, even if knowing something of the artist's intentions deepens our understanding of the work.

Freedom of the audience to construe their own meanings regarding works of art is one of the perspectives discussed by Andy Hamilton (2008, 2013), who invokes Adorno's dictum on the *inexhaustibility of interpretation of high art*, how succeeding generations value or reassess works of art and how these interpretations may differ depending on the cultural milieu in which these views are expressed. One of the troubling features of Hamilton's 2013 essay is its distinction between the relative merits of "high art" and, by implication, "low art" and the assertion that high art has aimed for truth and that the act of artistic creation, in terms of high art, is essentially truth-directed (Hamilton 2013:258). The distinction between high art that aims for truth and low art that apparently does not is hard to accept in the twenty-first century. Is a personal love poem by Leonard Cohen sung by the artist himself in 1983 an example of high art or low art as seen from the perspective of 2016? Does the phrase "God saves" from the Sex Pistols song "God Save the Queen" invoke rich philosophical questions as to whether there is a God to save or not save; whether, if there is a God, he or she saves or not; whether God can be asked to save the queen in particular at the expense of less-elevated members of the British population; or whether God is capable of saving at all? It is an example of a series of higher thoughts regarding truth emanating from a low and degraded artistic expression, which is how Hamilton might categorize the songs of the Sex Pistols, as

## Authenticity: Contingences and Intentions

compared with a song written by Schubert? Or is Hamilton's entire concept based on a false premise? The argument is beyond the scope of the present text. The principal point at issue is how authenticity interacts with the artist's intentionality.

The tendency of the conservation profession is to hold the opinion that the meaning of a work and the intentions of the artist are logically equivalent, a view that Livingston (2003:139) describes as "absolute intentionalism." This implies that all authentic meanings of the work exist in a direct relationship with the artist and that no other voice holds this authentic message. Livingston gives a useful summary of different stances here: *Antirealist absolute intentionalism* holds that all meanings of the work are intended by the author but regards such meanings as projections of the interpreter; *fictionalist intentionalism* involves the interpreter imagining or believing that the artwork was created with an array of decisive intentions. Here the artist is not thought to be identical to the agent or agents who actually created the work. Under this rubric could be included posthumous casts of Degas's wax dancers, which are fictional to the aims of the artist but carry forward the intention of his agents and successors to ensure that bronze versions of the wax figures are reified by museum acquisitions. *Moderate fictionalist intentionalism* is similar while allowing that some meanings of a work were not intended by the author. *Textualist intentionalism* holds that meanings are determined by intentions, where these intentions are viewed as immanent in the artwork and can be read by an observer as if the artist intended it to be such. *Conditionalist intentionalism* regards the possible set of meanings discerned in the work to be those the artist "could have intended." *Absolute anti-intentionalism* holds that some

meanings intended by the artist are not in fact meanings of the work and that these may be unintentional. Livingston (2003:141) writes: "Absolute anti-intentionalism holds that authorial intentions are never decisive or determinant with regard to a work's meanings, and that the former are in some sense irrelevant to the interpreter's tasks."

A good example of issues related to this discussion of intentionalism is the work of Tino Sehgal, a German artist living in Holland, whose conceptual art includes *This Is New* (2007), in which a museum attendant barks out headlines to museum visitors from the day's newspaper. For *This Objective of That Object* (2004), five people with their backs to the visitor chant, "The objective of this work is to become the object of a discussion." If the visitor does not respond, they slowly sink to the ground. If the visitor says something, they then enter into a discussion (Lubow 2010).

The intention of the artist is that nothing of the work is recorded or documented, not even the instructions given to museum attendants. Sehgal's work could be regarded as the intention to preserve no specific intention regarding his work. It is all ephemeral and cannot be reperformed as a result. Absolute intentionalism of this kind, the determined intent not to document, is at variance with the conservation paradigm to preserve, so whose voice gets followed: the voice of the artist or the voice of the museum conservator and curator? The museum often invokes the concept of *conditionalist intentionalism* for many contemporary works on exhibition, negating or ignoring the authorial intent of the original artist. In such cases, the idea that what is being followed "could have been the intent of the artist" is one of the legitimating claims; another is: "We are preserving the artist's work so that future viewers can experience

what the artist intended.” Neither of these conditionalist stances can be easily reconciled with the intention of the artist.

### **Intentionality and the Production of Fakes**

Problems with the artist’s intent are important for how the original artist’s creation is regarded. It may be that the intent of the artist was to ape, copy, or re-create works of art in the style of another artist. If the intention was to deceive, these works may be fakes, forgeries, or a complex postmodern manipulation of the audience. This book investigates how the interaction between intention and forgeries can be revealed.

Even here, there are problems with the intent to deceive and the purposes of that intention. When Venice was newly built, cities were supposed to have pedigrees that enabled them to claim that they had been built in the distant past. Fake sculptures were therefore fabricated to create an admired past for Venice, linking it to Saint Mark, an association that in fact never existed (Hoving 1997:41–43). The original saint associated with Venice was Saint Theodore of Amasea, but because he was seen as too closely linked with the old power of Byzantium, he was replaced with Mark the Evangelist, whose body was stolen from Alexandria in 828 C.E. Geary (1990:92) notes that documents suggest that the body of Saint Claudia was substituted for Saint Mark in Alexandria and that merchants responsible for the theft hid the body of Saint Mark under pork on its way to Venice to deter the Saracens from examining the cargo. In commenting on the documents that legitimized this switch, Hoving (1997) writes: “The first is a forged document, known officially as the *Praedestinatio*. According to this Saint Mark had a vision telling him he’d be

buried in San Marco on the rialto. This bit of fakery was inserted into the older legends of the peregrinations of the saint to establish a ‘prehistory.’” Here the intention was to create a forged past, but a past that supported and re-created the legitimacy of Venice as an ancient city-state. Such historic forgeries cannot be uncreated and are accepted as real and authentic by most observers. When wandering around St. Mark’s Square, few wonder what happened to the chapel of Saint Theodore of Amasea or contemplate the forged documents that made his presence authentic both materially and conceptually.

There are many other scenarios. For example, during the medieval period, the creation of fakes was intended to provide the Christian faithful with yet another head of John the Baptist to be venerated and to perform miracles for the believer.

Some fakes made with the intention to deceive have been on display for decades or even hundreds of years. A typical example is the ancient Egyptian limestone statue of Queen Tetisheri (Seventeenth–Eighteenth Dynasty), shown in Figure 2.17, discovered by Sir E. A. Wallis Budge (1857–1934) in Luxor in 1890. It has been on exhibition in the British Museum for 100 years. Its inscription was found to have been copied from a now lost fragmentary version. Two hieroglyphic offering inscriptions that run along the lateral faces of the throne were shown by British Egyptologist W. V. Davies in 1984 to be a cause for concern. The statue was identical to one in Cairo, but a few signs were missing or wrongly interpreted. The cracks and wear looked to Davies as if they had been made with a chisel; he thought the statue was a fake. He was right. Scientific analysis showed traces of modern pigments. Does the endorsement of scholars and the admiration of

## Intentionality and the Production of Fakes

the public over several generations have any impact on the biography of this object? Some scholars still believe the statue is genuine, but with added inscription, and still maintain that the sculpture is authentic even if the inscription is wrong, although the traces of pigment that were thought to be modern, determined through scientific connoisseurship, may be additional evidence for fakery.

Does that mean that the semiotic construct of the authentic work, validated in aesthetic terms by millions of visitors over the past 100 years, has to be negated? In general, it does, and the fake Egyptian sculpture has

been removed from view. One could argue, however, that the context in which the appreciation of the sculpture developed is a judgment that involved many people over an extended period of time, a semiotic process that functioned independently of scientific evaluation of whether the sculpture was ancient Egyptian or nineteenth century in terms of origins. The view that observer appreciation is more important here could be called an example of contextualism. The semiotic construct of Vanlaethem and Poisson (2008) is only concerned with the presumed paramount importance of the material authenticity of a work of art, which is seen as antithetical to its continued diachronically authentic state. The validation of the context of its existence, its presently existing condition, or the need for restoration is made by groups of people invested with special interests or cultural relationships with the artwork in question.

The difference is the variable application of criterion to the problem of deciding what is authentic or not. Let us suppose that the artwork Vanlaethem and Poisson are talking about is itself a fake. For example, it can be scientifically demonstrated that the stones used to build Anasazi cliff dwellings at Manitou Springs in the 1900s were taken from several hundred miles to the southwest, from actual, collapsed Anasazi dwellings near the Four Corners area (Lovata 2007:49). The construction is a fake. Does that mean it can be taken back to its original location or placed in storage to avoid clouding the modern mind with its inauthentic presence? The answer, of course, is no: There is no going back. Tourists flock to the “site,” and no one is about to deny its semiotic import. The two cases are viewed very differently, even though scientific evidence has been brought to bear on both



**Figure 2.17.** A fake limestone statue of Queen Tetisheri. In the collections of the British Museum, the statue was on display for 100 years and was a very popular exhibit. (Image courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London)

## The Cult of Authenticity

events. Both works are deemed to be inauthentic, but different decisions were reached regarding each example. The case-sensitive nature of decisions regarding authenticity does not necessarily mean that scientific testimony can be endorsed in all of them or that scientific testimony can be ignored in all of them either, however troubled the viewer may be by fake monuments or fake works of art.

What may be troubling in an archaeological context, which relies heavily on scientific methods of evaluation, is that the fake monument is an inauthentic archaeological construction, which the purist would not regard as real. If such a restoration or creation were carried out last month, there would be international outcry over the desecration of an authentic, collapsed, and deserted Anasazi structure on an archaeological site. The semiotic process recognizes this dislocation but argues that what has happened in terms of human appreciation of the monument is more significant than any attempt to return the monument to a more conceptually authentic state.

Can the same logic be applied to the Egyptian statue of Queen Tetisheri? Does 100 years of the ongoing biography of the object on display to the public validate its continued existence as a museum exhibit? After all, both are archaeological artifacts. In terms of representation of the Anasazi to the public, it could be argued that the conceptual authenticity of the site is of greater significance than the material authenticity of its existence, while in the case of the much-admired statue of Queen Tetisheri, its materialistic falsity cannot be allowed to override its semiotic existence.

In the influential book *The Social Life of Things*, Appadurai (1986:10–45) writes of artifacts viewed as commodities. He writes

that discontinuities in the knowledge that accompanies the movement of commodities create problems in terms of authenticity and expertise, resulting in authenticity and the expertise to establish that authenticity becoming increasingly necessary. If objects partake of social lives, if they are allowed to possess social biographies, then part of a biography could involve a change in status, a change in value in terms of being viewed as a commodity or in terms of how authenticity is perceived by viewers. Object biographies are potentially important in terms of conservation. Deciding which biographies have particular significance at any given time may be problematic, but a decision made by the conservator will impact these biographical states. The narrative favored by the conservator becomes the story of the artwork itself.

In an essay on the concept of the “signature” in the modern art world, Baudrillard (1981:103) writes:

Until the nineteenth century, the copy of an original work had its own value, it was a legitimate practice. In our own time the copy is illegitimate, inauthentic: it is no longer “art.” Similarly, the concept of forgery has changed—or rather, it suddenly appears with the advent of modernity. Formerly painters regularly used collaborators or “negroes”: one specialized in trees, another in animals. The act of painting, and so the signature as well, did not bear the same mythological insistence upon authenticity—that moral imperative to which modern art is dedicated and by which it becomes modern—which has been evident ever since the relation to illustration and hence the very meaning of the artistic object changed with the act of painting itself.

## Intentionality and the Production of Fakes

An ancient reversal concerns a Mesopotamian ritual of the eighth to fifth centuries B.C.E. known as the Mis-pi (Dick 1999). The Mis-pi incantation involved the creation of a divine being in material form. Its authenticity depended on denial by craftsmen of their agency and identity as creators of the cult object. With the craftsmen taking their signatures off the statue, it became authentically divine (Dodd, personal communication 2016), an interesting antecedent to some of the authenticity studies of the medieval period.

The concept of the emergence of the object as an artistic event in itself can be traced back to the Renaissance (Appadurai 1986:46), and this is where some commentators stop. Lenain (2011) argues that the notion can be backdated to the early medieval period. But this concept of the object could also be thought of as implied by Pliny in 79 C.E. for the Greek and Roman world or, following the examples cited by Dutton (2012), for Chauvet cave paintings of 30,000 years ago (Clottes 2003) and Acheulian hand axes approximately 900,000 years ago (Kohn and Mithen 1999). Some of these hand axes were never used and were exceptionally finely made in order to be admired and seen as aesthetically beautiful in the Paleolithic period itself. It has to be recognized that the opinions of Baudrillard regarding modern works of art—perhaps here one should say postmodern to allow Baudrillard an escape clause—are completely outdated.

In the twenty-first century, the copy per se is no longer an illegitimate child but an object that challenges the concept of uniqueness. The work may be deliberately created by the artist himself as a valid form of artistic expression, as a copy or replica as a commentary on originality, or in emulation of previous artists. The work might be used as a controversial

but legitimate surrogate for the original work of art. This work may no longer be extant or may have had no definable material authenticity and exist only as a conceptually authentic event.

Sherrie Levine and Elaine Sturtevant have been engaged with the subjects of replication, emulation, and difference over the past 20 or 30 years. Levine is best known for her work *After Walker Evans*; Levine rephotographed images taken in Alabama from an Evans exhibition catalog dating from 1936 for her own exhibition in 1979. The estate of Walker Evans did not approve of this exhibition and regarded the appropriation as an act of copyright infringement, acquiring all the rephotographed photographs to prevent them from being sold. The self-referential nature of some of this art is a commentary on the art itself. In the case of Sherrie Levine, another artist has created works on a website called *After Sherrie Levine.Com*, a commentary on the commentary on the replication of modern art. This site even provides downloadable photographs, created by artist Michael Mandiberg, of the rephotographs of the photographs. Each downloadable print comes with a certificate of authenticity. The site includes a one-act play by Mandiberg, consisting of a supposed interview between Sherrie Levine and Jeanne Siegel, that has every semblance of veracity. What Levine thinks about this site and its authentic state is unclear.

In the sense that the work of Levine undermines the uniqueness of the original, the artist copying Levine makes a statement concerning the legitimacy of copying her copies as another revolutionary act, another statement in the face of authenticity. One could also argue that the apparently facile production of copies of copies of photographs, which are, in a sense, facsimiles of the human beings

## The Cult of Authenticity

being photographed, is a deliberate act by Mandiberg to undermine the concept of the artistic legitimacy of Sherrie Levine's work.

The problems of conceptual authenticity, which in conservation are associated with the intangible authenticity of artifacts, are explored by Downey (2012) in an article concerning the appropriation art of Elaine Sturtevant, although some do not consider her productions to be an act of appropriation. In 1961 Claes Oldenburg opened *The Store*, which was full of painted plaster models of blueberry pies, outsize hamburgers, and a wide selection of handmade undergarments, most of which have subsequently been inadvertently destroyed, lost, or discarded.

Six years later, Sturtevant opened *The Store of Claes Oldenburg*, with numerous replicas of Oldenburgian plaster pies. Oldenburg was initially supportive but became increasingly irate at being "ripped off." Sturtevant has been re-creating other artists' work for more than 40 years, in an engagement of the issues of authenticity, originality, and the conceptualization of singularity. Sturtevant claims that throughout her oeuvre, she is engaged in the "understructure" of an artwork and that by engaging with the same techniques used by an artist such as Warhol, she creates wholly original artwork. Since X-radiographs, infrared reflectography, and microstratigraphic features of a work of art are commonly



**Figure 2.18.** *Untitled* by Michael Mandiberg, 2001. Digital photograph of a rephotograph by Sherrie Levine of a photograph of a sharecropper family taken by Walker Evans in Alabama in 1936. A commentary on a commentary of emulation, each image comes with a downloadable certificate of authenticity provided by Mandiberg, legitimizing his photographic re-creations. (Image courtesy of Michael Mandiberg)



## Intentionality and the Production of Fakes

referred to as the understructure or as revealing of the understructure, it is hard to accept Sturtevant's view of this in any physical sense rather than as an intangible presence.

These works are not facsimiles, according to Downey (2012), as apparently most were produced from memory. Nor are they an attempt at fakery, as all works are signed and dated by her. Nor can they be dismissed as appropriationist or recuperative. Rather, they are manifestations of a concern for rethinking how the ideals of originality and authenticity prefigure the value of a painting as a conceptual event. Sturtevant, says Downey (2012), produces a moment when the edifices of originality and authenticity, their agreed conditions of possibility, crumble into the unreality of difference through forms of repetition. Do Sturtevant's paintings of Warhol's flowers represent an image of those paintings, or are they more about the artistic "understructure" and the thought processes that produced these images? This distinction is critical: Are viewers looking at copies or are they engaging with the practice of producing art? That is a difficult question to answer. From the perspective of the viewer, the works may indeed appear to be free copies of Warhol's work, but simultaneously they may be authentic works from Sturtevant's viewpoint as she investigates the way in which art is produced by producing free copies of his work in the present.

Many philosophers have things to say about the concept of time and when an artwork is produced. For example, Lyotard (Benjamin 1989:240) writes:

A distinction should be made between the time it takes a painter to paint the picture (the time of production), the time required to look at and understand the work (the time of consumption), the

time to which the work refers (a moment, a scene, a situation, a sequence of events; the time of the diegetic referent, of the story told by the picture), the time it takes to reach the viewer once it has been created (the time of circulation), and finally, perhaps the time the painting is. This principle, childish as its ambitions may be, should allow us to isolate different "sites of time."

The diachronic criteria invoked here do not make any allowance for the time of restoration of a work of art, the time of its decay, and the time during which a similar or identical work (which may be forged) is created. The reception of a forgery may include all stages that an artwork undergoes as referenced by Lyotard. Bracha Ettinger (1992) views the authenticity of works of art as entirely bounded by the relationships between object and observer. Griselda Pollock (2011) quotes a salient passage from Ettinger's work:

Artists continually introduce into culture all sorts of Trojan horses from the margins of their consciousness; in that way, the limits of the Symbolic are transgressed all the time by art. It is quite possible that many work-products carry subjective traces of their creators, but the specificity of works of art is that their materiality cannot be detached from ideas, perceptions, emotions, consciousness, cultural meanings etc., and that being interpreted and reinterpreted is their cultural destiny. This is one reason why works of art are symbologenic.

Not all of us might be enthralled by the view that the materiality of a work of art cannot be detached from ideas concerning

it and the varied cultural meanings attached to it. Where does that leave works of art that have been replicated and that now replace the original. Can they still be regarded as symbiogenic?

How to evaluate traces of biological material of an original artist or original artwork is an interesting question. How does that play into issues of replication? Relics, such as bone, skin, or blood that can be characterized at a molecular level, are the most obvious works that have significant biologically characteristic components. Organic materials, such as feathers, wood, and textiles, can be preserved in corrosion products on important bronze antiquities; such organic materials could not be replicated in a bronze copy of the original. Biological markers are currently being investigated to allow artists to sign their works not only with their signatures but with synthetic DNA (Olewitz 2015). The Locard Exchange Principle states that every interaction leaves a biological trace. Lorenzi (2016) writes of the discovery of a large seated bronze Buddha with a completely mummified Buddhist monk inside it in the collections of the Drents Museum in the Netherlands. The bronze form of the Buddha could be replicated, but the hidden association of its monk skeleton is unique, an intangible authenticity from the point of view of perceptual properties. Cole (2006) records that Italian anthropologist Luigi Capasso has reconstructed a print of Leonardo's left index finger from traces left in ink on 52 pages he had handled. Fingerprints have also been used to authenticate a drip painting attributed to Jackson Pollock found in a thrift store by a retired truck driver. Peter Paul Biro, a forensic art expert, states that a fingerprint found on the store canvas matches one in paint from Pollock's East Hampton, New York, studio. However, as Cole (2006)

points out, there are subjective factors in deciding if fingerprints match each other or not, and the case has not been resolved in favor of the thrift-store Pollock. The ramifications of the biological past have not yet been fully explored in terms of its impact on authenticity.

The concept of authenticity as set out by Gavin Lawrence (personal communication 2012), even within the field of art and restoration, can be employed internally in a variety of ways, while some of its external relationships relate to bad faith, forgery, and creativity. Here a useful distinction can be made between a fake and a forgery. A fake is a copy or work in the style of an artist that is not made to be passed off as the genuine article. For example, it may be a copy of a van Gogh made for the backdrop of a stage performance. This is a *fake* van Gogh. But if the fake is then offered for sale or given as a genuine van Gogh, it is classed as a forgery. This is the sense in which Dutton (2003) uses these two words. Not all authors make this distinction, and many assume that the words *fake* and *forgery* are essentially synonymous. Some authors take an unusual view of this subject. For example, Whittaker and Stafford (1999:204), in the context of twentieth-century production of Stone Age flints, state that *replicas* are made for educational or experimental purposes; *fakes* for deception.

In discussion of the problems of authenticity, particularly as it relates to the medieval period, Thierry Lenain (2011) discerns three essential components of the subversion of the authentic: *stylistic mimicry*, *artificial aging*, and the setting up of a *spurious context of reception*. These are useful criteria to bear in mind. Stylistic mimicry has been used for copying art of all periods, often with no intent to deceive. The mimicking of a style may produce artworks identical in appearance to known works of the artist concerned, or variations of

## Intentionality and the Production of Fakes

the originals but in a closely matched style or technique. For example, Michelangelo carved *Sleeping Cupid* in 1496 in imitation of the original Roman version; stylistically it could be mistaken for a Roman original. Artificial aging may be used to create the appearance that an old work of art should possess, as in modern distressed furniture, but if this aging is clearly known to the buyer, then no forgery is actually committed, just the illusion of age. For example, André Mailfert, a twentieth-century French faker of Louis XVI furniture, produced high-class reproductions that he did not represent as actually dating from the historic period they appeared to originate from (Embree and Scott 2015; Mailfert 1968), despite the replication of original joints, aging, and patination. Some of his productions ended up on display at the Louvre, where they had been assessed as authentic period pieces of Louis XVI (Embree and Scott 2015).

In the case of Michelangelo's *Sleeping Cupid*, the marble sculpture is reputed to have been buried in an acidic earth to artificially age the carving. The art dealer Baldassare del Milanese bought the masterpiece from Michelangelo and sold it to Cardinal Riario of San Giorgio, a noted art collector. However, when the cardinal learned that it was in fact carved by Michelangelo, he demanded his money back, which led to satirical comments about his lack of appreciation for the work of the young genius.

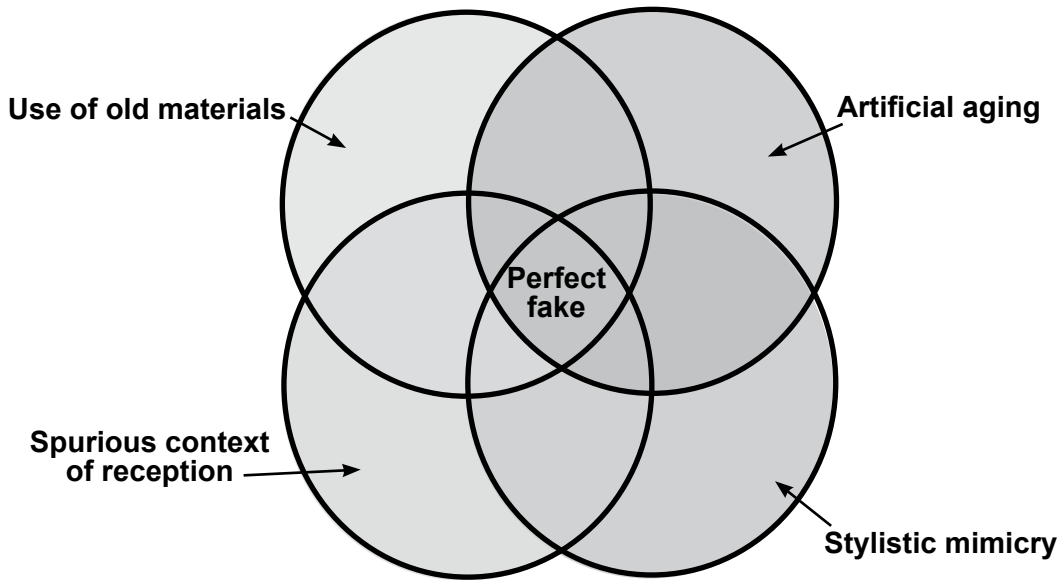
Re-creating the authenticity of age that passes muster scientifically can be practically impossible, which is why such details as surface deterioration, pigment degradation, bronze corrosion, varnish alteration, and stone patination are so important in terms of authentication. The third criterion, the spurious context of reception, is an essential

part of the illusion of authenticity in creating a pedigree for the artwork, to provide it with an essential historical existence. The context of reception could be innocently created, as in a play in which fake paintings by Monet are employed for the purposes of the plot.

More commonly, the serious forger must create an apparently real context in which the fake exists, such as its documentary history, a certificate of authenticity, the deceased relative from whom the artwork came, the country house in which it has resided for hundreds of years, or the site from which it was excavated.

In fact, additional criteria or desiderata can easily be added to these three categories, as Figure 2.19 illustrates. Some forgeries, such as the best work of German forger Christian Goller (Hoving 1997), who used only old materials in creating versions of paintings by German expressionist Otto Mueller (1874–1930) or Eric Hebborn (1934–1996), who used old paper or parchment and bistre ink or silverpoint for his classier drawings of minor Renaissance masters, employ only materials appropriate for the supposed period of manufacture of the work of art (Hebborn 1991). It is these four prerequisites that are required to create the perfect fake. The authenticity of condition as far as the fake is concerned relies upon an understanding of the deterioration and degradation that materials used in the construction of art objects undergo over the course of time. Stylistic mimicry and artificial aging, for example, overlap in a larger zone of Figure 2.19. A fake that looks as if it were made by the master being copied, aged to give the appearance of being produced some time ago, but without a decent provenance, would not be able to be sold as a forgery, even if the use of old materials only required a scientific evaluation to confirm. Often this is never carried out.

## The Cult of Authenticity



**Figure 2.19.** The four criteria for the production of the perfect fake. Three of these criteria are after Lenain (2011), and the author has added the fourth: the use of old materials. The apparent authenticity of the artwork has to be created in terms of style, history, materials, and degradation. Each has to be carried through to a high standard to strive toward the illusion of perfection. (Diagram by the author)

Many organic materials disintegrate completely, and ancient examples of artifacts such as woven baskets are scarce. Some materials, both natural and synthetic, used in wide variety of artworks are unstable and will naturally alter and degrade, especially through inherent vice or through exposure to unsuitable display or storage conditions.

Some kinds of deterioration are viewed as damage, while others are regarded as desirable aspects of aging. For example, a Renaissance painting with craquelure, where large patches have fallen away revealing a bare ground layer, is considered to be damaged, while a Roman bronze with a smooth green corrosion crust is regarded as attractive. In contemporary practice, the green patina would not be stripped away to reveal a gaudy bronze metallic form (Scott 2002) because the patina has come to be valued as an inherent quality of the object itself, as an essential indication

of the authentic passage of time and the existence of the object over that time.

In their efforts to create an artificially aged work of art, forgers have placed paintings in damp cellars, urinated on them, dried them in the blazing sun, added an already old re-dissolved varnish to the surface, deliberately damaged them so that parts of the work have to be professionally restored, and created the craquelure associated with age by a whole plethora of means. Furniture has been thrown into the sea, kept in a pigeon loft and covered with manure to try to patinate the wood, and shot at with buckshot. Bronzes have been buried in old fish and regularly doused with saltwater before being taken to a Viennese wine cellar to be carbonated, followed by boiling in mud. Paper and parchment have been smoked in slow-burning straw and stained with tea or coffee. Ceramics have been broken or buried and filled with wine

## The Appreciation of Authenticity

or unguents, which are allowed to evaporate away, leaving authentic chemical residues. Stone has been buried in soil (as with one of the famous works of Michelangelo), heated, cooled, soaked in oxalic acid or vinegar, and struck with a small pick to create the kind of surface damage associated with age. There is no end to the variety of techniques employed to create an artificially aged work of art. By utilization of increasingly sophisticated scientific techniques, it is often possible to deduce evidence of artificial aging as opposed to natural ageing, although this may not always be the case. Drawings, such as those produced by Hebborn, may defy easy differentiation between artificial aging and natural aging, especially if old materials were used to create the forgery.

Definitions of the meanings of some common words, such as *replica*, *imitation*, *emulation*, and *copy* are hard to achieve in art history and restoration, but it would prove useful in further discussion of the topic of authenticity if some agreement could be reached. For example, the glossary of terms at the end of this book makes reference to *editioned replica*, *authenticated replica*, and three different versions of what *replica* may mean, depending on context.

How can these descriptive terms be applied to the works of Levine, Mandiberg, and Sturtevant mentioned earlier in this chapter? In referring only to itself as a phenomenon, which Mandiberg does twice over, treating art and its replicas as encapsulated within the sphere of art itself, Mandiberg's work exists only within this narrow sphere. That appropriated sphere of art could refer to itself again if someone were to create yet another site after Mandiberg's work. Internally, this action could be viewed as entirely reasonable, as a personal expression of the artist, but externally, the observer would be faced with a series of

diminishing returns, in which copies of copies of copies became legitimized by virtue of the artists' intent to subvert the authenticity of the original in the name of an increasingly vacuous exploration of the nature of artistic creation. There are aesthetic questions here too: If one work by Mandiberg is visually indistinguishable from a work by Levine, and both are in fact works by Evans, which are also visually indistinguishable from the other two artists' work, how are they to be appreciated and accorded significance?

### The Appreciation of Authenticity

The appreciation of authenticity for an individual viewer is very much part of the performative component of authenticity. It may pertain to the notion of what an observer thinks of as "authentic" or "real," or a "copy" or "inauthentic," and that may simply be a mental construct. This is illustrated by the work of Huang et al. (2001) using functional magnetic resonance imaging of the brain and different versions of Rembrandt portraits. Some works were labeled as "copies" rather than "authentic." The researchers found that the designation "copy" evoked stronger responses in the viewer's frontal polar cortex (FPC) and right precuneus, regardless of whether the painting was authentic or not.

Advice given to participants about authenticity had no direct effect on the cortical visual areas responsive to the portraits, but there was a significant psycho-physiological interaction between the FPC and the lateral occipital area, suggesting that these visual areas may be modulated by the FPC. The designation "copy" resulted in stronger activations in the FPC and right posterior precuneus, while the designation "authentic" activated only the orbitofrontal cortex, the latter being associated with reward and monetary gain

## The Cult of Authenticity

The research tended to support the view that aesthetic judgments regarding authenticity are multifaceted and multidimensional. The production of new artworks is generally held to initiate a transaction between the artist and prospective viewers, within a social and cultural context that is often fuzzy and soft-edged, and therefore very susceptible to direction. It is interesting that cognition is mentioned by some philosophers in the context of our view of what authenticity may mean for us. This demonstrates that an observer will respond to the concepts of *copy* and *authentic* in different ways.

A further psychological study was conducted by Newman and Bloom (2012), who investigated why originals were considered more valuable, looking at two possible explanations for any differences. First, original art was thought to be more valuable because of the creative origin of the work and the artist's production. Second, observers felt that an original work was somehow infused with the unique essence of the artist. In one experiment, 180 participants were asked to estimate the monetary value of two paintings they had not seen before, both depicting the same scene, one titled *Son of a Covered Bridge* and the other titled *A Covered Bridge*, both by Jim Rilko. Half the participants were told that two different artists had painted the same scene by coincidence. The other participants were told that one artist had produced one of the paintings and that another artist had seen it and decided to make a copy. All the participants were told that there was only one of each painting in existence. Participants who thought that the two paintings showed the same scene by coincidence tended to rate them as having a similar value. By contrast, participants who thought one painting was a copy of the other tended to value the second painting especially low and to value the first

version of the work especially high. In the final experiment, 256 participants read about either a sculptor or a craftsman and his work creating either a bronze sculpture or a piece of furniture, respectively.

For the participants who read about the sculptor, those who heard that the process was very hands-on tended to rate the value of the sculpture much more highly than those who read that the creative process was hands-off. By contrast, this distinction made far less difference to the valuations made by participants who read about the work of the craftsman. So when an original piece of art is desired, it seems that it is valued not just as an end product but for the originality of the performance that created it. The work of art is thought to have a special quality because it came from the hand of a particular artist. Copies and forgeries, no matter how close to the original, do not achieve the same feeling in the individual, according to the authors of this study.

These two experiments are open to a number of possible arguments as to how successful they were in proving that the essence of the artist is of paramount importance. Perhaps if both works of art used in the first experiment were highly valued Renaissance works, the appreciation of the second work might result in it being rated more highly. The authors of this study may have a valid argument as a result of their work, but in particular cases, this generalized notion of the devaluation of copies may break down, especially if the copyist is viewed as a great artist in his or her own right. For example, a print from *Battle of the Sea-Gods*, a copper engraving, first state, by Andrea Mantegna (circa 1431–1506), was copied by Albrecht Dürer in 1494 as a pen-and-ink drawing and now resides in the Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth, England. The copy

## The Appreciation of Authenticity

made by Durer has become more famous than the original by Mantegna. So is this not a defective copy but a new work of art?

The experiment of Newman and Bloom (2012) may be generally valid in terms of experimental participants valuing the original work over the perception of a copy of it but may not be universally valid, as this example illustrates. A copy of an engraving need not be another engraving; it could be presented in a different medium. Danto (1981) says that

an engraving of an engraving is a “different thing altogether” from a copy of an engraving, “although it might exactly resemble a copy” for another reason. A copy is defective, for example, insofar as it deviates from the original, but the question of deviation is simply irrelevant if it is an engraving of an engraving. If deviation is irrelevant, so is nondeviation. Others think this is not right: A class of “free copies”—copies of originals that are not defective—can be recognized.

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## Chapter 3

# Authenticity, Monuments, and the International Charters

The Reconstruction of Monuments  
ICOMOS Charters  
Debates Concerning Appearance

Chartres Cathedral  
The Grand Midland Hotel

*It is therefore of fundamental importance to our task that we fully clarify this difference in the perception of artistic value, since it influences the principal direction of all historic preservation.*

—Alois Riegl, *The Modern Cult of Monuments*

*Like those architects, pupils of Viollet-le-Duc, who, fancying that they can detect, beneath a Renaissance rood-loft an eighteenth-century altar; traces of a Norman choir; restore the whole church to the state in which it probably was in the twelfth century.*

—Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*

### Introduction

This chapter contains a more detailed discussion of monuments and how international charters came to be recognized as of

international importance. Charters concerning cultural heritage have had a seminal impact for a huge range of artifacts, monuments, and sites, but this chapter concentrates on

monuments and two particular cases: the restoration of Chartres Cathedral, which is proving to be controversial, and the complete makeover of the defunct Grand Midland Hotel, which has been the subject of only muted criticism.

International charters have a much wider significance than those sections of them that relate specifically to monuments, but the principles of the discussion offered here are applicable to several broad fields within the ambit of international charters. Authenticity interacts with values in a multitude of ways, from individual or cultural values to the distinction between artistic and aesthetic value. This has an important resonance in this book, including implications for the discussion of forgeries and restoration practice involved with how these values are debated.

### **Authenticity and Reconstruction**

After the heavy destruction of artworks and monuments during the First World War, many were summarily rebuilt, restored, or demolished without the benefit of any internationally agreed-upon framework to guide nations in dealing with their damaged heritage. As a consequence, many inauthentic reconstructions and gross alterations took place. One of the first international charters to express a serious interest in how original fragments of artworks were to be regarded as authentic and how they should be restored was the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historical Monuments of 1931 (ICOMOS 1931). In the section dealing with conservation, the charter states:

In the case of ruins, scrupulous conservation is necessary, and steps should be taken to reinstate any original fragments that may be recovered (anastylosis),

whenever this is possible; the new materials used for this purpose should in all cases be recognisable. When the preservation of ruins brought to light in the course of excavations is found to be impossible, the Conference recommends that they be buried, accurate records being of course taken before filling-in operations are undertaken.

This charter's insistence that original fragments should be used and be recognizable in any reconstruction, constituting anastylosis, and that any new materials employed should be recognizable as well, is one of the first clear statements made regarding the need to differentiate between what is (or was) original and what has been restored.

Thirty-three years after the Athens meeting, the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS 2004) set out to address some of these concerns again, as a consequence of the still greater damage and loss of art following the Second World War. The charter was formulated in the belief that heritage was important for all of humankind and that similar appraisals of restoration and conservation were needed for all countries. The first paragraph of the preamble to the Venice Charter (ICOMOS 2004), in referring to historic monuments, states: "It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity."

At this stage, there was still a belief in a readily definable or determinable scientific concept of authenticity as a unified thing in itself that could easily be justified without the need for further discussion. Article 12 of the Venice Charter (ICOMOS 2004) essentially contained the same message as the passage from the Athens Charter quoted above,

## Authenticity and Reconstruction

namely: “Replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence.”

Being able to distinguish between the original and restored areas of a work of art is still important in art restoration. Today, it is not always possible to distinguish restorations from originals by visual means, although the conservation profession has taken other measures to adhere to the ethics of distinguishability of substance. These measures include undertaking restorations in a different media or paint; alteration of the finish or appearance under different types of lighting, such as ultraviolet or infrared; or providing explanatory labels indicating which parts are authentic to which period in history or in which restoration campaign they were introduced. Article 9 of the Venice Charter states:

The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and in this case moreover any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp. The restoration in any case must be preceded and followed by an archaeological and historical study of the monument.

There are cases where the aesthetic and historical values of a work of art are at odds with one another. In some artworks this could present a logical contradiction: Is the historical authenticity of the artwork

valued especially in virtue of avoiding repainting parts of it altogether, or is greater emphasis placed on the work’s aesthetic value with the aim to restore it to appear without damage and loss, although it may no longer be possible to discern what was original? What values are placed on each? The difficulty of answering these questions and the realization that the Venice Charter of 1964 enshrined a logically positivist view of the nature of authenticity have led over the past 50 years to a whole series of conservation charters whose approach to the topic has been influenced by tangible and intangible factors that were not considered relevant by the Venice Charter.

In 1972 UNESCO adopted the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 1972). In 1977 the World Heritage Committee defined criteria for the inclusion of cultural property on the World Heritage List. The guidelines stated that to be so designated, a monument had to “meet the test of authenticity in design, materials, workmanship, and setting.”

Even in this era, there were notable exceptions. For example, Warsaw, obliterated by German bombing in the Second World War, had been completely reconstructed as a replica by the Poles. This city replica was added to the World Heritage List in 1980 (Jerome 2008). Despite the rebuilt Warsaw being a modern replica and not adhering to the World Heritage statement that added monuments must meet the test of authenticity in design, materials, workmanship, and setting, there is general consensus that the intangible authenticity which the city represents within its environment should be recognized. Part of the problem of definitive codes of ethics regarding these matters is that they are subject to interpretation on a case-by-case basis (Kelleher 2004).



**Figure 3.1.** Warsaw, Poland. As a result of bombing by the Germans in World War II, Old Warsaw was completely destroyed. The new city buildings were constructed as replicas of the old. (Image courtesy of Posoka.com)

On the other hand, Jokilehto (1985) writes that the old Hanseatic town of Lübeck on the Baltic was not accepted for inclusion on the World Heritage List because too much of the fabric had been lost in recent decades due to war or commercial development: Reconstructions do not qualify as part of the authentic urban fabric when evaluated in a manner fully consistent with the guidelines. The concept of anastylosis, if it cannot be applied, may disqualify rebuilt structures from attaining the state of grace of authenticity. Internally, one could argue, authenticity has been utilized in conservation in a number of different ways, for example, in assessing the authenticity of ancient buildings or cities whose architectural critiques have often elevated the Rieglian historical value over other concerns in a simplistic and linear analysis, condemning

some historical structures as being too “inauthentic” to enter the hallowed ranks of those designated as World Heritage Sites.

The exclusion of Lübeck and the inclusion of Warsaw on the World Heritage List reflects the conservation assessment of authenticity at that time. This assessment has become more sophisticated since the 1985 article, and a recent article by Jokilehto presents a more modern approach (Jokilehto 1995). His influential text *A History of Architectural Conservation* (1999a) does not mention *authenticity* in the index, and there are still substantive points of debate. For example, in considering whether reconstructions of New Lanark (UNESCO 2001) are authentic in terms of reinstating the appearance of Lanark at the time of the Welsh social reformer Robert Owen (1771–1858), the founder of

## Authenticity and Reconstruction

utopian socialism, Jokilehto (1999b) writes, “This approach to ‘period restoration’ relies on choosing an earlier period as a guideline for the choice of what to keep, what to re-use, and what to reconstruct. At the end of the restoration, the historic building tends to have lost its authenticity and become a modern interpretation.”

The question “Do different cultures have different views on authenticity and if so, how does this affect restoration?” is of direct concern to developments in the conservation field addressed by the Nara Document on Authenticity (UNESCO 1994), formulated under the auspices of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) 30 years after the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites of 1964. The Venice Charter has been one of the most influential international agreements concerning the organization and implementation of conservation measures. It has even generated detailed reviews of its accomplishments in the post-Second World War environment (Hardy 2009).

Limitations on how intangible heritage was to be assessed within international frameworks led to formulation of the Nara Document (UNESCO 1994), which was an attempt to escape from the scientific rationalism of earlier pronouncements in conservation charters, which had stressed the material authenticity of the artifact, site, or monument. In reevaluating the need for more inclusive criteria, the Nara Document invoked the societal values with which cultural monuments are imbued. For example, Article 9 states: “Conservation of cultural heritage in all its forms and historical periods is rooted in the values attributed to the heritage. Our ability to understand these values depends, in part, on the degree to which information

sources about these values may be understood as credible or truthful.” This appears to be very reasonable. The only problem is that how intangible values that may or may not be considered as “truthful” might generate debate. Additional documentation may be required to determine the current truth of an assertion of intangible importance. The Nara Document goes on to state in Article 10: “The understanding of authenticity plays a fundamental role in all scientific studies of the cultural heritage, in conservation and restoration planning, as well as within the inscription procedures used for the World Heritage Convention and other cultural heritage inventories.”

Exactly what is meant by “scientific studies” in the context of a document that is trying to escape from the scientific strictures of codes based entirely on a material evaluation of substance is not clear. Indeed, Article 10 does not advance the argument for cultural relativism as successfully as the often-quoted Article 11:

All judgements about values attributed to cultural properties as well as the credibility of related information sources may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture. It is thus not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong.

This new relativism in how authenticity was to be judged liberated the concept from the narrow confines of materialistic concerns and enabled a whole array of different arguments about what might be regarded as

## Authenticity, Monuments, and the International Charters

authentic, especially the intangible associations of artifacts that different cultures may consider as important as the material substance. Article 13 of the Nara Document states:

Depending on the nature of the cultural heritage, its cultural context, and its evolution through time, authenticity judgements may be linked to the worth of a great variety of sources of information. Aspects of the sources may include form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors. The use of these sources permits elaboration of the specific artistic,

historic, social, and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage being examined.

The materialistic approach to the concept of what constitutes an authentic object was particularly challenged by the Nara Document (UNESCO 1994) because, writes Stovel (2008), the Japanese wanted to extend the range of attributes through which authenticity might be recognized as legitimate. The Japanese practice of periodic dismantling, repairing, and wholesale reassembly of historic wooden temples would, under the old tests of physical integrity, fail to satisfy the World Heritage criterion; the new document allowed Japan to nominate a historic structure to the committee with confidence that it could be ratified.



**Figure 3.2.** Nikko, Japan. The recognition of intangible authenticity in the Nara Document enabled the Japanese to list as a World Heritage Site the shrines and temples of Nikko, a single complex of 103 religious buildings within two Shinto shrines. They testify to a centuries-old tradition of conservation and restoration as well as the preservation of religious practices linked to a site considered sacred. Under previous criteria of authenticity, these Shinto shrines would not have qualified, as they are continuously rebuilt; their intangible authenticity would not have been recognized. (Image courtesy of UNESCO World Heritage Centre)

## Delusions of Authenticity

### Delusions of Authenticity

Stovel (2008:39) states that a benefit of this new approach was acknowledgment of the existence of many long-standing technical delusions related to authenticity, which the conservation field had taken for granted. The principal delusion, according to Stovel, was the view that authenticity was a value in its own right. This was stated quite definitively when the World Heritage Committee declared in 2003, “Authenticity is not a value itself . . . properties must demonstrate first their claim to ‘outstanding universal value’ and then demonstrate that the attributes carrying related values are ‘authentic.’”

The second delusion was refutation of the idea that authenticity could be considered an absolute property. The third was the challenge to the idea that authenticity had to be present in all attribute areas, and fourth was a clarification on improving understanding of the importance of authenticity, which was never mentioned in earlier conservation debates. As Stovel (2008) writes: “One of the two major issues skirted in the Nara Document was how to ensure that acceptance of cultural content as essential in assessing conservation actions and approaches would not result in efforts to cloak arbitrary or ad hoc decisions within the all-forgiving mantle of cultural context.”

The other major issue was the lack of an exact definition of authenticity, but since the word, as shown in chapters 1 and 2, eludes a single meaning outside of a defined context, that is perfectly understandable. Because the definitions carried immediate practical consequences for historic structures, their treatment, and how they were to be evaluated, the use of *authenticity* in preservation codes for conservation professionals has important consequences. For example, the World Heritage List offers an evaluation based on

four authenticities: *design, material, workmanship, and setting* (Stovel 2007). For buildings and monuments, these four authenticities and their values can be discussed and compared with other criteria when evaluating a course of action for a particular historic structure.

ICOMOS has been much concerned with the debate regarding authenticity. In 1996 the ICOMOS National Committee of the Americas released the Declaration of San Antonio, which is primarily concerned with interactions between conservation and authenticity. The committee recognized that authenticity has many contexts that interact with the sphere of conservation across a wide range of activities and values. It identified seven areas in which the concept operated: authenticity and identity; authenticity and history; authenticity and materials; authenticity and social value; authenticity in static and dynamic sites; authenticity and stewardship; and authenticity and economics.

The declaration, largely focused on what these concept areas mean to cultural groups within the Americas, recognized that cultural heritage creates a “rich and syncretic pluriculturalism” that forms the dynamic of the continental identity. In terms of “authenticity and history,” the document understood that the authenticity of a heritage site depended on an assessment of the significance of the site by those associated with it or those who claimed it as part of their history. “Authenticity and materials” encompasses the material fabric of a site. The document states:

The degree to which documented missing elements are replaced as part of restoration treatments varies within the Americas in accordance to the cultural characteristics of each country. Some national policies indicate that what is

lost can only be part of our memory and not of our heritage. Elsewhere, policies encourage the replacement of fully documented elements in facsimile form in order to re-establish the site's full significance. Nevertheless, we emphasize that only the historic fabric is authentic, and interpretations achieved through restoration are not; they can only authentically represent the meaning of a site as understood in a given moment. Furthermore, we universally reject the reliance on conjecture or hypotheses for restoration.

This part of the declaration presents a similar set of concerns for material authenticity to those articulated by the Athens Charter in 1931, but there are essential differences in scope. The San Antonio Declaration recognizes that certain types of heritage, such as cultural landscapes, may represent traditional forms and encompass embedded spiritual values that may be as important as the material authenticity of the site itself. "Authenticity and social value" as a category also invokes the spiritual meaning manifested by customs and traditions, forming part of an intangible heritage. The declaration maintains that these intangible associations must be carefully identified, evaluated, protected, and interpreted. "Authenticity in dynamic and static sites" includes cultural sites still in use as well as archaeological sites no longer used by descendants. The declaration states, "Some physical changes associated with maintaining the traditional patterns of communal use of the heritage site do not necessarily diminish its significance and may actually enhance it. Therefore, such material changes may be acceptable as part of on-going evolution." Under the category "authenticity and stewardship," the document states that both communities and the

constituted authorities must be provided the means for the correct knowledge and evaluation of the heritage, its protection and conservation, and the promotion of its artistic and spiritual enjoyment, as well as its educational use. For "authenticity and economics," the emphasis is on cultural tourism, which is often a substantial source of revenue. Nevertheless, the limited values that tourists may place on a site and the economic concerns for tourism revenue cannot be the overriding criteria in a site's conservation and interpretation.

The different authenticities envisaged by the San Antonio Declaration are laudatory, but they may subsume practically every conservation decision under the umbrella of authenticity, creating an imbalance with respect to values and ethics. This is a minor quibble in a vibrant response to the problem of what we mean by authenticity. The San Antonio Declaration breaks this problem down into a series of areas. There may be *sui generis* debates about which stakeholders should make decisions regarding authenticity, particularly when extensive material changes to the monument are undertaken as part of the ongoing evolution of its use or existence.

The varieties of authenticity are now recognized as important considerations in their own right across an increasingly wide field of areas of significance. For example, the operational guidelines for a 2005 UNESCO World Heritage document state that monuments may be understood to meet the conditions of authenticity if their cultural values are truthfully and credibly expressed through a variety of attributes, including form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; language and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling; and other internal and external factors.



## Early Debates Concerning Authentic Appearance

Dutton (2003) ponders a pertinent question that has been raised previously: Authentic compared with what? The terms of reference are so broad and all-encompassing that the only inauthenticity left would be if the cultural values were not truthfully and credibly expressed—that they were fake cultural values. The inclusion of “other internal and external factors” grants considerable leeway in reaching a decision as to whether a monument or site meets World Heritage guidelines for authenticity.

There are plenty of critics of these laudable international charters. The most immediate criticism is that there are too many charters and that they are often contradictory concerning how urban fabric is to be preserved. Some have expressed doubts about how successfully the messages of the charters have been communicated to people who are affected by them or to wider audiences concerned with the realities of the human situation and development. Authentic appearance, according to UNESCO documents of 1976, may involve the removal of disfiguring poles, pylons, or telephone cables, but in one East African country (Kulikauskas 2007:66), the developmental dream is to have a concrete block house with a tin roof and piped water, destroying the “authentic” nature of the surroundings. In Vilnius, a Renaissance palace has been destroyed by rebuilding so that only the subterranean part of it remains, violating every clause of applicable charters (Kulikauskas 2007:66). Yet no protests regarding the demolition were made by the international bodies responsible for the strictures of the charters that should have been applied to this important monument. Kulikauskas has some suggestions for a realignment: six points relating to the possible formation of new charters, including an assessment of reality on the ground

and the philosophy underlying the decisions that have been made. Alternatively, he suggests that we stop producing charters and reinterpret the old ones; that we start practicing what has been preached, thinking inclusively and embracing other disciplines in the debate to allow people who are affected to make informed choices. This critique is certainly part of the difficulties of coming to terms with scientific conservation pronouncements that represent a Western intellectual tradition of validation whose relevance is only now being questioned.

### Early Debates Concerning Authentic Appearance

Long before these international charters were formulated, the problems of the authentic nature of ancient buildings and art objects, which were often summarily restored, had already become a matter for debate. Regarding early attempts to clean oil paintings at the National Gallery in London or the Louvre in Paris, people asked: What was the authentic appearance of these paintings: murky shades of brown or amber varnish through which some details could be only vaguely discerned, or startlingly bright pigmented surfaces that looked as if they had been painted yesterday?

Could ancient buildings be fully restored to appear completed in a manner never intended by the original architect? Could monuments be satisfactorily restored at all?

The term *restoration* began to enter common parlance in the eighteenth century. In 1755 Samuel Johnson wrote in his famous dictionary that restoration was “the act of replacing in a former state. To give back what has been lost or taken away” (Johnson and Walker 1828), while the *Oxford English Dictionary* of 1956 offers “attempt to bring back to original state by rebuilding, repairing,

repainting, emending etc.” The definition is quite apposite for our purposes here. Even the “attempt to” that this dictionary includes is perhaps a subtle hint that restoration may strive to regain an original state but perhaps won’t always succeed.

Anxieties concerning restoration were first felt in the West with the repair or alteration of ancient buildings, briefly mentioned in chapter 1. This is why the international charters gained increasing significance. The principal protagonists in the arguments concerning the restoration of these monuments were John Ruskin (1819–1900), Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879), and George Gilbert Scott (1811–1878). Scott was often seen as the villain of the restoration controversy in England, although in his *A Plea for the Faithful Restoration of Our Ancient Churches* (1859), he sometimes protested that he undertook rebuilding only when it was necessary to save the structures concerned, although a great deal of restoration was sometimes deemed essential, much to Ruskin’s disgust. Stephan Madsen (1975) divides Scott’s work into three groups: first, his preoccupation with saving authentic monuments, which could be considered laudatory and conforming to his expressed views; second, his destruction of structures (for example, at St. John’s College, Cambridge, where he demolished a chapel dating to 1516), which seems to represent quite the opposite philosophy; third, the work that he undertook, strongly influenced by a high Victorianism, the manifestation of which was a *horror vacui*.

Plenty of debate concerning these matters went on in England at the time. These debates influenced the rebuilding of historic structures on the continent. Many voices in the early part of the nineteenth century attacked restoration as essentially an act of

destruction. For example, Lord Byron (1788–1824) writes in *Don Juan*:

Who after rummaging the Abbey  
through thick  
And thin, produced a plan whereby to erect  
New buildings of correctest conformation  
And throw down old, which he call’d  
restoration.

As Madsen (1975) reminds us, the forgotten name of Edward Freeman deserves a mention here. His 1846 volume on the restoration of churches distinguishes between three systems or varieties of restoration. The first system is the *conservative*, which exactly reproduces details of the original; the restored church in its new state is a facsimile of the old. The *eclectic* system represents a middle way with some rebuilding according to conservative principles and some remodeling. In the *destructive* system, the entire work is rebuilt. In Freeman’s time it was probably rebuilt in Decorated Gothic design, eliminating the material authenticity of the original.

In France, thanks to architect Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, a “stylistic” kind of restoration was established. Its principal aim was to complete the work of art to reach a “unity of style,” with the restorer assuming the right to act on behalf of the ancient artist (De Angelis-D’Ossat 1948:51). This represented an almost postmodern idealistic conception of what the building should look like rather than the actual materiality of the work. It is too facile, however, to simply dismiss the depth of scholarship that Viollet-le-Duc brought to his practice of restoration, which in fact saved dozens of French churches from either total destruction or completely inept amateur restoration (Reiff 1971). The extensive damage and destruction of parts of Notre

## Early Debates Concerning Authentic Appearance

Dame during the French Revolution and before inevitably resulted in any restoration being viewed pejoratively, since a cathedral was either going to remain partially wrecked or be imaginatively restored. A fair summation is offered by Reiff (1971:30), who writes, *apropos* of Notre Dame:

The nave chapels were more decorated than evidence warranted; the crossing spire more complicated than the original; the grotesques on the former more fanciful than the remaining vestiges could possibly hint. All was done, however, with great scholarship, and for specific reasons: the decoration to give the chapels a more complete aesthetic effect; the carrying bays reconstructed in twelfth-century form to give art historians tangible proof beyond the traces he found of what they originally were like; the spire elaborated to make it more imposing; the chimeras to visually unite the façade.

The opposing view of the architectural purist, promoted by William Morris and John Ruskin, resulted in this scholarly re-imagining of the restoration of an original monument being denounced as a lie. Ruskin presages Heidegger in preferring to let the monument decay naturally or, if one wants to ensure that it still exists for future generations, to preserve the remains without restoration of any kind. This viewpoint takes into consideration the importance of “authenticity” meant as originality of materials and originality of intention.

In Italy, on the other hand, there developed two new theories that were in an intermediate position with respect to the French and English examples. The first, *historical restoration*, exemplified by Luca Beltrami,

proposed restoration based on accurate and detailed historical research. The research could be direct, such as studying the artwork itself, or indirect, such as examining documentary or archival evidence. The restorer thus becomes a sort of historian-archivist, whose goal is to study events that characterized the shape of the monument or condition of the artwork and then reconstruct or reintegrate it according to the results of the research, avoiding arbitrary stylistic choices. The second approach, *philological restoration*, had its greatest exponent in Camillo Boito (1836–1914), who expressed the basic points of his theory in his *Questioni pratiche di belle arti*. First he stressed the importance of the “monument as a document” that he wanted to “read” without additions, modification, or reductions; he wanted to be sure that everything was the “authentic” production of the original author. In his opinion, the monument was deprived of almost all its importance when its form was altered by “stylistic” additions (Boito 1893:7). He thus preferred to talk about *conservation*, carried out with the application of scientific methodologies, and not about *restoration* (Boito 1893:8,11). Boito insisted that the original, or old, artistic aspects of a monument had to be preserved by any means; additions were to be contemplated only where there was material proof of the original position of the fragments and the profile of the shape. Any addition had to be completely recognizable as a modern operation, using modern materials, sketching the basic shape of any decorations present, and adding the date of restorations or a conventional sign to indicate the details of any intervention. Before any restoration, especially in the archaeological field, every part had to be examined and documented with drawings or photographs. These images, as well as any

components that were removed, were to be on exhibit close to the monument for educational purposes (Boito 1893:17, 24).

Boito's philosophy represents an idealistic purist vision, since he refuses to accept as authentic all kinds of restoration and is in favor of destroying all old additions, as they are merely representative of the invention of a new artist. Only in one case does Boito accept them: when there are known or demonstrable sources or images of the original morphology (Boito 1893:58). The philosophical shift in denying the historical authenticity of restorations in general characterizes the late nineteenth century.

Boito was influenced by the arguments of both Viollet-le-Duc and Ruskin and formulated his own restoration thesis in his 1883 document *Prima Carta del Restauro*, in which he laid out eight principles to guide restorers in their approach to the authenticity of existing monuments: (1) a differentiation of style between the new and old parts of a building; (2) differentiation between the new and the old in the use of building materials; (3) suppression of moldings and decorative elements in new fabric placed in a historical building; (4) exhibition in a nearby place of any material parts of a historical building removed during the process of restoration; (5) inscription of the date (or a conventional symbol) on any new fabric in a historical building; (6) descriptive epigraphic documentation of the restoration work done attached to the monument; (7) registration and description with photographs of the different phases of restoration, with the register published or placed in the monument or in a nearby public place; (8) visual notoriety of the restoration work carried out.

These recommendations are remarkably modern and transparent in their aims. They were certainly not adhered to by many who

restored old buildings in the nineteenth century. Some may be considered problematic. For example, differentiation in style between the new and the old was rarely achieved, as to do so could create a strange pastiche between the original style and the restored parts, not something that would have had much appeal to Scott. The emphasis on honest documentation of the actions taken is a laudatory part of Boito's recommendations, as is the idea to exhibit contiguous material remains that have been removed from the original building. This is an interesting concept as a referent to the processes undertaken, resulting in the alteration of the building but retaining the authentic components removed in the process of restoration. One could regard that as an ideal state, since it has rarely been enacted; the space consumed by exhibiting the material removed during restoration could result in large areas devoted entirely to fragmentary material remains, which would overwhelm the visitor and consume tracts of land in perpetuity, entirely for a purist philosophical crusade. The use, completion, or alteration of a building is rarely exposed to a critique based on elements that have been removed. As much as one might say that the authenticity of the entire operation has therefore been enhanced, it is often simply impractical.

As Madsen (1975) writes, following the end of the eighteenth century, the replication of past periods and styles became prevalent. After the neo-Gothic followed the neo-Renaissance, neo-Baroque, and neo-Rococo. After neo-Victorianism in the 1950s came neo-Art Nouveau in the 1960s and neo-Art Deco in the 1970s. Much of this has since been swept away by modernism, which was not prevalent at the time Madsen was writing. The impact of Ruskin and later William Morris on attitudes about restoration on the

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## Early Debates Concerning Authentic Appearance

continent was a strong one. Morris, for example, prevented alterations to St. Mark's in Venice by the force of his writing and beliefs. Between 1870 and 1900, many people began to have qualms about what had happened in the name of improvements to ancient buildings.

Viollet-le-Duc carried out several restoration campaigns without any qualms at all, even at Notre Dame de Paris, substantially altering the nature of the original fabric of the building. Viollet-le-Duc (1990 [1854]:195), in opposition to Boito, wrote, "Restoration is a means to re-establish [a building] to a finished state, which may in fact never have actually existed at any given time."

This idealized approach to restoration was anathema to Ruskin, who responded in his work *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, in a section called "The Lamp of Memory" (1898:353–357):

Neither by the public, nor by those who have the care of public monuments, is the true meaning of the word restoration understood. It means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed. Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter; it is



**Figure 3.3.** Uppark House in Sussex. H. G. Wells's mother was once a housekeeper here, and the house is featured in some of his novels; details of life in the house are reflected in *The Time Machine*. In 1989 the house burned to the ground. It has been restored, much as a time machine would allow it to be restored. Even new carpets were matched to the original weave of old; architectural finishes were replicas of the original. In theory, what could never be replaced has been replicated in the name of the use-value of the property, not its historical or material authenticity. (Image courtesy of Valerie Ann Scott)

impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture.

Ruskin's work was a great influence on William Morris (1834–1896) and the Arts and Crafts movement that followed. In 1877 Morris founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), which sought to prevent inauthentic additions to and alterations of buildings, the latter described by Morris as “forgeries,” echoing Ruskin's view (1898:356): “Do not let us talk of restoration: the thing is a Lie from beginning to end. You may make a model of a building as you may of a corpse, and your model may have the shell of the old walls within it as your cast might have the skeleton, with what advantage I neither see nor care: but the old building is destroyed, and that more totally and mercilessly than if it had sunk into a heap of dust.”

SPAB continues to fight for the cause today, and in the case of complete restorations, such as that of Uppark House in Sussex, England, which burned to the ground in August 1989 and was completely rebuilt as a replica of the original, SPAB may not approve. When the house caught on fire, the roof, top floor, and main staircase were entirely destroyed; the ground floor was heavily damaged by fire, smoke, and water, and the ceilings collapsed (Nicolson 1990).

In the face of a partially burned wreck, the National Trust decided to reconstruct, replicate, and restore the entire building. The National Trust's surveyor of conservation, Nigel J. Seeley (1942–2004), wrote: “Seeking out information from incomplete evidence applies to works of art just as it does to forensic science; precisely the same analytical techniques apply” (Seeley 1996).

On the other hand, Ruskin could be invoked here. If repair was no longer possible, he would surely have advised to pull down the entire building, to undertake deconstruction honestly, and not to set up a lie in its place. The decision to reconstruct Uppark, which cost the National Trust, or its insurers, more than £20 million and four years of work, did not meet with universal approval. SPAB, taking its inspiration from William Morris, regarded a total reconstruction as an inauthentic existence for a building, now beyond resurrection. Eggert (2009) claims: “[Something] that clarified the (philosophic) confusion surrounding the competing claims of the aesthetic and the historical would have been preferable. The catastrophe that Uppark suffered demanded it, but the house did not receive it.”

The diachronic existence of many buildings is a complex affair. It does not represent a linear evolution of change but a semiotic mingling. Nor are many of the problems amenable to the Brandian concept that restoration cannot presume that time is reversible or that history can be abolished, a statement more applicable to works of fine art than to standing monuments or buildings.

The actions inherent in the conservation, refurbishment, or adaptive reuse of ancient buildings place these activities firmly toward the restoration end of the RIP spectrum and some distance from preservation, which, as was stated in chapter 1, carries the connotation of trying to keep artifacts in their current condition indefinitely into the future.

So how to counter the claim that philosophic confusion reigns in the judgment between the aesthetic and the historical connotations of the Uppark reconstruction? The most obvious candidate in our defense as far as historic buildings are concerned is the range

## Chartres Cathedral and Its Various Authenticities

of values that can be incorporated into a discussion of how the building is to be treated or that are emphasized, depending on the needs of that ubiquitous group of modernists, the stakeholders, and that were clearly enunciated by Alois Riegl (1982 [1903]). David Lowenthal (1985) might say, in relation to Uppark, that we are attempting to remake the past in the image we want of it, regardless of historical veracity. Building conservators might argue that Uppark is an example of adaptive reuse—the adaptation of a charred hulk into a simulacrum of what it once was. Riegl might say that what is invoked is a purely aesthetic value by virtue of reconstruction; Seeley (1996) that the presentation of the new Uppark is informed by reference, as far as possible, to a scientifically documented re-creation of materials, leaving parts of the charred remains on view as contiguous reminders of the refabricated decorations to preserve evidence of what occurred at the structure for future reference.

The values that Riegl so incisively outlined are very germane to the current debates concerning the fateful or fortunate decisions conservators may take regarding a particular building or monument. In assessing the degree to which different values pertain to how an ancient monument is to be treated, the question that has to be asked is: Who assigns the values that Riegl enumerates? The conservator? The curator? The architect? Members of the public? In the case of important old buildings, it will generally be a consensus of all who have a say in the process, but each should be informed and educated in the subject area. Knowledge of or training in restoration is not the same as being a trained architect, and a conservator or art historian may have no insight into how the local population regards the monument.

In prior decades, historic buildings damaged by fire have been demolished. Examples

include Coleshill in 1953 and Dunslund in 1967 (Gomme 1989). Gomme takes issue with a variety of purist arguments that should a building be restored, the interiors should be plainly stated as a backdrop to the salvaged furniture and paintings. As Rowell and Robinson (1996) remark, the purist approach to building restoration has been further enhanced by the intellectual legacy of architectural modernism, which rejected the use of traditional techniques or the ornamental in favor of severe designs with new materials such as concrete, steel, and glass, and was antipathetic to traditional structures that had no relevance to the modern world. Here can be seen a reflection of the philosophical purism that sought the removal of eighteenth-century marble restorations from Roman sculptures, which were seen as visually deceptive, and their replacement with smooth beige modern fills, which revealed the contrast between ancient and modern.

### Chartres Cathedral and Its Various Authenticities

An important example is that of Chartres Cathedral. Its interior is now partially restored, partially repainted to resemble what was thought to have been its thirteenth-century appearance. There are always problems with a complete restoration of this kind: electric lights in the interior have not been removed, and the condition of the interior has changed markedly since the original building was finished. Medieval French cathedrals such as Chartres suffered from drastic alterations following the decisions of the Council of Trent: the cathedral was closed for a few days, and all the medieval chantry chapels were demolished. This was followed by periods of neglect by the *ancien régime*, followed by periods of various “improvements”

that altered the building to the taste prevailing at the time.

It is therefore difficult to assess how the cathedral would actually have looked in the years following its completion, yet many commentators regard the complete repainting in the “original” colors as a triumph of scientific restoration, while others think that what has occurred is a complete desecration of historical authenticity. This kind of polarization is quite common and is enhanced by lack of technical knowledge of the subtle issues inherent in conservation and restoration decisions on the part of both sides of the argument.

The architect-in-chief of the Historical Monuments Department in France, Patrice Calvel, talks of the authenticity of the use of stones from the Berchères quarry (Cascone 2014). The quarry provided the stone used in the original building. In the strictly ethical codes of conservation practice, an observer should be able to distinguish between the old, original components and the modern restorations, especially when they are fashioned from the same stone used in the fabrication of the cathedral itself. The observer might be interested in learning what conservators have to say about this restoration and how they interpret it, since clearly a detailed debate among the various stakeholders is required. For example, have the principles of anastylosis been adhered to. If not, with what justification?

In the case of Chartres Cathedral, there exists a dichotomy between what present-day stakeholders want and what observers more interested in traces of the “original” might regard as appropriate in terms of restoration. There are two competing claims for authenticity: one desirous of the present need to undertake a total restoration in terms of cleaning and repainting, and the other desirous

of respect of the historical appearance of the cathedral, invoking no need for alteration of substance whatever (Cascone 2014; Furman 2015; Hamburger 2015; Penketh and Willsher 2014).

Windows are not necessarily judged by the same criterion applied to buildings. Stained glass was supposed to allow light to filter through to allow intense colors to enthrall the visitor. If the stained glass becomes covered with a film of dirt and deterioration products of the glass itself, is it then still fulfilling its original function? In general, the answer is that it is not, that stained glass must be cleaned, conserved, stabilized, releded, consolidated, and repaired to retrieve the color and stability of the original windows (Cascone 2014). There is generally more agreement concerning conservation work that would be undertaken on the stained-glass windows of Chartres than about work on the building itself. Similar repairs and restoration of stained-glass windows have taken place at many other cathedrals, such as York, without any controversy. This lack of controversy may be because outsiders are not aware that conservators might replace missing pieces of glass with modern equivalents that have the same transmitted color intensity, so that in some cases a stained-glass window is a pastiche of original and modern components. This argument is based entirely on the materiality of the window rather than on its aesthetic authenticity, which is usually the paramount consideration in the restoration process. What the viewer sees is not the glass itself but the light filtered through the glass. However, in the case of Chartres Cathedral, the conservators chose to install a double-glazing system that altered the way in which reflections of colored light can be observed within the cathedral. The stained-glass



## Chartres Cathedral and Its Various Authenticities

restoration has been criticized by experts on the Glass Is More website. Florian Lechner (2014) writes, “Windows that no longer spread, expand and make tangible their radiance and imaging in the space, become mindless, neutered, stripped of an essential property. This is happening in the Cathedral of Chartres.” Udo Zembok (2014), writing on the same website, adds:

I think it would be appropriate also to describe the changes to the light (entering the cathedral through the windows) from a purely optical perspective, in other words the physics. Without the thermoformed glass protection, light rays pass through the stained glass filtered only by the transparent coloured glass. By the laws of physics light rays are parallel and this is what causes coloured lights to be projected onto the walls and floors. By adding the external protective skin, which is translucent and thermoformed, the light rays are now diffused and enter through the coloured panes in an indirect fashion which in turn further diffuses the projected light.

The problem here is to understand exactly what has happened to the stained-glass windows in virtue of the thermoforming treatment. Knight explains the basis of the process, which is a commercial procedure conducted by the company Debitus (2016). Knight (personal communication 2016) writes:

The complaint of Zembok . . . does appear to be justified. Rather than using plane external glazing, which wouldn't greatly affect the properties of the transmitted light, the thermoforming process reproduces the texture of the original

glass, and therefore diffuses the transmitted light. Thus you don't get the patches of coloured light on the floor like you used to. On the other hand, from the outside, the protective glazing looks like the original glass and is presumably less noticeable. Plane glass protective glazing has been criticized because, from the outside, the windows look flat and featureless and you get distracting reflections of the surroundings. So, basically, you can't win. The approach which has been used by some English stained glass conservators is to use flat glass for the external protective glazing, but to break it up so as to follow the main outlines of the figures. That way, you still get light transmitted as before, and the reflections as seen from the outside aren't as noticeable, though it still doesn't look quite like the original glass.

Aesthetic decisions that will have different consequences have to be taken: Either the internal reflections and transmittable properties of the windows will be valorized and a restoration treatment that minimally affects these discernable properties will be chosen, or the choice will be a treatment that places greater emphasis on the external appearance of the windows as observed from outside the cathedral while substantially altering the transmittable features of the light penetrating through both the thermoformed glass and the restored stained glass. In my opinion, the French decision was ill-advised, given the extensive alterations already undertaken within the decorative schema of the cathedral.

As regards the restoration of the building itself, an approach that does not accord with any regard for historical value or age-value may be viewed as a controversial decision whose

justification is doubtful. But if Muñoz-Viñas's (2009) views regarding the entirely subjective nature of decisions concerning conservation objects are accepted, then the stakeholders responsible for the decision to repaint the interior of Chartres and to clean, restore, and thermoform the stained-glass windows are perfectly free to do so if they think this is how the cathedral should look. The *present-day* values this decision invokes seem opposed to the view that Chartres is a building whose historical existence in the present should be respected as far as possible, refraining from any attempt to restore it to a condition that never existed while ensuring its present-day function.

The more conservative or literary British press often comments negatively on restoration decisions about whose nuances it is usually ignorant. Thus Alasdair Palmer (2012), writing in the *Spectator*, comments that the cathedral has received an ill-conceived makeover that has robbed us of the sense of the passing of time. After agreeing that some of the scenes depicted in the stained-glass windows could not even be seen before cleaning, Palmer writes:

But the restorers are also cleaning the interior walls and ceiling of the church, and here the results are more questionable. The cleaning of the west end of the church has now been completed. Centuries of grime have been removed: the stone has then been covered with a thin layer of plaster, and painted a cream colour. Lines that look as if they follow the joints between the under-lying stones have been painted in a lighter colour. The bosses in the roof have been gilded. The capitals of the pillars have been painted a brilliant white. This has two effects. One is that, in replacing the blackened stone

with cream-coloured paint, the restoration means that there is a very significant increase in the ambient light, as it reflects back off the whiter surfaces. The result appears to diminish considerably the effect of the stained-glass windows, as you can see when you compare the windows of the west end with those of the transept. The walls and ceiling of the transept have not been cleaned, and as a consequence the colours of the rose windows stand out against the blackness of the uncleaned walls. The effect is magical: the rose windows look like the gates of paradise. . . . The other effect of the restoration of the interior walls and ceiling is that it makes the restored parts of the church look brand-new. In 2017, the date when the whole restoration project should be finished, when you enter Chartres cathedral you will no longer be confronted by something that looks as if it was built nearly 800 years ago. It will look as if it could have been finished yesterday. That, for the restorers, is part of the point of the restoration. They have said that they want to make the church look as it would have done when it was finished in the 13th century. But it is far from obvious what "returning the cathedral to its original state" should, or could, involve. The most natural way to interpret the idea is to say that it would mean that we could "see Chartres as the people who built would have seen it." That, however, is impossible. We don't know exactly what Chartres looked like 800 years ago: the restorers know that the sculpture was painted, for instance, but they do not know with what colours. They will leave the sculpture uncoloured, which is certainly not how it would have originally appeared.

## Chartres Cathedral and Its Various Authenticities

In *Paris Match*, restorer Luc Pelletier and Irene Jourd'heuil, curator of historic monuments, present the opposing view (Feron 2012). They write that the restorers “made a very bold choice. For the first time in the history of restoration, it was decided to restore the interior back to its initial state. Generally, restorers will go back to the last restoration and if we had followed that logic, we would have stopped at the work done in the XIXth century.” Jourd'heuil states: “The orange ochre wash of the XIXth and XVth centuries disintegrated easily. Below them the original layers of XIIIth century enduit were virtually intact clinging to a rough stone work foundation.” But intact for how long? “This is the issue. For the XIIIth century original is now vividly exposed and no longer protected by subsequent restorations. If nothing is done to protect this enduit or plaster, it will be black again in less than half a century.”

The devil of these cases is in the detail. One concern, from the point of view of material authenticity, is why the restorers painted in fake lines of a whiter shade to imitate the grouting? If the aim is to reveal the thirteenth-century interior finish, then it is a matter of debate if it is reasonable or not to paint over the original grouting with lighter lines in imitation of joins between contiguous blocks of stone. An approach that would respect the historical authenticity of the different time periods represented in the multilayered Chartres interior would be to preserve selected areas of the different finishes in certain areas of the cathedral to allow the fifteenth- and nineteenth-century finishes to be observed, as well as to preserve a section of the grimy surface of the twentieth century as a reminder of what has been removed. The intention in these twenty-first-century restorations should not

be to add additional material to complete an aesthetic conception but to preserve the original traces of color without repainting. There is a tension here between attempting to create an aesthetically uniform appearance and the desire for preservation of the historical materiality of the interior.

The view of critics such as Palmer (2012) is not sufficiently differentiated. A finish that is practically black because of dirt, smoke, and grime is an indication of a lack of maintenance, not an authentic finish of the cathedral interior revealing its historical presence. The cathedral is often reviled as the “most dirty monument in the whole of France,” and the black patina is a record of the extent of air pollution over the past 200 years rather than a reflection of the intention of the original artists, craftsmen, and patrons. Criticism of the restoration, and its consequences for the appearance of the interior, has to be separated from the effects of cleaning away decades of grime. As far as cathedrals are concerned, these are often two separate activities, and each has to be discussed in its own context. What methods of cleaning are involved? Do they involve chemical application? Are the swabs examined for removal of any paint along with dirt, as they were in the case of the Sistine Chapel? Were the revealed surfaces consolidated? If fifteenth-century paint is removed, how can it be determined that no thirteenth-century finish was affected? Repainting the entire decorative scheme to simulate the original painted decoration is problematic because it may create a historical fiction if carried to excess, making the interior of the cathedral appear as if it had been painted last week. The list of questions is long and requires detailed publication by the restorers to answer them.



**Figure 3.4.** The Black Madonna of Chartres before restoration. In some areas, the appearance suggests that the black or dark gray patina has been worn away to the wooden base of the sculpture. While differentiated, the surfaces are not unattractive and possess an appearance of age. (Image in the public domain)

## Chartres Cathedral and Its Various Authenticities



**Figure 3.5.** The Black Madonna of Chartres after restoration. The black faces have been completely repainted to match white flesh, with rosy cheeks. (Image courtesy of Meredith Cohen)

## Authenticity, Monuments, and the International Charters

The windows, which have already been discussed, are a different matter. The internal decay of the glass, and the resulting accumulation of obscuring salts and deposits such as syngenite, means that conservation of the stained-glass windows, often involving replacement of came and of missing or heavily deteriorated fragments of glass, is less controversial. The aim is to stabilize the windows, clean the glass, and position the glass securely to allow light to penetrate as originally intended. No one argued that the patina of age needed to be kept to preserve the authenticity of material degradation over

the centuries, which is part of the historical realization of the passage of time for the windows. No value was placed on the corroded state of the stained-glass windows: they are there to let in the colored light and to illuminate the story or images they depict. They are not there to be preserved as historical testimonies to decay, despite the regrettable decision of the French authorities to install thermoformed coverings.

The case of Chartres is quite different from that of Reims, the latter being partially destroyed by German bombing during the First World War, on September 20, 1914.



**Figure 3.6.** The Cathedral of Reims as a ruin following German bombing in 1914. The cathedral's authentic condition could also be considered to be its state as a ruin, but the cathedral will be rebuilt as a replica of itself. Replication is an essential function of human intervention with decayed originals whose desired function cannot be negated. Here the Rieglian use-value again takes precedence over historical authenticity. (Image courtesy of the Dayton Marian Public Library Postcard Collection)

## The Grand Midland Hotel

Scaffolding that had been erected around the north tower caught fire, which spread to all parts of the wooden superstructure. The lead of the roofs melted and poured through the stone gargoyles, destroying in turn the bishop's palace. The partial destruction of Reims Cathedral was used in a propaganda campaign by the French against the Germans, blaming them for the deliberate destruction of many historic buildings in France, with no regard to their universal human value. It is somewhat ironic that a Christian nation such as Germany would target Christian monuments such as Rheims for destruction, but such is the lack of any real regard, in an authentic sense, for Christian values: nations are better at lip service than at the principles of conservation of historic structures, even if they practice the same faith.

Restoration work began in 1919, under the direction of Henri Deneux, a native of Reims and chief architect of the Monuments Historiques; the cathedral was fully reopened in 1938, just in time for the outbreak of the Second World War. The reconstruction of Reims is quite a different matter from the restoration of Chartres. Leaving Reims as a ruin would have been a reminder of German bombing and the hideous destruction that the First World War brought to Europe (Reims Cathedral 2016). Some might argue that this, in fact, was the authentic state of the cathedral at that stage in its life: a charred ruin. Any attempt to re-create something from the burned building would, by definition, be inauthentic because the only authentic state is the state in which it exists in the present. An heuristic view of its existence, on the other hand, might consider that the reconstruction ameliorated part of the scars of war, made the much-loved building usable again, and stood

as a symbol of rebirth after the devastation of World War I, all of which demanded the reconstruction of the building as a replica of itself to fulfill these requirements, its present condition being incompatible with its intended use.

## The Grand Midland Hotel

Many buildings are subject to a precarious existence once their original function is over. England has demolished scores of fine Victorian buildings that were deemed by the authorities to have outlived their purposes or that stood obstinately in the way of tower blocks for the working classes in the 1960s or car parks for the middle classes in the 1970s. Witness the events surrounding the near-demolition of George Gilbert Scott's Grand Midland Hotel at St. Pancras, North London, which for decades was misused as a collection of dowdy British Rail offices and storerooms, with rubbish, discarded box tops, obsolete signs, piles of old paper, broken glass, and cracked windows covered with dense layers of grime visible from the Euston Road.

This state of shocking destitution entailed the entire building being recommended for closure as a fire hazard, being deserted by British Rail, and being ripe for potential demolition, before Sir John Betjeman (1906–1984) took up the cudgels and fought for the hotel as few others at the time were prepared to do. I cycled past the neglected hotel for more than 28 years, from 1959 to 1987, often wondering why on earth such a magnificent building in the center of London was not fulfilling its authentic purpose and function: it seemed very sad as well as an outrage of undeserved neglect. The poem *Buildings in Need* by Keely Mills (2009) is very germane to our discussions here:

## Authenticity, Monuments, and the International Charters

There is Poetry in the Walls  
Never stop listening to the tales, that are recorded in the walls.  
Stories trapped in brick, that ache to be told.  
Slithers of epics that breathe from out of gates and guildhalls.  
All past kisses and their hopes gathered in.  
Conserve every detail, as though sweeping off dust from a jewel.  
Buildings can be demolished like love pacts.  
Scrubbed away, one day strong like the ground beneath, then—  
scratched from the view, without a slab to see.  
Look up at edifices till the sky bleeds into every aspect, bring to light—  
the possibilities that beat from within.  
Understand that even hollow spaces are not empty, just uncharted prospects.  
Look down and you will not see the same old street,  
instead a platform where markets bustled and brimmed with traders and town subjects.  
Look closer and there are masterclasses,  
Where lions fight unicorns and kings from centuries sit above, watching.  
Treat the heart of the city as though it was indeed your own, crystallized.  
Appreciate its jagged curves and doors.  
Delight in its finery, the nuts and bolts which make it peculiar and prized.  
There is poetry in the walls and you must listen harder to hear it,  
stare closer to see it, become aware that—  
The buildings that surround you need a champion to stop and recognise.

In the case of St. Pancras, the champion who stopped and recognized the authentic worth of the building was Sir John Betjeman. The line “conserve every detail as though sweeping dust off a jewel” is an apt description of the degree of care the trained conservator brings to his or her work in the act of preservation.

When the tide of opinion turned against the authorities as a result of Betjeman’s protests and those of others, the entire structure was turned from a shabby and disused British Rail office into a Grade I-listed building to be saved for a new purpose: to be a five-star hotel, not of great utility to the neighborhood’s impecunious inhabitants, such as myself, but at least the totally refurbished building would perform a function akin to a resurrection. Various additions were made to the structure (Pearman 2009), hopefully seen not as a carbuncle on

the face of a familiar friend, as Prince Charles once wrote of the National Gallery extensions, but in keeping with the desire to enhance the restored original. There are debates as to how successful certain parts of the restoration have been in keeping to the aims and design of the original work, an inherent problem with many architectural replicas.

In the first stanza of “East Croker” from *Four Quartets*, T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) writes:

In my beginning is my end. In succession  
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are  
extended,  
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in  
their place  
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.  
Old stone to new building, old timber to  
new fires,



## The Grand Midland Hotel

Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth  
Which is already flesh, fur, and faeces,  
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.  
Houses live and die: there is a time for  
building  
And a time for living and for generation  
And a time for the wind to break the  
loosened pane

The recognition by Eliot (1943) that the building still exists despite being extended, removed, or restored allows it to live in different contexts before it makes way for

another bypass. This is a more sympathetic approach to the varying diachronic function of buildings than many allow for in accounting for the restoration of Uppark. For where one might see only philosophic confusion, a cogent argument for the actions that took place could be envisaged.

Different buildings may require different approaches to their conservation or restoration, all the way from age-value to relative art-value, from historical continuity to aesthetic appreciation, from adaptive reuse to demolition. When viewed from this perspective, there is



**Figure 3.7.** Hotel designed by George Gilbert Scott at St. Pancras, North London. In the 1860s Scott won a competition to design a new hotel for St. Pancras, entering after the contest deadline had closed. He got the contract, and the hotel opened in 1873 at twice the proposed budget. By 1935 it had closed due to running costs. For 50 years it was misused as neglected offices for British Rail. Parts of the building would sporadically fall off, creating lawsuits for damages. Closed as a fire risk and almost scheduled for demolition, the building was championed by Sir John Betjeman and saved at a cost of £250 million. Many features are replicas of the authentic original, reflecting a desire to return to the past of Scott's creation. (Image courtesy of Valerie Ann Scott)

no philosophic confusion over which approach to take regarding Uppark, only a series of choices based on an assessment of which values are inherent in the conservation options open to us. Uppark could have been judged purely on age-value and left in the condition in which the fire created for it in 1989, its authentic state at that time. Or it could have been completely reconstructed as an aesthetic object, its relative art-value being evaluated as more important to emphasize than its age-value, and its authentic existence based on its aesthetics.

One could also argue that its historical existence has been kept alive, since the alternative, undertaking no reconstruction, would probably have resulted in demolition of the building altogether. The decision regarding which way to proceed involved all who had an interest in the process of conservation, and a consensus to attempt a complete reconstruction was reached. It was not a decision made in haste by one individual; it was the considered view of the National Trust as to the philosophical approach to be taken regarding Uppark's present existence. The future use of the building may incorporate the story of its burning and the continuation of its life in

a different sense than the original, much as nothing of such historic homes is ever truly original to its maker. Such homes usually shoulder numerous accretions, additions, or alterations of the original fabric to accommodate the changing use of the structure. The fire itself will become a historic event in the future, so that others, looking back on this tragic event, will be able to contemplate it as part of the ever-evolving history of Uppark.

In any case, England has plenty of admired Ruskin-esque ruins, quietly moldering away, and there is general agreement that these form part of the landscape, a landscape that has an authenticity of its own in terms of being subject to no need for restoration and no need for reconstruction. The ruin undergoing a process of natural decay in its native landscape has long been an object of romantic fascination with time and decay. Of course, as Lowenthal (1985) would point out, some of these ruins are themselves romantic falsifications of an imagined past that should have existed but never did. The need of the present to invent historic ruins, such as a romantic folly, represents a desire for a past whose authenticity has been created in the present.

## Chapter 4

# Different Approaches to Authenticity

Michelangelo's *Pietà*  
Philosophers on Restoration  
Degrees of Restoration  
Authenticity and Culture

The Forgers van Meegeren and Bastianini  
Craft vs Art  
Fields of Authenticity  
Problems of Indistinguishability

*A major problem for the philosophy of art on the one hand, and the philosophy of perception on the other, concerns the range and scope of seeing-in.*

—Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*

### Introduction

This chapter gives attention to philosophical arguments pertaining to authenticity and restoration, and how the perception of authenticity affects the works of artist-forgers such as Han van Meegeren, whose case is frequently cited in the philosophical literature on authenticity and is often used as a study of the problem of distinguishing between authentic works of art and their inauthentic imitators.

Another important example for discussion is that of Michelangelo's *Pietà*, which has also been used extensively in philosophical discussions of restoration. This chapter also touches on a host of other issues regarding authenticity, including authenticity and rehabilitation and the problems of indistinguishability, which are important in discussions relating to both restoration and art forgery. There is some dispute regarding whether forgeries are

works of craft or works of art. This chapter takes up this in attempting to extend the discussion regarding artistic forgeries and related issues back in time to earlier epochs.

Art historians, conservators, and philosophers all approach the issues involved in the authenticity, conservation, and restoration of art differently, which has had a major impact on the discussion of art fakes and forgeries. Scholars in these subject disciplines often engage in a discussion of authenticity without having read what the other disciplines have to say about the subject, which in the case of art objects results in a fragmented field of inquiry into the same kinds of objects. This situation has conservational, philosophical, art historical, and practical consequences for the works themselves and some of the theories of art and aesthetics that are written about them. It also influences the approaches to restoration, nonrestoration, derestoration or reresoration. Thus conservators rarely mention the work of Denis Dutton (1983a, 1983b, 2003), Mark Sagoff (1978a), Richard Wollheim (1980), Nelson Goodman (1968, 1983), Arthur C. Danto (1981), or Sándor Radnóti (1999), while philosophers rarely mention the work of conservators and restorers such as Cesare Brandi (2007), Paul Philippot (1965), Chris Caple (2000), or Salvador Muñoz-Viñas (2009a, 2009b, 2011); art historians such as Ernst Gombrich (1956, 1962, 1978), James Beck (Beck and Daley 1996), and Martin Kemp (2006) do not mention the work of Kneller, Goodman, Danto, Brandi, Lowenthal, or Philippot.

In a field with such potential for transdisciplinary communication, these missing interconnections between scholars undermines the possible symbiosis between disciplines and leaves conservation and restoration, in particular, often misunderstood by philosophers or

art historians, or poorly served in terms of assessing or evaluating the actions conservators and restorers take in their interactions with art objects or indeed the nature of artworks themselves. This fragmentation of the hermeneutic inquiry into the topic continues to create barriers to communication. This chapter aims, in part, to uncover and discuss these issues.

### **Michelangelo's *Pietà***

Mark Sagoff (1978a), in his paper on restoring and reproducing art, suggests that authenticity is a necessary condition of aesthetic value—that a work of art cannot be appreciated simply for its appearance or for the feelings it induces but must be appreciated for other conceptual factors. In practice, this is not always the case, and some admired artworks may indeed be quite recent forgeries, known and accepted as such, but that retain an aesthetic value.

Sagoff (1978a) takes this position in opposition to the views of Arthur Koestler (1965), who maintained that if a forgery produced the same aesthetic effect as a genuine work of art, then insistence that the forgery was inferior to the genuine work was a kind of snobbery. Sagoff (1978a) maintains that it is relatively easy for a skilled forger to create a version of an original painting from 200 years ago. In fact, the problem is to reproduce the deterioration the work has undergone.

These are indeed two separate phenomena: the ability to produce an indistinguishable copy of an original, and the ability to artificially mimic natural degradation of the artwork. However, Sagoff does not engage with the ability of scientific examination to distinguish between a painting from the eighteenth century and a twenty-first-century copy of an eighteenth-century painting, regardless of the art historical connoisseurship brought to bear on the problem, which may not be able

## Michelangelo's *Pietà*

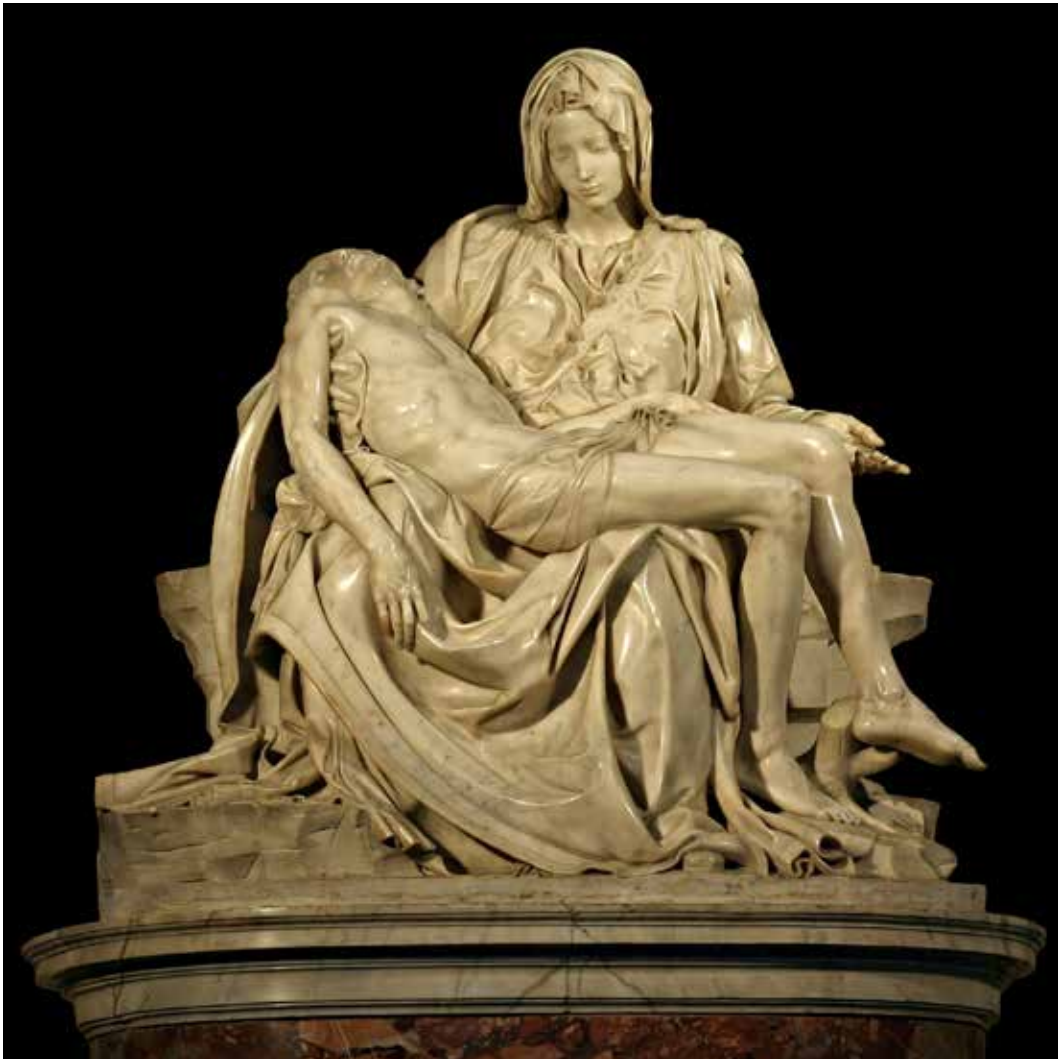
to reach a satisfactory conclusion. The premise of this argument is therefore false, but is not the principal thrust of Sagoff's article, which is more interesting. A theme often explored in contemporary aesthetics is that fabrication processes used to create a work of art and their epistemology have nothing to do with the actual appreciation of the work, that only the aesthetics of the surface matter, and that the perceptual object is simply the carrier of the aesthetic message or feeling. These arguments in aesthetics have received attention from scores of authors as a result of Nelson Goodman's seminal publication, *Languages of Art*, in 1968. The book compares the aesthetic effect of a perfect forgery with the effect derived from the real artwork, a topic that will be discussed later. Sagoff uses restoration work carried out on Michelangelo's *Pietà* to highlight his discussion of restoration.

In 1972 a crazed geologist attacked the sculpture with a hammer, shouting, "I am Jesus Christ." He broke the arm of the Madonna, knocked off her nose, and badly chipped her left eye and her veil. Onlookers took away many of the shattered fragments of marble. Mary's nose had to be reconstructed from a block cut out of her back. The complete restoration disguises any visual evidence of the attack, although restored areas can be seen under ultraviolet examination. Some scholars doubt that the position of the restored fingers matches Michelangelo's original. As a result of protective measures taken to ensure that this kind of damage cannot occur again, the sculpture can now be viewed only through bullet-proof glass. Sagoff distinguishes between an *integral restoration*, which provides new pieces in place of original fragments that have been destroyed, and a *purist restoration*, which limits itself to reattaching original fragments and asserts that nothing inauthentic, nothing not

produced by the original artist, can be shown. Sagoff thinks that in some cases, a purist restoration is safe while an integral one may further damage a work of art. In the case of the *Pietà*, a plaster cast had been taken in the 1940s, and replacement parts made up of marble dust bound with a synthetic polymer were molded in the casting shell used to produce the plaster replica. Sagoff says that the purist has missed the point—that one cannot object to the integral repair on principle and still assume that the value of a work of art depends solely on its appearance. He says that the authentic and the inauthentic are aesthetically different, not necessarily because they look different but because they are different things.

This idea pertains to the arguments of Goodman (1968), who says that a musical performance of Bach is still a work by Bach, even if played by two different orchestras in two slightly different ways. He calls such works that adhere to notation the *allographic* arts. But no notation decides whether two sculptures are instances of the same work, and these works are called *autographic* arts by Goodman. Goodman concludes that the only way to identify whether or not a painting, such as *Anna and the Blind Tobit*, was made by Rembrandt is to establish that it is the actual object made by Rembrandt and that it conforms to the class of paintings that experts have decided are by Rembrandt.

In some cases, what Goodman assumes by establishing whether a work is by a particular painter or not must rely not on visual evidence but on evidence hidden beneath the outer layer of paint. A good example of this kind of perceptual issue is the discovery of a copy of Raphael's long-lost *Madonna and Child* in Alnwick Castle, Northamptonshire, by Nicholas Penny in 1991. This copy, in fact, was the original Raphael and not a copy at all.



**Figure 4.1** *Pietà* by Michelangelo, 1498–1499, St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican. Marble; 174 x 195 cm. Four fingers on Mary’s left hand were broken during a move and were restored in 1736. Twenty-four known replicas by various artists exist. One, in Ninh Binh, Vietnam, has been destroyed (Hibbard 1974). (Image courtesy of Stanislav Traykov, Creative Commons Share Alike 3.0)

The evidence for this decision was based on an infrared reflectographic image of the detailed underdrawing of the picture, which would have been beyond the capacity of any copyist to produce (Penny 1992; Roy 2007). The underdrawing would have been covered by paint applied by the original artist, and drawings from an artist’s own hand cannot

be produced or reproduced in the same way one can create a painting in imitation of, or as a copy of, an original based on only what is visually observable. This dual connoisseurship, of the art historian (Penny 1992) who recognizes quality commensurate with an original, and the scientist (Roy 2007) who is able to compare an underdrawing with other

## Michelangelo's *Pietà*

infrared reflectograms of paintings known to have been produced by Raphael, has resulted in the copy now becoming the original.

In the case of the *Pietà*, Sagoff, while admiring the completion of the work, comes around to the view that the thinking that motivates an integral restoration is probably wrong in that it completes a work of art with material that can no longer be seen as forming part of the original.

If a restoration incites the same feeling, experience, or aesthetic appreciation as the undamaged statue, does this matter? The restoration of the *Pietà*, according to Sagoff, can easily be examined in its heavily damaged condition under ultraviolet light, as all the restored parts produce a bright green fluorescence. As far as conservation ethics are concerned, this approach to restoration is permissible in the sense that restorers are adhering to the principle of *reversibility*, or at least *retreatability*. Since no conservation actions taken regarding a work of art are truly reversible in the scientific understanding of that concept, perhaps the action should be described as *discernible*. But do observers want these restorations to be visually discernible? To be visually discernible would not accord with the idea of the aesthetic completion of the image.

The argument that Sagoff makes in his article is hard to follow. He does not mention the well-known conservation concept of anastylosis, in which the aim, set out in the Athens Conference of 1931, is to repair a monument or work of art using the original components and incorporating additions that can be visually discernible from the original, avoiding any charges of falsification of the original artwork. In the case of the *Pietà*, it could be argued that the principles of anastylosis have been upheld, since the restored parts fluoresce under ultraviolet light and can

therefore be visually distinguished from the original using special lighting arrangements. The outstretched left hand of the Madonna is mostly an eighteenth-century restoration, but this integral restoration, in Sagoff's terms, was executed in marble and will not show an ultraviolet fluorescence as will a twentieth-century restoration made out of marble dust and synthetic resin. Restorations at different historical moments have utilized the same kinds of substances that the work was composed of, namely marble, and totally different substances, such as a synthetic resin filled with marble powder, whose long-term stability is always in doubt but which enables the purist to view the additional restorations under ultraviolet light. The unity of the image, in Brandi's terms, is what is important here for the observer, and there is always a danger that different campaigns of restoration result in varying aesthetic judgments about veracity, authenticity, or physical and chemical stability. *Compensation for loss* has been provided in the twentieth century for parts known to have been shattered with a hammer and, more speculatively in the eighteenth century, with creation of an outstretched left hand. If the purist might object to any conservation action, it is the eighteenth-century restoration, but few would argue that these should now be removed from the sculpture in order for us to better appreciate the unrestored masterpiece. But there are sculptures for which restored completions have been removed, returning the sculpture to a fragmentary authenticity rather than a state of aesthetic completion. Examples include sculptures from the island of Aegina, discussed later in this book.

In claiming that art objects are appreciated in terms of things that are loved, as individual entities rather than as Platonic Ideals, Sagoff endorses the view that love is based on the characteristics of a particular individual (or a

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

particular work of art), not a set of enjoyable characteristics, a philosophy associated with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle emphasizes the primacy of the person; one loves the individual one knows, not his or her qualities per se. Many observers appreciate the *Pietà* in this Aristotelian way—that is, as a particular object with a particular history and not merely as a bearer of properties, says Sagoff, who suggests that justification for the integral repair of a work of art can be scrutinized under the umbrella of four principles:

Individualizing: works of art are not interchangeable unless, among others, they are instances of the same work. Appreciation is historical, because it identifies an art work as the result of a particular process; it is relational in that it judges a work so identified, in the context of others similar to it in period, place, and kind. Appreciation is cognitive, finally, because our feelings make us aware of the properties, not merely the surfaces, of things.

Of course, very little of what Sagoff has to say applies to modern works of art in which the original work has long since decayed away and been replaced with a surrogate of itself, an entirely new work that in one sense pretends to be the original work. Some of Naum Gabo's sculptures are examples of this ethical or restorative problem, as they have been replaced with exact replicas of the originals, although *exact* here does not mean that the materials used to make the surrogates are the same as those Gabo used, only that they appear visually to be the same as the originals at the time the surrogates were placed on display. A surrogate may not age in the same way as the original work either.

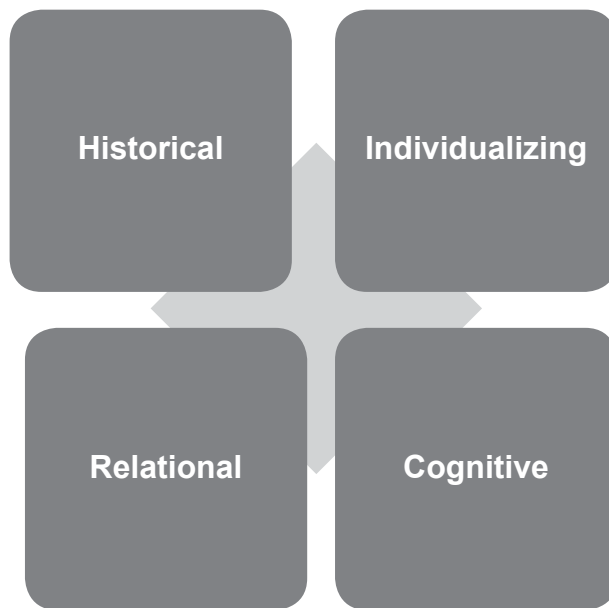
As a consequence of inherent vice, the artwork bears within its material composition the seeds of its own inevitable disintegration. In the case of Naum Gabo's cellulose acetate or cellulose nitrate originals that have become undisplayable, unless one wishes to contemplate the act of disintegration itself, which is also a part of the authentically postmodern approach to art, the contemplation of decay as a work of art is now a reflection of the artistic process of creation and may actually constitute it in cases where the artist considers inherent decay to be part of the function and meaning of the artwork in itself.

The four criteria *individualizing*, *historical*, *relational*, and *cognitive* deserve further attention. They seem to have been rarely evaluated by other scholars.

Under *individualizing*, if a work of art is an example of the same object, it can still be seen as an individual and authentic production. Additional legitimizing circumstances can result in a copy of a work being regarded as authentic—for example, if the copy is actually produced by the artist himself. An example is the bronze casting of the *God Mars* by Giambologna (1529–1608), which exists in about 14 authentic replicas. Many copies were produced after the artist's death by his successor Pietro Tacca and in the nineteenth and early twentieth century by unknown Italian foundries and more recently by Francesca Bewer, the latter strictly for study purposes. The term *historical* refers to processes by which the artwork was made. The degradation that many artworks undergo over time could be included as an essential concomitant of the historical component. By this means an observer could distinguish copies of the *God Mars* produced in 2012 from those produced in



## Michelangelo's *Pietà*



**Figure 4.2.** Concepts important for establishing authenticity, based on Mark Sagoff's ideas: Unique works are appreciated not interchangeably but because of their individual properties (individualizing); awareness of works is in the context of the art and its history of production (cognitive); the work is evaluated in the context of other similar works of art in terms of period, place, style, or materials (relational); processes by which the artwork is made are extended to include possible degradation over time (historical). These concepts are not mutually exclusive. (Diagram by the author)

1785. *Relational* refers to judging a work of art in comparison with other known works and creations of the presumed period of manufacture. Under the category *cognitive*, the viewer is aware of not just surfaces but also feelings associated with a bronze produced by Giambologna, or the foundry with which he was associated, rather than those associated with a recent copy finished by the author or even one fabricated by Pietro Tacca in Florence after the artist's death.

One of the few cogent arguments relating to Sagoff's paper is the discussion offered by Gregory Currie (1989), partly because Sagoff is a firm advocate of resistance to the *instance multiplicity hypothesis* (IMH), much discussed by Currie in his ontological studies. The IMH states that all kinds of

works are multiple: capable, in principle, of having multiple instances. In principle, it is possible for there to be as many instances of a painting as there are instances of a novel. Currie (1989:8) writes. "Thus the theory I propose is monistic in two ways; it says that there is only one kind of thing that a work of art is, and it says that there is only one kind of relation between a work of art and its instances." He also holds that works of art are *action types* and that all kinds of works belong to the same ontological category, which he calls the *action type hypothesis* (ATH). Sagoff, however, following Goodman (1968, 1983), argues that the authentic and the inauthentic are aesthetically different, not necessarily because they look different but because they are different things.

### Reconsidering Categories of Restoration: A Commentary

UCLA philosopher Andrew Hsu responded to my request for his take on the four categories suggested by Sagoff. His thoughts are of some interest here, since few philosophers have had anything to say in response to Sagoff's theory. Hsu (personal communication 2014) writes:

I've been thinking about what you write about Sagoff. You make it clear that actual cases (Gabo . . .) are a challenge to his view. He would at the very least have to elaborate his ideas even to address your cases. It appears to me there are a couple of different strands in Sagoff's thinking. The more prominent and important one is the claim that aesthetic appreciation and value are "individualizing" (and, therefore, historical). Aesthetic appreciation and value attach to individuals as opposed to sets of properties or experiences that individuals stimulate. This claim doesn't imply that fakes, copies, or integral restorations have to be bad (or even inferior to originals). A copy that a great artist makes of an original might be interesting and valuable in ways the original is not. Your observation that "some admired artworks may indeed be quite recent forgeries, known and accepted as such, but . . . retain aesthetic value" is consistent with Sagoff's main idea. (He may have some [ethical?] objection to fakes, because they can—and are intended to—confuse our relationships with individual artworks and the artists who produced them—but that's a different problem from getting attached to a mere bundle of properties or experiences as

opposed to an individual.) At the end of your remarks on Sagoff, you say that Sagoff makes it sound as if all changes to an artwork compromise our relationship to that individual. I agree that Sagoff makes it sound that way, but this second strand in the article is independent of the first and, in fact, in some tension with it. When Sagoff writes of artworks as historical and material links to particular artists, builders, etc., he seems to be thinking of durable objects, ones which are not in the normal course of events maintained by replacement of parts, repainting, etc., etc. He thinks of marble statues rather than of wooden temples, e.g. In the latter case, changes of material composition are from the beginning envisaged to keep the object in existence. I can imagine someone who thinks "These are the very timbers shaped by builders of old" being saddened by the discovery that the timbers have been replaced many times—Sagoff sounds like such a person—But this attitude is different from the "individualizing" attitude which Sagoff insists on as part of aesthetic appreciation. It requires a different explanation. To be fair, the cases of restoration Sagoff mentions differ from routine maintenance. Sagoff seems to think that integral restoration of the Pietà isn't merely a modification of an artwork by Michelangelo, but the conversion of a Michelangelo into a Michelangelo-de Campos, as it were: One individual work of art—a Michelangelo—is lost and replaced by a hybrid entity. Sagoff evidently thinks of this as a bad thing, though it doesn't strictly follow from the general thesis that aesthetic appreciation individualizes. That thesis applies to all

## Reconsidering Categories of Restoration: A Commentary

sorts of artworks—but it will apply to different kinds of artworks (allographic, autographic, material, immaterial . . .) in different ways. Sagoff is relying on an intuition about when a particular material artwork passes out of existence. For him, the Michelangelo is rather like a saint's relic; replacing bits the originator touched endangers its existence. People sympathetic to Sagoff's general thesis that aesthetic appreciation individualizes may not agree with Sagoff about the particular case.

Currie (1989:93) finds some agreement with the four categories outlined by Sagoff but does not think that from any of these criteria the original painting can be aesthetically separated from instances of its copies. Currie's arguments, however, are principally concerned with examples from the fields of literature and music, which may not be comparable to those of works of the visual arts. In discussion of how the same considerations apply to music, Currie (1989:94) states that to appreciate a musical work is to understand the composer's use of musical conventions, the historical context of what he has produced, and the relational properties of it compared with other musical compositions to which it might be connected, as well as the individual achievements of the composer. He says that what is needed here, and what Sagoff does not provide, is a premise that points to features possessed by paintings and sculptures, and not by literary and musical works, and that indicates how the possession of these features in the one case and their lack in the other makes painting singular but literature not. What is needed, he says, is a *differential* explanation. But the diagram in Figure 2.2, included within the historical context, the

possible diachronic degradation that the artwork may be subjected to, is relevant to the hermeneutic concerns here. As an example, consider, for the sake of argument, an artwork in a condition created by burial, a miniature portrait bust of a Roman woman in the collections of the J. Paul Getty Museum, shown in Figure 4.3 on the left. The bust is shown in a conserved state in Figure 4.3 on the right. Neither of these conditions represents the appearance and condition of the original bronze, which would have either been a bright yellowish or golden bronze or a toned bronze with a thin glaze or patina. Neither of the present states represents its original physical form. There is no reasonable case to be made that the appearance of this bronze as instantiated in its condition from burial could ever be satisfactorily replicated by a copy that could not be distinguished aesthetically from the buried bronze bust in its uncleaned condition. There has been a fundamental alteration to the instance of the work in a sense entirely different from the degradation of an early literary Roman manuscript on parchment, which can be read and deciphered.

The Latin text of the manuscript can be deciphered and read, just as it was read 2,000 years ago, but the appearance of the bronze bust as it was 2,000 years ago cannot be re-created. Additionally, endless digital copies of the Roman text can be made and disseminated around the globe. Copies of the uncleaned Roman bust from burial can be fabricated, perhaps using a very sophisticated three-dimensional printer, but the pustular degradation of the bronze would be only an imitative version of its morphology, not the substance of its formation itself. If an attempt was made to clean the pustule, feel it with a fingernail, or reveal the pitted surface of the corroded bronze, the deception would be all

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

too obvious. Deterioration due to age cannot be replicated in the same way that deterioration due to age has formed from the original material of the bust per se.

The superficial appearance of a perfect three-dimensional representation would not be the same as the representation the artwork creates for itself, from time and its internal degradation. Broadly the same criticisms of Currie's instance multiplicity hypothesis are made by Noël Carroll (1998:221), who discusses how this theory could possibly apply to site-specific artwork such as Robert Smithson's (1938–1973) *Spiral Jetty* (1970), which was created in the Great Salt Lake in Utah, a site known for unique algae that produced the reddish tonality sought by the artist. What was to be appreciated in terms of the artwork was the shifting physical appearance of the work as the water level changed. The vicissitudes that artworks of this kind undergo in the course of time are part of their existence qua works of art, deliberately sought in many cases by the artist and therefore part of a continuum of events in time that cannot be replicated. The Roman head and *Spiral Jetty* cannot be multiples of themselves because the processes of alteration, mineralization, and degradation are not seen as a multiplicity of repeatable events of these instances.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the Roman bust in two of its three possible states. This Roman woman would have worn gold earrings, now lost. Her hair is shown in a complicated braided and knotted style popular during the reign of Emperor Augustus. The fine detail of the hair required much hand carving to sharpen the contours from the cast condition. The pustular corrosion is due to bronze disease, and the cleaned version on the right is still potentially unstable with the pustules

cleaned and removed. Stylistic mimicry of the uncleaned bronze is possible, but the creation of a perfectly indistinguishable replica would not be possible. The corrosion could be mimicked but not reproduced. Unlike the exact three-dimensional copy, the original has a dynamic interaction with time in the form of bronze disease, which renders the cleaned bust metastable rather than stable (Scott 2002). This metastable equilibrium has nothing to do with the original condition of the bust but everything to do with its diachronic degradation.

The arguments concerning purist as opposed to integral restoration raised by Sagoff in 1978 became of interest to philosophers again after a 30-year hiatus. For example, Caroline Korsmeyer (2008) asks the pertinent question: How restored is too restored? Invoking the Rieglian (1982 [1903]) age-value, she asks how much original construction must be retained for age-value to remain?

Rafael De Clercq (2013) offers the reply, "A work is too restored if the purpose of restoration could have been achieved in a less invasive way, in particular, by preserving more of the (original) parts of the work and by adding fewer new 'parts.'" There are two issues here: first the problem of visual discernment of any restored areas, and secondly the problem of adding new parts. In terms of the forgery by Jef van der Veken of a painting by Roger van der Weyden, discussed in chapter 1, an ethical approach to completion of the image would have allowed a visual or technically achievable discernibility to areas inpainted by van der Veken. The question of age-value is secondary here because van der Veken would have made every attempt to retain the original vestiges of the work; any additional loss would be counterproductive. De Clercq's view (2013) that the restoration

## Reconsidering Categories of Restoration: A Commentary



**Figure 4.3.** Miniature Roman portrait bust of a woman, 25 B.C.E.–25 C.E.; 16.5 x 6.7 cm. Left: the unrestored bust. Right: after cleaning and stabilization. Possibly kept in a shrine, the bust retains inlaid eyes of glass paste—an unusual survival, as the eyes are usually lost. (Image courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu)

could have been achievable in a less invasive way, by adding fewer new “parts” in accord with the principles of *minimum intervention*, also misses the point here. The intervention has to be seen for what it is, and not be confused with the original via efforts to match the binding media, craquelure, and pigments of the remaining painted surface. Fewer new “parts” could not be used because the image would be aesthetically incomplete, but completion by adhering to modern restoration philosophy would not involve using

materials employed by the original artist. It would ensure that any restoration work on the painting was reversible or retreatable *and* could be discerned by commonly available methods of examination, such as UV photography. The problem is that with so much of the artwork missing, van der Veken effectively invented what van der Weyden may have intended, but this restoration was not based on any evidence of what the original artist had produced. It represents a skillful surmise by the restorer.

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

In earlier centuries, such as the sixteenth through the nineteenth, restorers often “corrected” sculpture or paintings to accord with the taste of the time, seen as giving relevance to older costumes or idioms (Darrow 2001; Giusti 1999; Talley 1998). Even during the early modern period, from about 1900 to 1970, Brandi’s axiom that only the material of the work of art should be restored, that the work should not be adulterated by fanciful inventions, was often not adhered to.

De Clercq (2013) divides his discussion of restoration into two questions: What is restoration supposed to achieve, and what are the means that a restorer can legitimately employ? These questions become entangled with ontological problems and issues surrounding the identity of artworks, as well as their perceptual and aesthetic properties (Carroll 1998; Danto 1981, 2007). De Clercq (2013:27) concludes,

The purpose of restoration is not to reveal the inalienable perceptual and aesthetic properties of a work, either by changing its appearance (Wollheim 1980) or by changing its current perceptual properties (Savile 1993a, 1993b). Rather, the purpose of restoration is to return or leave intact those perceptual properties that the artist intended the work to have and which, at some point after completion, it actually had.

The point of the reference to Richard Wollheim (1980) concerns his statement about the incorruptible nature of a work of art, regardless of whether some of its perceptual properties are now very different than those created by the artist, while Savile (1968, 1983) states that an artwork can undergo changes in respect of the perceptual and

aesthetic properties it presently has but not in respect of properties it timelessly has. These timeless properties are seen as fixed around the time of completion of the work, an interesting metaphysical concept that is further discussed by De Clercq (2013), who maintains that a particular conception of the relationship between aesthetic and artistic value in the context of restoration debates may have to be adopted—that artistic value is a property of the work at a particular time, close to its fabrication, while aesthetic value can change over time, showing that artistic value is not entirely the same as aesthetic value.

To the objection that the work may not be in its optimal condition at the time of completion, De Clercq (2013) replies that the condition is principally determined by the artist’s intention. For example, the artist may have the intention that a patina will develop.

The desire for degradation is an intention expressed by several contemporary artists, which provides some evidence to support De Clercq’s claim regarding restoration and intention (see also Heidegger 2008 [1935–1937]). However, there are instances in which the desired aesthetic appearance associated with a work of art is not dependent on the intention of the artist but on subsequent diagenetic processes. Some of these processes may entail a dramatic alteration of the appearance of the work.

Consider a Chinese bronze *ding* from the Warring States period, inlaid with copper strips and malachite intaglio (Scott 2002). In the original state, the *ding* would have displayed yellow, golden-colored bronze, with a contrasting inlay of subtle reddish copper and green malachite. It could be artificially patinated at this stage, but that does not affect the logic of the present argument. Thousands of years later, the *ding* now displays a variegated

## Artworks and Manuscripts

malachite patina interspersed with bright red cuprite, which obscures the bronze metal completely. A liver-red cuprite covers the copper strips, and the slightly darker green of the original malachite inlay can be seen, the entire *ding* partially covered with a burial concretion. A restoration intervention that attempted to recover the original appearance of the bronze, or some earlier condition of it, would destroy the aesthetic of the aged patina and corrosion, which has come to be valued highly in ancient Chinese bronze vessels. Here, our own cultural norms are imposed on what the desired aesthetic appearance of the vessel actually is, regardless of the intentions of the original artist. During restoration, the burial concretion will be removed, but the deeply corroded surface will be left intact as the conservator skillfully works to retain the vestigial “original surface” of the bronze, now embedded in a mass of corrosion products (Bertholon 2001, 2004; Organ 1963; Scott 2002).

The problem with De Clercq’s (2013) principal conclusion is that it is insufficiently labile: Not only are there good reasons for aesthetic decisions that have little to do with the intentions of the artist, but there must, at the very least, be cases in which the aim of restoration is to change the perceptual properties of the work from those it currently manifests, not necessarily to bring the work to a state closer to the original conception of it but to bring it to a state that present-day observers find the most acceptable in terms of aesthetic properties.

Relevant to the discussion here are the three options regarding restoration proposed by Muñoz-Viñas (2009a, 2009b). The first option is that the original state is considered more appropriately meaningful for present observers than the nonoriginal states; the second, that the meanings the restoration process

obliterates are not expected to be significant for future observers; the third, that presenting the object in its original state is worth the loss of historical information embedded in the object. The shift from truth-based theories of conservation to the meanings associated with objects ascribed by contemporary observers, advocated by Muñoz-Viñas (2011), allows for an entire panorama of legitimate debates based on the relative significance of the states of the artwork.

## Artworks and Manuscripts

Some of the material conditions of paintings and sculptures are not possessed by works of literature or musical performances. The ability to reproduce the text of a 2,000-year-old Latin manuscript shows that once the text has been replicated, it will not continue to degrade. Although Goodman’s distinction between the autographic and allographic arts has been criticized as not always applicable, in that a piece of music could actually be a fake performance of the original work (Dutton 1983a), there is still a strong case to be made that forgeries in terms of works of art constitute different cases and instances than forgeries of literature or music. For example, Mark Rowe (2013) discusses at length issues related to how Jane Austen’s works were received at the time she was writing compared with the assessment in a blind trial of three chapters of *Northanger Abbey* in 2013 by several publishers, who rejected the supposedly newly created work presented to them for publication. This is not really relevant to the problem of creating the perfect fake in the sense of the criteria illustrated in Figure 2.19. These were *stylistic imitation*, a *spurious context of reception*, *artificial aging*, and the use of *old materials* only. For a literary fake, as discussed by Rowe (2013), only stylistic imitation was involved

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

in the deception; Austen's book was given a fake title, and the names of the principal protagonists were altered. This was all that was required to present the new work for scrutiny to the publisher's readers, who rejected the work as not suitable for publication. In fact, the use of old materials and artificial aging are not relevant to the text itself but only to the medium of its delivery.

The perfect fake, in literary terms, would be a newly discovered work on fifteenth-century parchment, written in the correct kind of iron gall ink, aged artificially so that some of the lettering had burned through the parchment, aping an unknown work by a fifteenth-century divine, in Old English with no spelling inconsistencies, and with the right kind of documentary evidence attesting that it had been found in an old monastic ruin in Northumberland. The discussion of this kind of literary fake would have been of interest, but Rowe (2013) does not consider this kind of perfect fake in his paper. He states that sameness of manifest type is not enough for sameness of work; that a work is identified not only by its manifest features but also by the nonmanifest features of its context, its history, and the intentions with which it was made; and that the relevant difference may reside only in the different intentions with which the work was created. Rowe also suggests that comparing an original and a copy produced molecule by molecule, exactly mirroring the chemical and physical structure of the original, could be envisaged as a real event. However, this is a scientific impossibility in terms of works of art: a work cannot be replicated in a molecule-by-molecule fashion as Rowe suggests to make the original and the copy completely indistinguishable. Rather than suggest that this fantasy could be possible, what is more pertinent to consider is the

visually indiscernible rather than invoking an impossible chemical mutual identity.

Rowe also says that all works of art are types identified by their physical properties and their history of production (Rowe 2013:157). It is difficult to extend the concept that all works of art are types identifiable by their physical properties and their history of production to those works that are dependent on the non-manifest properties Rowe also mentions. An example is given by Denis Dutton (1983a): The African wood carvings of the Igorot of northern Luzon traditionally represent a rice granary guardian figure, a *bulul*, ceremonially treated with blood, producing over the years a deep red patina, partially covered with a black deposit from food offerings. These were already being made for tourists in the 1920s, and one famous carver made many both for tourists and for ritual use during this time. After the Second World War, none were carved, so the local inhabitants then bought the tourist art from the market and turned the inauthentic works into something culturally significant by making new libations of blood and grease. The history of production of these sacred works therefore does not represent a type that is identifiable and necessarily authentic because of their history of production and physical properties. Instead, their historical past as a tourist production has been reappropriated by the Igorot as a conceptually authentic *bulul*, and the history of how they were produced has been superseded by their performance in a ritual setting.

Sagoff's work has been criticized in that he overlooks the fact that there are copies that are not forgeries, there are copies that are forgeries, and there are forgeries that are not copies. Equally untenable according to Radnóti (1999) is his conclusion, "An artist cannot forge his own work but creates an



original work with every copy suggests the truth that paintings are not classified as forgeries or as fakes if they can plausibly be counted in some other way.” At the same time, a painter might produce or copy a work in the manner of his earlier, more successful style. Postdated memoirs that record events from a fictitious earlier period of the writer’s life, such as Mussolini’s diaries, are not unknown. Sagoff appears to be saying that any alteration to an artwork over time is seen as an unwelcome, external, and perhaps avoidable threat, but as outlined above, changes to a work could include not only the external but also the internal alterations that may occur with time, as suggested in Figure 4.2.

The opposing view, one could argue, is presented by Heidegger. As far as the material substance of works of art is concerned, the inevitable demise of the material is seen as a precondition for authenticity. Heidegger (2008 [1935–1937]:143–212) claims that the material used in art: “is all the better and more suitable the less it resists perishing.”

The inability not to perish is a premise with which many modern artists, as well as some Native American tribes, would agree, the ephemeral being part of the *raison d’être* of the artwork or artifact itself. For example, Clavir (1994) notes that a Zuni cultural representative stated that there is not a single item in Zuni culture used for religious or ceremonial purposes that is meant to be preserved in perpetuity. All are gifts to the gods that are meant to disintegrate back into the earth to do their natural work (Clavir 1994).

Some modern artists deliberately make use of the process of natural degradation. This has become more prevalent since the 1960s, with performance art and art fabricated from materials suffering from inherent vice, made of transitory, perishable, or

self-destructing materials, often designated as ephemeral art.

The historical events affecting an object’s material existence are seen by Heidegger as deeply connected to alteration and decay, in keeping with his view of an art object as a *being in itself*. In this sense, conservation must fight against the natural perishability of all things. The works are no longer the same, in the Heideggerian view, as they once were, and this natural process of decay is part of the cycle of life. Some writers, such as Eggert (2009), hold the view that the genuine work of art has been eradicated by conservation actions. He writes: “It is they themselves, to be sure, that we encounter there, but they themselves are gone by. For Heidegger the very activity of subjecting a work to an art-historical study—when it has been rendered the object of a science . . . for him, the very activity rendered the work inauthentic.”

Eggert (2009) does not present an alternative argument to this statement, which could be construed as an extreme view of the subject. It could be argued that when an art object is rendered as an object of science, it is viewed in a certain dispassionate manner that does not result in the object becoming more or less inauthentic or authentic than before it was examined. The physical and chemical properties of a work of art can be evaluated by scientific examination, but this process does not necessarily interfere with the physical state of the work of art, as no sample or physical intrusion into the work may take place. For example, detailed scanning of the *Mona Lisa* employing infrared to ultraviolet light, and numerous wavelengths in between, reveals that the left hand of the *Mona Lisa* is actually holding a cloth or a piece of material (CNN 2007). The *Mona Lisa* is discussed in greater detail in the chapter dealing with Renaissance art.

### Authenticity and Rehabilitation

The conclusion that inauthenticity is necessarily a consequence of the later investigation or rehabilitation of works of art is only one way to interpret what Heidegger says. Heidegger claims that the ongoing dynamic of the artwork is of importance to its authenticity, that the life of the artwork necessarily includes change.

The authentic artwork will not always be determined by factors established at the time of creation, because the life of the artwork will have introduced new factors into its identification. Heidegger believes that excessive focus on the *object-being* of an artwork threatens its authenticity, while attention to the *work-being* of an artwork supports it. He argues that at any particular synchronic moment in which the artwork is examined, its authenticity is not completely represented, as it is an ongoing process that cannot be judged only at a singular moment of existence; preserving the artwork as it is at one given point of time will restrict further developments in the authenticity of the object, thus confining the artwork to a less authentic state.

The question is whether preserving the *Mona Lisa* as it is at a given point of time, in the condition following its last known conservation intervention, or its physical state in 2015, is stunting its authenticity in its ongoing existence, or whether conservation is undertaking a legitimate function in seeking to preserve the artwork in its current state for as long as possible. There may be several types of answers to this question.

The approach taken by Heidegger has much in common with the view of Muñoz-Viñas (2011), who says the stakeholders are the ones who decide on what authenticity means in a given case. Muñoz-Viñas (2011) argues that truth-based theories of restoration,

such as those of Brandi (1977), are the cause of problems in evaluating what is authentic or not, as they are based on objective criteria that create impossible or contradictory demands on hallowed notions of conservation, such as revealing the *original object*, the *artist's intent*, or the *true nature* of the work of art, or undertaking its *reversible* treatment, facets of conservation philosophy discussed in chapter 1. Muñoz-Viñas (2011) holds that artistic merit, style, color, shape, material, and so on are the meaning-bearing features; they are valued for what they “mean” to people, not for their relation to “truth.” His theory calls for an adaptive application of modern conservation to works of art in which scientific objectivism is supplanted by a relativistic approach to actions that need to be taken regarding works of art. From this perspective, it is ethically correct to reintegrate missing parts of a religious sculpture in an indiscernible way if other perceivable techniques are not acceptable to the devotees. It is the affected people who know intimately what meanings the object possesses and how it will best convey those meanings. Interpretation of this statement could involve a hermeneutic inquiry into the context of the work and the cultural setting in which the work resides. The point at issue would be a contention by some that reintegration of the image of the religious sculpture in an indiscernible way would disguise its material authenticity to such an extent that the finished state could be viewed as akin to a forgery. On the other hand, if completion of the image is considered essential by the devotees, then the aesthetic authenticity overrides every other consideration, even if that creates an image that is partially a falsification of the original or a complete replacement of the original. Care has to be taken to make a distinction between a religious sculpture—the case put

before us here by Muñoz-Viñas—and a religious painting, for in the latter case, many observers are in agreement that the retouching and repainting of a damaged painting should be visually indiscernible, because the original and the repainting can be distinguished under ultraviolet or infrared light.

Muñoz-Viñas (2012) also draws attention to the concept of damage to a work of art and what should be done about it. Alteration of an object may or may not be deliberate, and this may or may not be considered positive. If not deliberate and positive, this alteration could be called a “patina.” If deliberate and positive, it could be called “restoration.” If negative, it is described as “damage.” “What makes us consider this negative or positive is a result of taste and prejudices that can vary among persons, cultures, and with time,” says Muñoz-Viñas (2012). This view of the issue of damage and loss remains an important concern for us in terms of what constitutes an authentic state of an artifact or art object. Jonathan Ashley-Smith (1995) provides some insight into possible definitions of damage, whose consequences for works of art are not liminal. The problem with damage is that it can be seen as accidental or deliberate, and depending on the phenomenological approach, opinions regarding what constitutes damage may be divergent between art historians, conservators, and curators.

Old damage may be seen as an indication that an object is authentic because of what it has suffered in some previous century, not necessarily what it is in itself. A typical example are some of the forgeries of Han van Meegeren, who scoured his painted surfaces in places to remove part of the finished painting he had just produced to create functional damage that might be associated with a seventeenth-century Dutch canvas by Vermeer.

This damage would then be hidden by professional restoration, but the damage would be documented, useful in the subsequent life of the work as a piece that had undergone real restoration. This was false old damage disguised by genuinely ethical restoration. Silks used for repair in Japanese paintings on silk have been damaged artificially using gamma radiation, ultraviolet light, or ozone to render them physically deteriorated, the preferred methodology for Japanese conservators (Sugiyama 2014). The silks will subsequently degrade themselves, requiring replacement with another set of laboratory-knackered silks.

Restoration can itself cause damage, especially in disguising missing parts or in the overpainting of pictures to improve the appearance in accord with contemporary tastes or to add to their value by including more desirable features, often by associative desires for famous names to be attributed to the work. All these actions may damage the original. Ashley-Smith (1995) proposes that damage be defined as “something that by an effect on our level of understanding and enjoyment or on the object’s life-span causes a decrease in total benefit.” This may hold for authentic works, but for some forgeries, apparent damage results in an increase in total benefit.

### Authenticity and Cultures

There are problems with the concept of one culture, one heritage and with one unified approach to properties such as damage, significance, context, decay, value, or function. Further complexities exist in seeking a common ground for discussion of the preservation of heritage. Universality, the assumption that some heritage is meaningful to all humankind, may be a basic tenet of art restoration, although the idea is being questioned

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

more frequently in the twenty-first century. Postmodernism substituted the idea of cultures for that of culture, asserting that there are no superior or inferior ones—they are just different types of culture. As applied to restoration, the point is that the very notion of universal culture is a Western construct, a sort of cultural globalization, and as the commodity value of culture increases, so does the Westernization of culture itself.

Scientific conservation, a consequence of classical theorists' appetite for truth, has created the ever-increasing influence of science in conservation. Science performs a number of basic tasks: It establishes how the restored object should be by determining precisely how it was at a given moment in time. It determines which conservation techniques and materials are the most effective. It monitors the development of a given conservation process. It dates the materials of a work of art, when pigments came into use, how old a piece of wood is, and whether the composition is acceptable for the alleged period of manufacture. It performs a variety of functions, but it cannot create values in terms of conservation action.

Muñoz-Viñas (2002) argues that notions of authenticity and falsehood are meaningless even in the case of deliberate forgery. Forged objects are undisputable, tautologically authentic objects, even if they have been incorrectly identified. A painting thought to date from the sixteenth century primed with titanium white and painted with cadmium pigments is still a true painting: a contemporary painting imitating an earlier formal style. Our belief that this modern painting should date to the sixteenth century is wrong, but the painting itself is not wrong. No less than beauty, falsehood is in the eye of the beholder.

Baugh (1988), in *Authenticity Revisited*, essentially follows the Heidegger train of

thought through Sartre, the latter more associated with the authentic human existence and its problems of dissimulation than with objects of art. Baugh argues that works of art, like human beings, make their own "world" by revealing it in a singular manner and that it is in this that artistic authenticity resides. He argues that works of art, like human beings, depend on their historicity for their authenticity; that authentic works must be *singular*—they must be the *irreplaceable* basis of their worlds, which they can be only if they establish their own organizational principles. Baugh (1988:483) writes: "The originality of a work of art does not consist in its either ignoring or fleeing the past, but in determining what the past has made possible for the present. Originality lies in returning to the past and reinterpreting it in a way that the present is liberated from the current, dominant interpretation and working-out of its past." It would help the reader here if Baugh were to give particular examples of works of art that illuminate the application of the Sartrean view of art and aesthetics. In his emphasis on the past, and the liberation of the present, Baugh consigns many works of art to a form of oblivion, since appropriation art would not represent an authentic work that could be experienced outside of the world of art itself. It would have a past that was another artist's past, not the past of the present work. By *singular*, does Baugh mean that the work of art is exemplified only by one particular created form, or does he mean that the work is singular because it is quite unlike any other work that it might be compared to? In chapter 2 *Luncheon on the Grass* was mentioned, a work by Picasso that exists in many different forms. Each is singular, one could argue, but whether all are equally authentic in the Sartrean view could be problematic.

## Problems of Forgeries



**Figure 4.4.** *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* by Edgar Degas. Height 104.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Sculpture in stone, terra-cotta, wood, or bronze may give rise to complex identities, particularly when not produced by the original artist. (Photograph by Frank Kovalchek. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic)

### Problems of Forgeries

Even more problematic for the view of authenticity presented by Baugh is what an observer would make of the bronze dancer by Degas illustrated in Figure 4.4. It was not actually made by Degas himself. Nor was it produced in his own lifetime or made in wax, which was Degas's preferred medium for these sculptures (Arseneau 2006). What are we to make of the plaster versions and bronze copies originating from the Valsuani Foundry in Paris, which are conventionally regarded as authentic works (Failing 2013). Particularly in terms of what defines an original and what

constitutes a reproduction is a phenomenological problem of an artist's oeuvre (Levene 2011), especially salient in the case of these sculptural productions from Degas's studio or produced by his heirs, other artists, or later foundries. Although it is commonly known that Degas never had any of his sculpture cast in bronze, you would never know this from displays at the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the Louvre (Lindsay et al. 2010). Yet in the art world today, the cast bronzes circulate at huge prices—\$30 million is one recent example—and these works are accepted as originals by Degas (Failing 2013; Levene 2011).

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

The wax original of *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans*, circa 1881, and other wax figures made by Degas were “rediscovered” in 1955. Through their purchase by Paul Mellon, they mostly ended up at the National Gallery in Washington, DC. The assertion of rediscovery is itself a myth (Failing 2011), as the wax figures, long thought lost, were known of years before this revelation, with the delay probably designed to enhance the supposed authenticity of the bronze copies. The original tutu Degas used for *La Petite Danseuse* is completely different in construction and aesthetic effect than the limp miniskirt worn today by the posthumous bronze casts (Barbour and Sturman 2010; Berrie and Quillen Lomax; Failing 2013; Lindsay et al. 2010). There is also an interesting series of plaster casts of replicas of highly finished wax models whose material correspondence to the original mode of production of the works has been clouded by the intimate relationship between Degas’s heirs; the Hébrard Foundry in Paris, which cast 73 of the wax originals in bronze; and the plaster versions in the Valsuani Foundry, which has also issued bronze casts (Sturman and Barbour 2010). A complex argument (Failing 2013) concerns the status of a series of the plaster casts from the Valsuani Foundry, which were used in the 1990s to cast at least eight series in bronze. Some hold that these plasters were made during Degas’s lifetime and are, in fact, more authentic than the wax version of the *Little Dancer* in the National Gallery. However, no major Degas scholar has defended this proposition. Gary Tinterow, director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, says, “There is nothing that demonstrates that Degas had a set of plaster casts made of his sculptures during his lifetime” (Failing 2013). The problem here is to decide on the relationship

between wax models, plaster versions, and bronze casts and to determine which were actually produced by the artist and which were fabricated after his death and in what context. Those produced after the death of an artist would fail to satisfy the intangible authenticity of their supposed association with the hand of the artist or his intentionality—that would be the usual response of an informed observer regarding art that valorizes a specific individual artist. In connection with the argument that the plaster casts are all original to the artist, Patricia Failing (2013) writes,

The inventory photograph of *Dancer Ready to Dance*, the right foot forward presents another kind of challenge. In the photograph, a substantial external armature extends from the base of the sculpture to the top of the figure’s head. Large wires attached to this metal rod hold each arm in a curved position around the head. When the external armature was removed before casting, Sturman and Barbour observed (Lindsay et al. 2010), the left arm drooped so that it is now rendered almost perpendicular to the body in a compromise of the original intent. The drooping left arm is in the same position in the Valsuani plaster. Why didn’t the “lifetime” plaster preserve the artist’s original intent instead of replicating an error that resulted from the casting process years after the artist’s death?

Scientific connoisseurship seems to provide here a terminus ante quem for the *Dancer Ready to Dance* as compared with the plaster cast and presents physical evidence to support the view that the Valsuani plasters, and correspondingly the bronze castings made from them, are not authentic in

that they do not represent the intentionality or materiality of the artist himself. Failing (2013) writes: “The Valsuani plasters seem suspended in a gap between two concepts of original, the plasters as first and lifetime records of Degas’s sculptural oeuvre, versus the plasters as independently created interpretations, variations or emulations of Degas’s work by another hand or hands.”

What is accepted as real today was never real in the lifetime of the artist. This inauthentic authenticity has been fashioned out of the desire for the essence of the artistic expression associated with Degas. The observer is quite happy that these works are, in one sense, fakes of the real.

The existential view of authenticity to the self, permeated by the honest representation of the past and the previous life of these sculptures, which constitute a Sartrean view of an authentic self and its actions in the world, would render all these works as representative of an inauthentic existence.

Darren Hick (2010) takes up the question of copies, stating that it is curious that museums knowingly display reproductions that are not by the original artists but by copyists. These works of appropriation seem to have much in common with forgeries, so why are they valued at all? Hick (2010) thinks that to understand what is not wrong with appropriation art requires us to understand what is wrong with a forgery. According to Hick, following Levinson (1980), *referential* forgeries are direct copies of existing works, *inventive* forgeries are of the artists oeuvre but are not copies of any existing work, and *pastiches* represent selected, reproduced, or combined aspects to create a new fictional artwork. Hick says that forgeries of art of the inventive category present few philosophical issues but that referential copies present a

problem: What does it mean for a copy of a work to be a genuine instance of that work? For example, the authenticity of a Piranesi print becomes complex when considered in the autographic sense of Goodman (1968); to qualify as an original Piranesi print, says Hick (2010), it must have been printed from the original plate and perhaps authorized by Piranesi himself. That is all very well, but it is known that Piranesi bequeathed his printing plates to his descendants and that scores of prints were produced as posthumous editions; even the plates themselves had to be recarved due to excessive wear to create a few score more “original Piranesi” prints. By Hick’s criterion, one would have to sort out the prints produced by Piranesi during his lifetime and declare that these were the only authentic versions of the artwork, which would create problems in terms of what to do with those deemed inauthentic, or the philosophical principles may be seen as entirely unrealistic.

The technological possibilities that allow these plates to be reproduced impact the views of Margolis (1983:156), who thinks that “authenticity is a distinction of an intentional and normative sort that is bound to reflect the shifting practices and technological possibilities of different societies.”

Peter Strawson (1959) suggests that it is only because the necessary reproductive technology is lacking that artworks such as panel paintings are invariably regarded as inherently singular in nature. This seems an overly optimistic statement by Strawson, since the complexity of a painted surface cannot easily be reproduced in a form that appears to match the original. In fact, paintings contain within themselves a host of compositional and chemical detail that precludes their easy reproduction. Even 60 years after Strawson was writing, there are much greater problems with

marble sculptures and ancient bronzes than with paintings. Some sculptures, such as the famous dolomitic Getty Kouros, have resisted every scientific test thrown at them. The kouros has remained an enigma: It is either from the sixth century B.C.E. or it is a modern forgery, but no one can actually tell for sure, which does not mean that no one will be able to tell in the future as a result of new perceptions or new states of knowledge, à la Goodman (1968).

### **Authentic Works by Han van Meegeren and Bastianini**

A twentieth-century forger who has achieved both general recognition for his achievements, in terms of monetary reward, and posthumous philosophical fame is Han van Meegeren (1889-1947), whose forged works now command higher prices than lower quality (or at least lesser known) genuine works from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Lopez 2008). This disgruntled Dutch artist spent years perfecting a style of painting that could pass as early examples of paintings by Vermeer (1632-1675), thought by art historians to possibly exist. Van Meegeren then produced the works, thus confirming the art historians' surmise that early works had been produced by Vermeer but up until then had never been found (Bredius 1937). During the Second World War, one of the fakes was purchased by Field Marshal Hermann Göring, which led to van Meegeren being tried for treason. As he could have been shot, he confessed to having forged several Vermeers, at least one of which had been purchased for the Dutch state. Dutch art historians were aghast, and even into the 1960s and 1970s, several refused to believe that the works were not authentic.

Van Meegeren asked for canvas and paints to be brought into the court so that he could demonstrate how the works were fabricated.

As this case is so famous and has been written about extensively, philosophers have been drawn to it as an example of how forgery and aesthetics are intertwined, how the perception of the time was embedded in the cultural milieu in which van Meegeren was working (the resemblance of Greta Garbo to one or two figures in the various paintings), and how it was possible for art historians to be fooled into thinking that Van Meegeren's works were genuine Vermeers because they confirmed a past that could have existed for Vermeer but did not (Radnóti 1999).

Alfred Lessing (1983) suggests that what is wrong with a forgery is that, in the case of van Meegeren's forgeries of Vermeer, he was "passing off the inferior as the superior." Lessing thinks the other problem with forgeries is that they lack originality and do not have historical veracity. The problem with Lessing's argument is that forgeries that enter into a state of historical existence may become admired for what they are rather than what they are not. Even the Victoria and Albert Museum purchased Giovanni Bastianini's bust *Lucrezia Donati*, the work of a nineteenth-century sculptor that was known at the time to be a forgery, for the price of an original Renaissance work, which is how it had been described. The bust purports to represent the mistress of Lorenzo the Magnificent, carved in the style of the fifteenth-century Florentine sculptor Mino da Fiesole (1429-1484). It was declared to be *the* masterpiece of da Fiesole by the art historian Giovanni Cavalcaselle. The bust was exposed by Alessandro Foresi (1819-1897) in 1868 and purchased by the museum the following year, with knowledge that it was a forgery. The recognition of the forgery per se as an admired work of the nineteenth century has resulted in a new hermeneutic relationship between



the ongoing historical life of the sculpture and its emergent historical authenticity. The forgery itself begins to accrue the vestiges of historical time, so that it not only represents itself; it represents what in the nineteenth century was admired about works of art that dated from the fifteenth century but that had been reinterpreted in a manner more pleasing to nineteenth-century tastes. This is why art historians at the time lauded the work as one of the best examples of fifteenth-century marble carving. Thus the sculptor re-creates the work as a fiction of the original, but it itself becomes an original from the nineteenth century that now has an ongoing existence, in storage at the Victoria and Albert Museum. It has now obtained a historical authenticity.

Lessing (1983) does not take into account this kind of transformation of the original.

Tomas Kulka (1981) writes that once van Meegeren's forgeries were known as twentieth-century works, what had been seen as artistic innovations were revealed as a problem of anachronistic deception. Jones (1992) adds that when it was discovered that the supposed early Vermeers were actually forgeries by van Meegeren, it rapidly became obvious that some of his work was grotesquely ugly and that he had created a body of work that most observers would regard as unpleasant paintings, altogether dissimilar to Vermeer's.

Goodman (1968, 1983) used the example of the forged Vermeers to show that the idea of a separate class of Vermeers resulted in the



**Figure 4.5.** *Lucretia Donati* by Giovanni Bastianini. Currently in storage in the Victoria and Albert Museum, this forgery was made in Florence around 1865. The bust purports to represent the mistress of Lorenzo the Magnificent, carved in the style of the fifteenth-century Florentine sculptor Mino da Fiesole. It was purchased by the V&A for the same price as a Renaissance work and with the knowledge that it was by Bastianini. (Image courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

creation of a new class of works of art to which other forgeries of Vermeer by van Meegeren were then added, creating the false legitimization of the new class of Vermeers, because van Meegeren had succeeded in adding this group to the oeuvre of the master himself. The success of van Meegeren is therefore seen, by most commentators, as incredible and as an example of the blinkered cultural assessment of the art historians involved in the attribution of them. Some of the fakes were hailed as the greatest Vermeers ever painted (Bredius 1937), which is doubly embarrassing. A common observation is that fakes may not be visually apparent to the faker's generation but become all too obvious to the generation that comes after, as its members are not culturally blinkered to the anachronisms that were not noticed by observers in the prior generation (Friedländer 1909).

This has often been taken by philosophers as an observation that can be applied on a practically universal basis. This surmise, often using the forged Vermeers as an example, is repeated in several philosophical writings on the subject of forgeries, so this issue has to be addressed and discussed in more detail here.

Han van Meegeren forged works attributed not only to Vermeer but also to several other artists, which he did not confess to having forged and had no intention of revealing to the world. As a consequence, a few works held in art galleries or museums around the world may be fakes by van Meegeren. Why have these not been exposed as forgeries while his Vermeers have been?

One reason is the technical competence of van Meegeren in re-creating the substructure of a genuine seventeenth-century painting, using an old seventeenth-century frame and canvas scoured down to the ground layer and the correct pigments for the work, which he

then created using this authentic frame, canvas, and ground. *The Procuress* "by" Dirck van Baburen (1595-1624) is a case in point. There are at least three known versions of this painting: one in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, one in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and one at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, all attributed to Dirck van Baburen (Montias 1991; Schneider 1991). One version of this painting was owned by Maria Thins, who was the mother-in-law of Vermeer. Vermeer illustrates this painting in the background of two of his paintings. Van Meegeren may have originally produced this copy for his own backdrop of supposedly authentic works to be painted in subsequent Vermeer forgeries. The painting could be copied in a realistic manner rather than invented from a photograph; van Meegeren was known to use authentic props, such as vases and goblets, to provide the correct period atmosphere for his fake paintings. Van Meegeren claimed, spuriously, that the van Baburen had been purchased by his former wife from an antiques shop in Nice.

The version in the Courtauld was presented to the gallery in 1960 and has remained controversial ever since, with some art historians and conservators evaluating the work as an example of an authentic van Baburen and others regarding the work as a forgery. The Courtauld scientific staff conducted a scientific examination in 2009, an attempt to clear up this debate, and concluded that the painting was likely an authentic seventeenth-century work. At this stage, art historical opinion concerning the work was still mixed, with some believing that the work was genuine and others believing it was a fake. A genuine seventeenth-century Dutch oil painting would have had a double ground layer, with earth pigments such as raw sienna, burnt umber, and yellow ocher, which the forgery

by van Meegeren contained. Because he had used a genuine seventeenth-century canvas and frame, a double ground layer paint construction, and hand-ground or carefully prepared pigments that matched those typically found in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings, the technical examination could find nothing inconsistent with a seventeenth-century origin. If art historians could not definitely state whether the work was stylistically acceptable or not, there was no way of proceeding further.

What was missing from the 2009 study was a technical examination of the binding medium. Scientific connoisseurship has continued to make a series of advances in the examination of works of art. The advantage of the scientific method is its ability to revisit evidentiary material to determine further details of chemical composition or elemental components. Van Meegeren, in his efforts to simulate the natural aging of oil media, in which craquelure occurs and the oil media hardens with age, used a phenol-formaldehyde resin (Bakelite) with oil of lilac additions, which would harden to simulate the natural degradation of age if heated carefully in an oven at 105°C. The oil of lilac probably functioned as a plasticizing addition to the formula, as the Bakelite is a rather brittle resin.

The nature of the binding media used in the van Baburen picture was revealed in a further study broadcast in July 2011 by the BBC during the making of episode three of the *Fake or Fortune?* series. Phenol-formaldehyde was never used, or even known, in the seventeenth century, and therefore evidence for the van Baburen as being a forgery was unequivocal (Alberge 2011).

What would have happened if van Meegeren had been able to use a traditional media such as walnut oil or poppy seed oil

for his fake instead of phenol-formaldehyde resin mixed with oil of lilac? The answer is that even this relatively recent scientific advance might have had difficulties coming to a conclusive decision regarding authenticity. If van Meegeren had used a traditional medium, the certainty of the determination of inauthenticity would have vanished, especially if he had used old linseed oil, a medium used by Vermeer himself.

The terminus post quem for phenol-formaldehyde resin is around 1900, while that commonly associated with walnut oil, poppy seed oil, or linseed oil is at least 1400. Faced with this scenario, the only hope for making a decision on the matter would rest with art historical connoisseurship; scientific connoisseurship would not be able to help, at least not definitively enough to satisfy all the critics. This case has been discussed here at length because it illustrates a number of important points. It contradicts the view of Goodman (1968, 1983) that the class of van Baburen paintings made by van Meegeren initiates a new class of works that can help define a new paradigm in the oeuvre of supposed van Baburen paintings—namely, the class of van Meegeren fakes. It refutes the ideas of Friedländer (1909), Lessing (1983), and others that the work of the forger always becomes obvious to succeeding generations because of the temporal fixations of the forger in relation to the time he creates the work, and that this is an unconscious influence on the style in which he paints or depicts certain images. It refutes the view of Jones (1992) that the work of this particular forger resulted in the creation of fakes that were necessarily aesthetically inferior and that could be readily discerned by an informed or impartial modern observer as obviously wrong.

## Different Approaches to Authenticity



**Figure 4.6.** *The Procuress* by Han van Meegeren, circa 1940; after Dirck van Baburen, circa 1622. Oil on canvas; 98.7 cm high x 103.9 cm wide. Many believed this to be an authentic work by Baburen. It was presented to the Courtauld Institute in 1960, and a scientific examination in 2009 could find nothing wrong with the work. A 2011 determination of the use of phenol-formaldehyde resin as the binder resolved the problem definitively. This resin, mixed with oil of lilac, was one of van Meegeren's paint media. (Image courtesy of Holger Thölking; in the public domain)

In the case of the Vermeers, the common rhetorical question was: How on earth were the experts fooled by *that*? The forgery of the van Baburen, which some thought was still authentic until the BBC program reached its conclusion in 2011, illustrates that 70 years after the fake was painted, its aesthetic characteristics transcended the cultural setting in which it had been created; it was still causing trouble even after all the intervening years.

If Field Marshal Hermann Göring had not purchased one of van Meegeren's forgeries, how long would the early "Vermeers" have continued to fool art historians into thinking that they were authentic? The probable answer is that they would not have been unmasked until late into the 1950s or perhaps even the late 1960s, when a new generation of art historians would have begun to study the oeuvre of the artist afresh, with doubts being raised concerning the early Vermeers and the beginnings of the regular

determination of the binding media of paintings. Examination of pigments, ground layers, and microstratigraphic features of the van Baburen fake were not sufficient to determine if the painting was acceptable and attributable to van Baburen or to van Meegeren. Even if the fakes had been discovered at a much later date, an international furor would have taken place. Dutch museums would have been very embarrassed, and van Meegeren would have achieved posthumous fame without the agony of being placed on trial in 1945 and possibly being shot for selling national Dutch treasures to the Nazis. He succeeded in spite of having to confess to the forgeries: a certified van Meegeren fake is now worth more in the art market than a genuine work of an obscure seventeenth-century minor painter. The work of the faker is valued today as a reflection of the infamy he has achieved since 1945. Now an authentic van Meegeren fake can be purchased at auction, and no doubt imitators of

## Is It Craft or Is It Art?

him exist as well, because those forgeries that become valued as works of art in themselves often result in a stream of forgeries based on the forgeries of the real or authentic, an appropriation of the forger himself.

The final point is that the conjunction of the conservator's experience, scientific connoisseurship, and art historical connoisseurship must be made to provide as impartial a view as possible of the material and historical authenticity of a work and that in some cases there will still be a struggle to reach a definitive conclusion. Cases in which one of these fields chooses to ignore the others abound, and they are continual reminders of the need for collegial collaboration. They are also reminders that some fakes have, in and of themselves, altered the course of art historical inquiry by their own interrelationship with the originals and by being accepted as real in the course of time. The chronological relationship between fakes and their time of fabrication creates a continually evolving hermeneutic awareness of the existence of the object and our evaluation of it.

### Is It Craft or Is It Art?

There has always been a contention between different observers as to whether a particularly fine example of a work could be designated as a work or art or merely as a work of craft, and that distinction might affect how works are regarded aesthetically. In ancient Greek, for example, there is no distinction between the words *art* and *craft*. Τέχνη is used for both (Papadopoulos, personal communication 2015).

Regarding the question of whether something is authentic or not in terms of how it is appreciated or evaluated, a frequent philosophical jibe is to say that the work is an instance of craft rather than art. For example, if

a famous artwork, described as such for 100 years, is shown by scientific connoisseurship to be a fake, one philosophical response is to describe the work as a craft object.

A useful starting point here is a radio broadcast by Denis Dutton from 1990. Dutton states that craft involves the application of a technique. The concept of craft is historically associated with the production of useful objects, whereas artistic creations are not necessarily utilitarian. Works of art, says Kant, are *intrinsically final*; they appeal at the level of aesthetic appreciation or imagination. Craft invariably involves the application of skill but not necessarily of aesthetic differentiation, although some dispute that. Dutton (2003) refers to Collingwood's work of 1938 (which is admittedly seen as eccentric in many circles), in which a salient distinction is made between planning and execution, such that the craftsman produces a work "which is preconceived or thought out before being arrived at." This is an interesting distinction that has not been taken up by many other commentators, although one could equally posit the idea that a work of fine craftsmanship arrives at its final state through the exploration of the materiality of the production of it, not from an a priori set of intentions or thoughts. Of course, the strict demarcation between art and craft probably exists only in the philosopher's imagination, since all traditionally acknowledged art involves craft, the application of a technique—often a technique that has to be learned to surpass what a craftsman is simply capable of. The ancient Greek lack of specificity regarding the word for *art* may not be a bad thing as seen from the perspective of 2016, since otherwise there may be a heady dispute over what constitutes craft and what constitutes art in terms of contemporary art.

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

Becker (1978:864) writes, “As a work ideology, an aesthetic, and a form of work organization, craft can and does exist independent of art works, their practitioners, and their definitions. In the pure folk tradition, a craft consists of a body of knowledge and skill which can be used to produce useful objects.” Becker sees the transition to art as including an emphasis on the concept or appreciation of beauty, as typified in the tradition of some particular art form; on the traditions and concerns of the art world itself as the source of how the work is to be valued; on the expression of thoughts and feelings of the artist independent of any utilitarian value of what is produced; and on the freedom of the artist from outside interference in his or her work.

This is a reasonable working model, which can then be contrasted with the hybrid artist-craftsman, who takes the useful function of a craft product to a higher level, where the beauty or artistic appreciation of the work can be seen as such. Becker (1978:865) offers the following definition: “A craft world, whose aesthetic emphasizes utility and virtuoso skill. . . . These artist-craftsmen develop a kind of art world around their activities; we might reasonably call it a ‘minor art.’”

Since Becker’s writing in 1978, the distinction has become even more contentious, as artists have expanded the modern repertoire of art to include a host of modes of production and materials: embroidery, basketry, knitting, glasswork, and so on. A good example of a contemporary reformulation is the re-creation of Japanese handmade baskets into an art form by the intervention of Lloyd Cotsen. Cotsen began to collect outstanding examples of Japanese handmade baskets until he had enough material to publish a lavish illustrated volume. The result was recognition that the baskets were not necessarily

utilitarian objects but were works of art in their own right.

Sally Markowitz (1994) makes a distinction between the *aesthetic criterion* for the designation of a work of art and the *semantic criterion*. As regards the aesthetic criterion, characteristics may mark the work as particularly significant and may invoke a certain response to the work in an individual attuned to the aesthetic contemplation of it. As Markowitz notes (1994:56), some interpretations require that the artist intend the work to create an aesthetic response, not just that the viewer be able to appreciate the work aesthetically. Whether there is such a thing as an aesthetic response has been under attack in recent years; Markowitz does not engage with this question. But an interesting defense has been launched by Andy Hamilton (2008), who writes of the necessity to overcome the separation between the concepts of appreciation, beauty, and connoisseurship on the one hand and interpretation, meaning, and truth on the other. Markowitz is much concerned with the distinction between the abstract appreciation of a work and its physical function or performance, a feature she calls *functional aesthetic quality* and that might characterize craft activities more than art activities. However, the way tea is poured from an exceptionally finely made teapot can still be regarded as an aesthetic event; it possesses a functional aesthetic quality in a way that contemplation of a painted teapot by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) does not; the contemplation of the latter is often regarded as on a higher plane than the merely functional. Clearly there are functional craft teapots, and there are exceptional or virtuoso teapots that aspire to being works of art, and increasingly it is recognized that this is the case. Markowitz

## Is It Craft or Is It Art?

(1994:65) cites the case of Catherine Riley's embroidery of a white sardine can, mounted and framed in white, in which the word *sex* is rendered in bone silk and flowers. Some critics have refused to call it art, one suspects because of the reactionary view that feminist politics and art do not mix. Clearly, in utilitarian terms, the sardine can is not a sardine can, and by the criteria of Collingwood, the artist may well have had a preconceived notion of what an embroidered sardine can might look like, but there is no general preconceived notion of what an embroidered sardine can would actually be, except in this specific case.

Markowitz (1994) refers to the concept of *normative dualism*, the distinction between the mental activity of artistic or aesthetic contemplation and the physical world of materiality, which has been valued less highly than the mental state of appreciation. Here, arguments based on the perception of elitism filter into the debate concerning whether something is a work of art or a work of craft. She considers this problem via four potential criteria: first, that the simplest interpretation of elitism rests on the claim that there is no real difference between art and craft objects; second, that there is a distinction and that art is superior to craft; third, that a distinction can be recognized between art and craft but that critical views are held of the tendency to value what is distinctive about paintings over what is distinctive about teapots; and fourth, that justification of the art–craft divide is taken seriously but that questions are raised regarding the tendency to value the sorts of qualities that art is taken to actually have. Markowitz regards this fourth criterion as the most productive, since arguments in favor of or against a proposition that saw feminine-related activities such as embroidery as belonging entirely to a craft tradition

and devoid of artistic import would have to be defended. Historically, embroidery has been regarded as craft, even when made into sardine cans, but that division is less defensible in 2015 than it was in 1994.

A pertinent example is the case of Venice and its faked associations with St. Mark. The most famous early Christian Venetian sculptures, the four marble columns that support the great ciborium, are carved with a number of scenes showing miracles and the lives of obscure saints. For hundreds of years, these were thought to be fourth- or fifth-century originals, carved in consummate early Christian style, until a Czech art historian showed that they could not possibly be real and were forgeries of the thirteenth century. Another art historian confirmed the work of the Czech art historian; he found actual invoices sent by the thirteenth-century fakers to ecclesiastical authorities in Venice while searching for things completely unrelated (Hoving 1997).

The foundations or origin of Venice had to be seen as much older than they really were to create the historical presence that the city should have had but as a latecomer in the medieval world did not have. So, is there justification in thinking of these superlative examples of thirteenth-century art, which have been admired by art historians and the informed general public as genuine works of art from the fourth or fifth centuries for the past few hundred years, as merely craft creations, as some philosophers propose, because they forge an antecedent historical presence that is entirely fictitious? My own inclination is to answer probably not, but there are as many cases of forgeries that could meet aesthetic, semantic, or intentionalist views of what constitutes “art” as there are varieties that might be categorized as “craft” products.

### Fields of Authenticity

For any investigation into the authentic and inauthentic in art, one has to come to terms with the fact that authenticity cannot really exist as a blanket description for everyone and that the word holds separate and fragmented interests for the different fields of inquiry regarding it. For example, extensive expositions of how authenticity is to be regarded in the field of literary studies largely concern how the motives, descriptions, and textual interpretations of individual works of literature can be discussed in terms of how the author or the reader interacts with the work and what those interactions mean for an authentic regard of the work, its literary merits, or how the author's intentions are analyzed. Consequently, a great deal of significance for art objects cannot be extracted from literary studies of authenticity, of which there are many. Since authenticity as regards art objects functions too in multidimensional ways, it can be visualized in the following two diagrams.

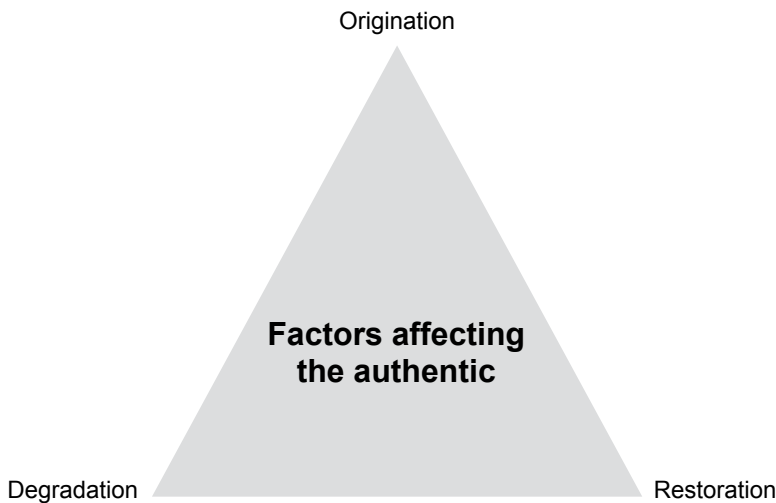
There are a number of issues with the ways appreciation of the authentic can be influenced by the origination, degradation, and restoration of a work of art. The nature of the original will depend on the materials from which it is composed and these materials' degradation over time, which will vary considerably. For example, a pre-Hispanic Costa Rican gold eagle pendant might undergo no effective degradation, while an ancient Egyptian painted tomb could very well be in a parlous state. The degree to which the work is restored to a supposedly earlier state of being has a direct effect on our perceptions of what is authentic. In some cases, even the identity of what the work is supposed to be has become altered by restoration. The great majority of treasured works of art from prior centuries have already been restored or are in

need of treatment to enable survival into the twenty-second century.

The three constituents proposed by Funk et al. (2012)—that authenticities are fragmented, contested, and performative (briefly discussed in Figure 2.11)—are important across the wider stage of the operation of the concept because different scholarly groups may not agree, in particular cases, on the idea of a conceptual realization of authenticity. For example, Denis Dutton (2012) clearly holds a low opinion of much modern art, such as Manzoni's 90 versions of cans of his own excrement, one of which sold for 124,000 euros at Sotheby's in 2007. The cans were originally valued according to their equivalent weight in gold rather than human excrement. Dutton (2009) contests that such cans constitute a valid art form and that they in any way form a significant accomplishment in the field of modern art. The Tate begs to differ and maintains that the can of excrement it purchased for \$54,000 is important, as the artist was "looking at a lot of issues pertinent to twentieth century art, such as authorship and the production of art." Even the nature of the material inside the cans is a subject of debate, with some saying they are actually filled with plaster of paris and with Dutton (2011) saying that due to improper autoclaving, at least half the cans purchased by museums and collectors have exploded, so they could not have been filled with plaster. From the point of view of the artist, the cans may be seen as performative. According to Manzoni's friend Enrico Baj, the cans were "an act of defiant mockery of the art world, artists and art criticism." The cans were each signed by the artist, but that has not prevented them from becoming contested iconic works with few imitators. The problem with Tate saying that the cans pertain to a lot of issues pertinent to twentieth-century art,



## The Nature of the Indistinguishable



**Figure 4.7.** Factors that affect our view of the three authenticities outlined in Figure 2.11. Each of these, in turn, is affected by the mediated nature of our relationship with art objects in their fragmented, contested, or performative roles regarding authenticity across many fields of inquiry. (Diagram by the author)

such as authorship and production, is that this statement by itself is insufficient to distinguish between cans of excrement that might have significance, such as those of the artist, and a can of my excrement, which could be held to question more intently the concept of authorship, since here the author is as mysterious as an artist as a can of excrement is in saying anything other than mirroring the stated intention of the artist of issuing an act of defiant mockery.

### The Nature of the Indistinguishable

An important aspect of the present study is the question of how one work of art may be considered indistinguishable from another copy or replica of it. In a famous example, sparrows try to land on a painted image of grapes because they were visually indistinguishable for the sparrows from a real set of grapes. This idea of an image of nature takes us back to the brief discussion in chapter 1 regarding Plato's view of art as being merely

a mirror of nature but unable to incorporate the essential form of the thing represented.

Over the centuries, many artists have been accused of creating works by taking molds directly from living models, as if that denigrated their artistic accomplishments, which in the field of modern art it does not. The perfect copies of human subjects in polyester resin or polyvinyl by artist John de Andrea are cases in point, as they are made from molds taken from living beings. But at the time Rodin (1840-1917) was working, had his *Age of Bronze* (1876) been modeled from a live figure using molds, it would have been viewed as deception. The accusation made in Rodin's case was entirely false, enhancing the artist's reputation when it became known that he had carved the original himself.

There are a host of problems with the indistinguishable in terms of copies and replication of works of art of all periods—especially in the modern and postmodern milieu, in which copying and replication become

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

emulation, appropriation, or even expropriation and an evaluation would have to be made to ascertain the extent to which the intention of the artist or the work of art itself can be regarded as an authentic statement of some kind. The beginnings of vicarious copies that were considered just as authentic as the original date to the medieval period and, in terms of more recent events, the philosophical assault on art launched by Marcel Duchamp, whose work is discussed in greater detail in chapter 10. His *Bicycle Wheel* from 1919 exists in several “original” versions. In fact, the original was thrown away by his sister. His urinal from 1917, which also made several appearances under the guise of an original, was appropriated from a urinal manufacturer and transformed into a work of art, echoing the title of Danto’s (1981) famous book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*.

According to Radnóti (1999:106):

The “thing” is itself, but where is the distinction that elevates this thing to art? The entire range of the attack on modernity in the twentieth century can be seen as an attack on this distinction. . . . While Duchamp’s ready-mades experiment with the supposed sameness of everyday objects, Magritte’s art transfers the picture into the domain of similarity. He turns it into a mirror only to withdraw it immediately from the realm of sense data. Rather than trying to copy, imitate or represent things, his paintings only resemble themselves. In his pictures a pipe is not a pipe, an apple is not an apple, or, in his painting entitled “Not to be Reproduced” (1937–1939), the mirror does not reflect, as the mirror



**Figure 4.8.** *Fountain* by Marcel Duchamp. Dimensions not specified. In the photograph by Alfred Stieglitz, the caption reads: “Fountain by R. Mutt.” This is the lost original, refused entrance to an art exhibit by the Independents in 1917. (Image in the public domain)

## Authenticity and Indistinguishability



**Figure 4.9.** *Not to Be Reproduced* by René Magritte, 1937. Oil on canvas; 81.3 x 65 cm. Here a reflection of reality is not a reflection for the person depicted. Although the book is displayed in the mirror as a mirror image of itself, the man is reproduced as he is seen by us, not as he would appear to us as a mirror reflection. The real is a subversive nonreality that is not to be reproduced, faking the reality of the sense of self. (Image courtesy of the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam)

image of the man with his back turned to the viewers also shows his with his back turned to the viewers; the eye is *The False Mirror* (1928).

### Authenticity and Indistinguishability

The riddle of the indistinguishability of works of art goes back to Goodman's work from 1968. If two works of art, a forgery and the genuine work, are visually compared and aesthetically no difference can be discerned between the two, they are in effect indistinguishable. How can progress be made in the argument in terms of differentiating between the authentic work of art and the forgery? Arthur Koestler (1965) proposes the radical solution that if an observer derives the same aesthetic experience from looking at the two

works, they are equally valid as works of art. This judgment does not satisfy all comers to this argument. It is worth recalling the states represented as the four alternatives of Figure 4.10, namely forgeries that are not copies, copies not intended as forgeries, forgeries that are copies, and original works. Forgeries that are not copies include the classic Vermeers of Han van Meegeren that do not copy any known work of Vermeer but that, in Goodman's terms, create an entirely new class of works: the class of works by van Meegeren that are placed into the class of Vermeers. When these are recognized as a separate class, they create and validate the class of van Meegeren forgeries, which then allows the clear perception that this separate class exists.

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

Even in the case of the painting attributed to Dirck van Baburen, the two classes of works remained in confusion after the forgery appeared in 1946, and the situation was not resolved unequivocally until 2011. Even here, the recognition of the different classes of this artwork did not result from the fact that an observer could learn to recognize almost imperceptible differences between the two works of art in the accumulation of knowledge derived from looking at the works as Goodman suggests but from the intervention of scientific connoisseurship, which was able to show that the binding media of the van Meegeren work was uniquely used by him and by no one else in history as discussed earlier in this chapter. It was a unique signature of the van Meegeren style, which is visually imperceptible.

According to Goodman (1968), the fact that an expert cannot tell an original from a fake at the present time does not mean the expert will always be in this state in the future. In the process of acquiring the skills of discernment, the nonperceptual knowledge that there is a difference between the two artworks takes a prominent role. Goodman shares Ernst Gombrich's view (Gombrich 1978) that perception and interpretation are inseparable. The aesthetic difference is constituted by knowledge and opportunity combined. Opportunity allows other processes to occur. As a result, an observer might learn to distinguish the fake. This argument does not allow for the nonperceptual or additional perceptual tools that scientific connoisseurship might bring to bear on the problem. These could be considered another mode of perceptual evaluation.

Goodman (1968:122) defines a forgery as follows: "A forgery of a work of art is an object falsely purporting to have the history of production requisite for the original." Instead

of the intentions of the artist, this way of defining a forgery speaks about the assertions of the art itself. Radnóti (1999:116) accepts this definition with one modification:

A forgery of a work of art is an object falsely purporting to have both the history of production as well as the entire subsequent general historical fate requisite for the original work. Without the general historical fate which includes aging and accidental wear and tear the statement about the history of production does not have credibility. Forgery has as much to do with construction for the sake of illusion of the history of production as with demolition for the sake of the creation of the illusion of the subsequent general historical fate.

A magnificent Umberto Giunti (1886-1970) fake in a private collection in Siena illustrates that point well (Mazzoni 2004:figure 64). It has all the historical damages that would be associated with the real work. Painted in the style of Francesco di Giorgio (1439-1502), it passed as an original work by the artist for decades. If an artwork, as here, should wear the physical history of its production on its sleeve, this would limit art forgery to only a fraction of artworks, the Goodman *autographic*. Goodman's twofold criterion of authenticity is made relative by the activities of apprentices, copiers, imitators, and forgers of great masters, as well as the numerous problems regarding modern and contemporary art. Radnóti's seminal work from 1999 seems not to be read by philosophers of art or art conservators; at least there has been little seen of it in subsequent literature on the topic, despite the sophisticated approach to its subject matter. For example, Radnóti is not even mentioned in Rowe's (2013) paper on the subject of

## Authenticity and Indistinguishability

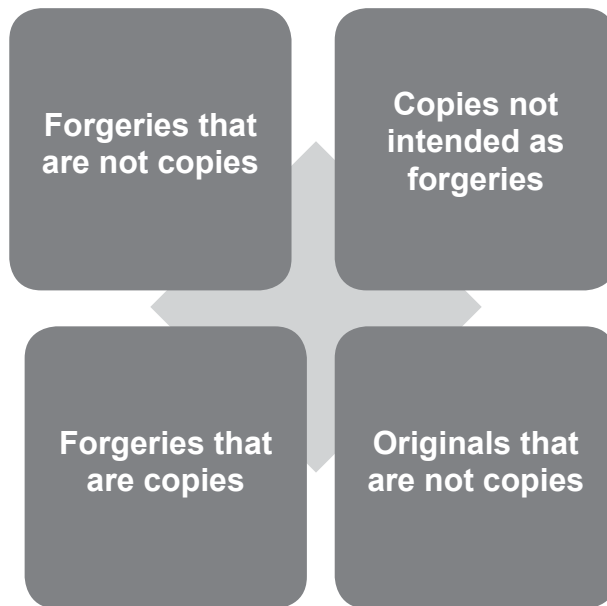
the perfect fake, despite the fact that Radnóti devotes an entire chapter to an incisive commentary on the topic.

Currie (1989:92) reminds us of the statement by Goodman (1968) that just because an observer can presently discern no difference between an original painting and a perfect copy, that does not mean he or she will not be able to do so in the future; concerted effort may also instruct us to differentiate the copy from the original. This seems a potentially perplexing argument to Currie (1989:94), who writes:

It is not clear what this argument is supposed to show. It may be taken . . . as showing that there is a certain vagueness in the idea of merely looking. It would

be very hard to specify exactly what it is merely to look at a picture, rather than to look at it in some way that would be regarded as not an appropriate way to appreciate its aesthetic qualities (e.g. through a microscope).

Additionally, Currie makes the point that Goodman's argument may depend on a too restrictive notion of what it is for pictures to look alike—that the context of other, similar objects is necessary to critique the appearance of each supposed original and copy. Goodman is talking about aesthetic difference here rather than properties that are scientifically determinable as constituting a difference between the original and the perfect copy. The extent to which this is a purely



**Figure 4.10.** Problems of indistinguishability. In terms of indistinguishability, a distinction can be made between original artworks, forgeries that are copies of known works by the original artist, forgeries that are not copies of any known work, and copies that are not intended as forgeries. The latter includes copies made by other artists to practice or learn the style or method of the original or copies made, as Dutton says, for a play or performance, in which the works of the artist are simply backdrops. Intention here is an important factor in the innocence of these works. (Diagram by the author)

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

theoretical argument is evident here. For example, Currie (1989:103) writes, “There is nothing about the artist’s achievement that is accessible via the original that is not accessible via the correct copy.” One of the problems with this argument involves inherent degradation with time. This will affect the original in particular ways, such as yellowing of the varnish, craquelure of the painting, and the fading of certain colors. A copy, unless it was the copy produced by the artist himself and has the same history of production and exposure to the same environmental parameters and pollutants as the original, cannot replicate the appearance of the original.

Is it really possible to subordinate the perceptual and sensory intuitions of the aesthetic experience to knowledge? That is the question Radnóti (1999) asks apropos of the work of Arthur Danto. According to Radnóti’s analysis, Danto assigns central significance to doubt as to whether the aesthetic response constitutes a form of perception. Goodman’s view that every aesthetic distinction can be traced back to some perceptual difference is called a “secret prejudice” by Danto (1981) in his important work *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Danto also holds that just because two works can be perceived as indistinguishable, that does not mean that distinctions between them will eventually become apparent, although that view could be disputed. Radnóti (1999:124) has this to say in relation to Danto’s views on the topic:

Danto assigns a lesser significance to learning and practice than Goodman. He claims that is our aesthetic sensibility that has changed since the 1930s, in the Van Meegeren case. Two paintings may be identical as far as their

perceptual events are concerned and whether or not something is a forgery depends on the history of its production, here Danto and Goodman agree, but in Danto’s view, the study of the receptive and perceptual differences ignores the artistic problem. Danto’s terrain is the art of the twentieth century such as Andy Warhol’s Brillo Boxes, the counterparts to the commonplace, their transfiguration. There was a certain sense of unfairness at the time, writes Danto, when Warhol piled the Stable Gallery full of his Brillo boxes, for the commonplace Brillo container was actually designed by an artist, an Abstract Expressionist, driven by need into commercial art, and the question was why Warhol’s boxes were worth 200 dollars each when the other artists work was practically worthless. But in Danto’s view the study of the perceptual and receptive differences ignores the artistic problem. If a known copy of one of Caravaggio’s paintings was made by his contemporary imitator and forger, Angelo Caroselli, then this is obviously not an original Caravaggio. But is it an original Caroselli? The positive answer would correspond to the autonomy of the identical. But if we regard as necessary preconditions not only the execution but the creation as well, then this work is merely a copy of a Caravaggio made by Caroselli.

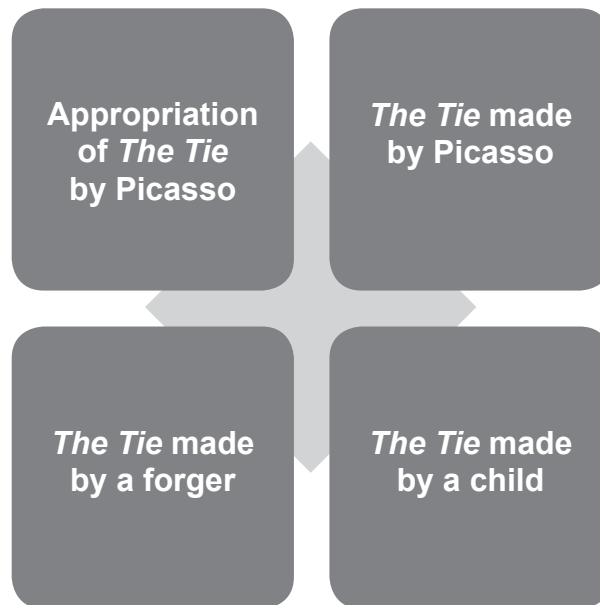
Danto (1981) proposed a philosophical problem in relation to indistinguishability in the following scenario: Picasso paints a tie with red paint, hence producing the artwork *The Tie*. An identical work is produced by a forger and another identical work by a child.

## Authenticity and Indistinguishability

Picasso signs the forgery. The original is confiscated by the police, and the version by the child is put on display. In our postmodern world of legitimate appropriations, a fourth tie could be added to the mix: namely *Picasso's Tie*, which is for sale in a prominent art gallery. What is to be said of the differences and perceptual indistinguishability of the different but identical works?

Danto says that the status of the forgery of *The Tie* is that the tie stands in the wrong relationship to its maker to be a statement made by Picasso. It only pretends to be a statement of someone else's, namely Picasso. It is quite possible, in Radnóti's view, to add the fourth tie, *Picasso's Tie*, the one with artwork status, that is constructed to have a causal history completely indistinguishable from Picasso's *Tie*.

Danto (1981) says that the tie painted by the child cannot have the same inherent meaning as that produced by Picasso himself. Although Danto does not mention the *intangible authenticity* that is now part of the conservation dialogue with the object, he effectively places the emphasis on the *intention of the artist* rather than on the inherent *qualities of the artwork* itself, although the nature of the artist's intention is itself subject to dispute, as will become clear later. In conservation theory, it can be argued that each of the different but identical objects is invested with an authenticity that cannot be physically determined. This intangible authenticity is potentially worrisome to philosophers, as it is neither verifiable nor an objective phenomenon. This may be viewed as a separated concept from the artist's intention. What is



**Figure 4.11.** The problem posed by Danto, with an addition after Radnóti (*Picasso's Tie*). In the original scenario, Picasso paints *The Tie*, which is identical to one painted by a child and one made by a forger. Picasso signs the forgery. The original is confiscated by the police, and the version by the child is put on display. A fourth version, *Picasso's Tie*, is put on display in another gallery. What can be said of the different origins of the works? (Diagram by the author)

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

meant by this term is a matter for some dispute, and we have already discussed aspects of this problem.

Carroll (1993), however, points out that it is not true that every artwork requires interpretation or that every artwork has content, but a statement by the artist that an artwork has no content can be seen as a valid statement about content. Even artists who are normally admired for the intentionality of their content, such as René Magritte (1898-1967), may deny any intention to the content of their paintings. Of course, for Magritte, this may simply be an intention to deny that an intention exists, as part of a philosophical game with the audience. The definition of the work as having no content is itself a form of a statement of content.

Danto (1981) accepts copies as valid art objects only if they have a valid existential point of view and content that allows for interpretation. He mentions Warhol's silk-screen *Marilyn x 100* (1962), which incorporates repetition, so the repetition of the images constitutes an image of repetition. It is difficult to follow his argument with regard to, for example, Roman marble copies of Greek original bronzes. Are they existentially valid expressions of the original artist? The execution of the work itself in these cases may be seen as the legitimate emulation of an earlier tradition, even if the intention of the original artist is not represented by such replicated works. Radnóti (1999:132) writes:

Wollheim thinks that Goodman uses the weaker notion of forgery when he equates it with execution. This notion could be strengthened by assuming that the forger equals Rembrandt not only in execution but also invention. Wollheim regards as subversive the particular

aspect of the example which eliminates the affect one's belief can have on perception. Knowledge can affect perception in what we see and how we see it. He still allows two works to be indistinguishable visually, which might cause us trouble, but holds to the tradition of art as being a living thing. He says certainly in trying to understand a particular work of art, we try to grasp it and concentrate on it as hard as we can, but at the same time we are trying to build up an overall picture of art, and so we relate the work to other works and to art itself.

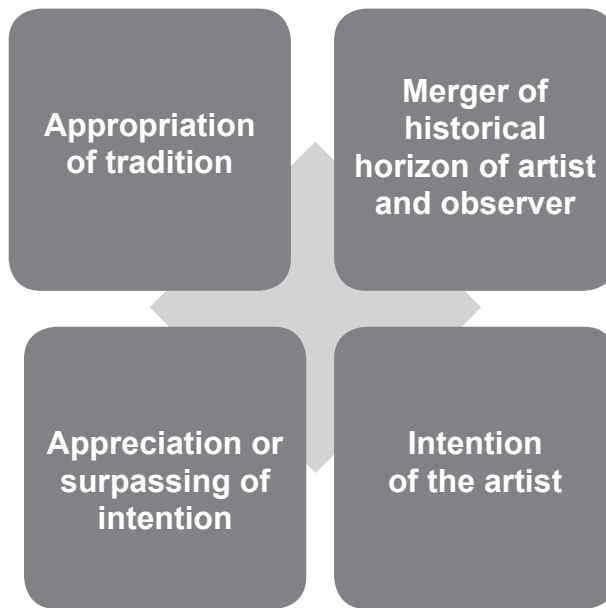
Danto (1981) states that Van Meegeren's forgeries of Vermeer can now be seen as such, not because of chemical analysis but because they can now be seen as full of the mannerisms of the 1930s, which would not have been seen as such at the time. This is an argument often made by art historians and philosophers, but as has been seen, in the case of the van Baburen forgery by van Meegeren, chemical analysis was the essential component in conclusively distinguishing between the real and the faked. There are many more examples where study of the chemical constitution of works of art has provided essential information in distinguishing between things that are visually indistinguishable.

It cannot therefore be assumed that the ability to learn to appreciate subtle visual differences between works that were formerly regarded as indistinguishable always conforms to the theories of Goodman or Danto.

Radnóti (1999) makes a distinction between the different ways of examining the problem of indistinguishability. There is the mimetic model, with a depiction of nature or a perfect similitude of another work of art, creating essentially the perfect fake. This



## Authenticity and Indistinguishability



**Figure 4.12.** A variation on the relationships between artist’s intention, appreciation or surpassing intention, the appropriation of tradition that may be invoked by a fake, and the merger of the historical horizons of the artist and the interpreter, based on Hans-George Gadamer’s hermeneutics. The major problem with this view is what to make of “artist’s intention.” (Diagram by the author)

distinction is based on the potential differences between depiction and depicted. As a second type of indistinguishability, Radnóti (1999:105) writes of the problems posed by medieval cultic images that “did not so much represent the sacred person surrounded by respect and reverence, did not so much simulate reality, but rather embodied or at least resembled that person. . . . When the principle of identicalness returns in a later period, contrasting itself with the principle of similarity, then in this struggle and dialogue the notion of indistinguishability once again becomes meaningful.” This statement pertains especially to modern art and the kinds of philosophical games Duchamp has played on modernity since 1913. The third type of indistinguishability that Radnóti outlines is that of the re-creation of everyday objects that embed the notion of indistinguishability

within them, such as the beer cans fabricated by Jasper Johns (1930-). Johns himself says: “I am interested in that which is not what it was; in that which becomes different from what it is; in the moment when we clearly identify the thing, as well as in the passing of this moment; in the moment of seeing and saying, as well as in the way we come to accept this” (Brockes 2004).

Johns’s beer cans were cast in bronze and hand-painted by Johns to resemble the cans they represented, but they could not be mistaken for the original cans. There is a complex story behind the similitude of these cans, however. The work was inspired by a joke made by Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) that the New York art dealer Leo Castelli could sell anything, even beer cans. Jasper Johns made his two cans in 1958; Castelli sold the work for \$900.

## Different Approaches to Authenticity

However, there is a hidden artist's intention behind the work: The two cans represent Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008), who in the 1950s had a romantic relationship that ended acrimoniously (Radnóti 1999). Both moved from New York to the South—Rauschenberg to Florida—in 1960. One can is open and light and has “Florida” written on it, representing Rauschenberg. The other can is closed and heavy, representing Johns. The lid of the former is punctured, while the other is not. These are clear examples of how the symbolism of two apparently indistinguishable cast-bronze beer cans can represent an intangible authenticity of intention that cannot be seen. A simpler example as regards the problem of indistinguishability would be Andy Warhol's relatively unpopular reproductions of packages of Kellogg's Corn Flakes. Each is indistinguishable from the other as a representation of the original, and none possess any intangible association for the artist beyond the reproduction of the packages themselves. These issues will be addressed in greater detail in the chapter dealing with modern and contemporary art.

This chapter has reviewed many prominent philosophical utterances regarding the concept of authenticity. Goodman drew a distinction between the autographic and allographic arts; Benjamin between originals, auras, and reproductions. Heidegger presented his views regarding world withdrawal, the object-being, and the work-being. Dutton outlined nominal authenticity and expressive authenticity. Funk et al. thought that authenticity was fragmented, contested, and performative; Knaller that the concept devolves into referential authenticity, subject authenticity, and aesthetic authenticity; Vanlaethem that authenticity is a judgment, a semiotic construct that cannot be separated from context, society, and aims. Several authors claimed there was no such thing as authenticity per se and that the concept should be given up.

The works of Sartre and Heidegger are often discussed in terms of their importance to the subject of art and authenticity, although these authors are more concerned with how our thoughts and actions can be viewed as authentic than with the existence of works of art and how their condition, appreciation, and significance can be investigated.

## Chapter 5

# The Ancient Old World

The Ancient Authentic	Leda and the Swan
Authenticity and Egyptian Art	Bacchus from Dresden
Authenticity and Spolia	The Lansdowne Boxer
Egyptian Fakes	The Getty Kouros
The Re-creation of Knossos	The Japanese Paleolithic
The Crown of Saitapharnès	Piltown Man
Greek and Roman Authenticity	Totonac and Zapotec Ceramics
Contexts of Roman Restoration	The Manitou Springs Site
Marcus Aurelius from the Pergamon Museum	Stonehenge II
The Pedimental Sculptures from Aphaea	Paleolithic Rock Art
The Getty Herakles	

*The artistic masterpieces of our age may seem a long way from the first daubs of red ochre on a human face . . . yet what our ancestors began, spread across the globe, in high art and low.*

—Denis Dutton, *The Art Instinct*

### Introduction

This chapter is a long one, not only because the ancient Old World interacts with itself, for example, in the way Greek bronzes were

reappropriated as Roman marbles, but also because in the twenty-first century, views of ancient artworks are constantly evolving as new scholarship and interpretations are

presented. These views are part of our own complex interaction with the past and our need for explanations of what is significant, important, or meaningful.

Forgeries of Egyptian art have been very influential in spreading the appreciation of ancient Egyptian civilization to a wide audience, as materially authentic survivors from so long ago are far rarer than is generally appreciated. Surviving traces of the Minoans have been used to reconstitute the Minoan civilization, as represented at Knossos, into a fiction of the twentieth century that is still carried onward into the twenty-first.

Restoration, derestoration, and reres-toration have important stories to tell as to how ancient sculpture has been valorized or altered to suit the tastes of the cultural period in which the alterations to the morphology of the work took place. The authenticity of some works, such as the Getty Kouros, is still contested, while notable cases of authentic art that was once regarded as inauthentic, such as Paleolithic rock art, speak to cultural assumptions of the ability of early man, compared with more evolved societal environments and the superior abilities presumed to accompany them.

Prominent forgeries have resulted in the rewriting of the Japanese Paleolithic prehistory. More amusing cases included here are the site of Manitou Springs, which never in fact existed, and Stonehenge II, which does not purport to represent the real Stonehenge but which has its own allure and historical validity. All of these cases have authentic consequences. Some, such as the forgeries of ancient Egyptian art, have helped spread appreciation for authentic art that does survive in virtue of its rarity. Others, such as the creation of a fake Japanese past, involved a desired prehistory and therefore were seen

as nationally significant. Still others have assumed a whole new set of meanings in the twenty-first century, becoming, in the case of Knossos, an authentic expression of the reconstitution of the site in a vision of what the Minoans were supposed to have achieved rather than what they actually achieved.

### **The Ancient Authentic**

Humans were already copying seashells 35,000 years ago, and a necklace from the Neolithic consisted of 118 deer teeth and 65 copies carved from bone. A Neolithic hatchet discovered by a Roman in antiquity was thought to be Jupiter's lightning beam (Schulz 2011).

A most significant forgery of a cruciform monument from Sippar (Sollberger 1968) was created during the first half of the second millennium B.C.E., but it supposedly dates to the reign of Manishtushu, king of Akkad (circa 2276–2261 B.C.E.). It includes an inscription stating, "This is not a lie, it is indeed the truth." In having to exhort the reader that his statement is not a lie, the ancient faker betrays the anticipation of doubt, since the truth of the lie does not come from an innocent regard of the past but a false consciousness of the present.

Bronze Age craftsmen were able to produce multiples of spears and palstaves from stone molds that would have been visually indistinguishable from each other. These molds were widely used throughout the Bronze Age, and experimental work has shown that each was capable of producing from 8 to 12 identical castings before being degraded by heating (Sørensen 2012; Wang and Ottaway 2004). The problems related to multiples and indistinguishability therefore recede in time back to the Neolithic, when deer teeth were simulated by bone, and to the Bronze Age,

when craftsman produced identical metallic artifacts, not depending on wax for the creation of sophisticated castings.

It is not clear that the ancient Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks did not have some notion of what was authentic or inauthentic in art. The Romans extensively adapted or even copied Greek original sculptures, often created in many similar marble versions. These marble replicas or adaptations were usually derived from bronze originals, but this work is usually described as an artistic emulation of the admired past, or as an appropriationist desire for the reproduction of the aura of the Greek originals by the Romans. The Greek original bronzes have, for the most part, been lost, burned, sacked, dismembered, deliberately destroyed, or remelted and are now almost universally lost to us. The heyday of the copying of Greek art by the Romans began in ancient Rome after Consul Claudius Marcellus (circa 268–208 BCE) sacked the Greek colony of Syracuse circa 268–208 B.C.E. and galleys full of Greek art came to Rome, then a city of mud brick with a population lacking in aesthetic tastes (Hallett 2005; Hoving 1997). The appropriation of Greek originals or the direct copying of Greek bronzes and marbles are described as acts of forgery by Thomas Hoving (1997), an opinion reinforced by the research of Carol Mattusch (1978, 1996, 2003) and Christopher Hallett (2005, 2012a). Hallett emphasizes that from his analysis, the Roman works were often forgeries whose material authenticity was sometimes valorized by direct imitation of Greek originals or deliberate archaizing references to the Greece of 500 B.C.E., even if the bronze concerned had a date of production of 200 C.E.

The longing for Greek art continued unabated until the Roman Empire collapsed in

746 C.E. The desire to get one's hands on an original Greek artwork became a mania—a sign of educated taste, refinement, and art appreciation. The supply simply was not there, and as Horace wrote, “He who knows a thousand works of art, knows a thousand *frauds*” (Radnóti 1999).

One of the most skilled fakers was Pasiteles, who wrote a best seller about his career in the first century B.C.E., sadly now lost. Seneca the Elder (55 B.C.E.–39 C.E.) remarked that half a dozen workshops in Rome made so-called Greek gems and intaglios.

One art connoisseur of Rome advertised his being able to tell by smell if a bronze was good or not, especially Corinthian bronze (Nobili 1922; Rieth 1970). This idea is not as daft as it sounds, for brass alloys have a distinctive smell that some bronzes would not have, and although Corinthian bronze was not made of brass, it did have other elements added to the bronze, such as silver, gold, or arsenic. Perhaps too the connoisseur could have evaluated whether the patina of the Corinthian bronze was correct or not, and its quality. Figure 1.17 reminds us that early cultures collected artifacts from still earlier epochs as museum exhibits and that this museological desire for the collection of artifacts from the past originates in ancient Babylon and Egypt.

The appearance of art connoisseurs of every persuasion can be traced back to Rome. There were refined art lovers, parvenu collectors of little taste, and hoarders of only cameos or only Corinthian bronzes, pictures, ivories, marble sculptures, jaspers, ambers, silver plate, books with exquisite bindings, tables of citrine, and so on. Rich collectors were prepared to pay huge prices for art of all kinds for their gardens, dining rooms, peristyles, private libraries, and atria. Ricardo

Nobili (1922:42) mentions that Julius Caesar (100–44 B.C.E.) was a better connoisseur than his rival Pompey (Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, 106–48 B.C.E.). Through numerous campaigns, Caesar carried with him endless numbers of precious mosaic tables and always kept in his tent a fine work of a Greek artist, a statue of Venus, with whom he claimed a relationship. As Nobili (1922:42) writes:

Though he showed eclectic taste in his gifts to the town and temples, he was in private, like a true connoisseur and refined lover of art, somewhat of a specialist, being extremely fond of cameos and cut stones. Of these he had six distinct collections that held the admiration of all the connoisseurs of the city. . . . [He] was also the every-ready patron of modern art. In this character he paid 80 talents (about 24,000 dollars in 1922) for a painting by Timonacus.

Nobili (1922:47) continues to astound the reader with the sheer wealth and magnificence of ancient Rome. He quotes a passage from the *Satyricon*, written by Gaius Petronius (circa 27–66 C.E.). One of the few works of Roman fiction to survive, it was based on what Petronius himself had witnessed. In the *Satyricon* he writes: “I entered the Pinacotheca, where marvels of all kinds were gathered. There were works by Zeuxis which seemed to have triumphed over all the affronts of age, sketches by Prothogenes that appeared to dispute merits with nature herself. . . . There were some monochromes by Apelles which moved me to holy reverence.”

Pliny the Younger (62–113 C.E.) records that, as regards forgeries, the Greek artists in particular were the most versatile. In Rome they reproduced the most esteemed originals

(Radice 1975; Roberts 2007). Zenodorus, for example, copied for Germanicus (15 B.C.E.–19 C.E.) a cup by Calamis in such perfect imitation of the chiseling that the copy could not be told from the original. Nobili (1922:59) provides a salient quotation from the work of the Latin writer Phoedrus (circa 15 B.C.E.–circa 50 C.E.), which confirms the suspicion that numerous forgeries were being created in all sorts of media:

Fraudulent masterpieces of painting and sculpture, often with the forged signature of some great artist, as at present times were on the market in Cicero’s time [Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.)], his “Odi falsas inscriptions statuarum alienarum” is eloquent enough. Phoedrus seems to complete Cicero’s information about Roman art faking when he writes: “It is in this way” he says, speaking of faked paintings and sculptures “that some of our artists can realize better prices for their work: by carving the name of Praxiteles on a modern marble, the name of Scopas on a bronze statue, that of Myron on a silver-piece, and by putting the signature of Zeuxis to a modern painting.

The fact that the work of named artists was considered especially desirable and collectible, that forgers were prepared to create works in imitation of a master, adding a false name or signature, clearly reveals that art and the faking of artistic works was prevalent in ancient Rome. In addition, the statement reveals that higher prices could be obtained for a recognized ancient work of art than for its modern equivalent, that art of the past was already valorized in ancient Rome, just as a bronze by Giambologna is valorized and not a modern

## Authenticity and Egyptian Art

imitation. Art, its collection, pricing, recognition of named artists, and faking of paintings and sculpture, is a state of affairs completely analogous to events that occurred during the Renaissance, although this is rarely recognized or discussed by Renaissance scholars.

### Authenticity and Egyptian Art

Because of the long prehistory of ancient Egypt, emulation of earlier artistic norms must have occurred in several settings; the most well-known is the period around the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, which saw the emulation of earlier Egyptian styles of coffins, burials, and texts. There was the famous *pia fraus* (religious fraud), instituted by the priests of Amarna, who took credit for events that were the result of other, earlier priestly works to establish the supposedly authentic credentials of their own temples. These acts of *pia fraus* were needed to convince religious devotees that the temple in which they were worshipping had a sanctity enhanced by the veneration of the ages, a trait often seen in the medieval period.

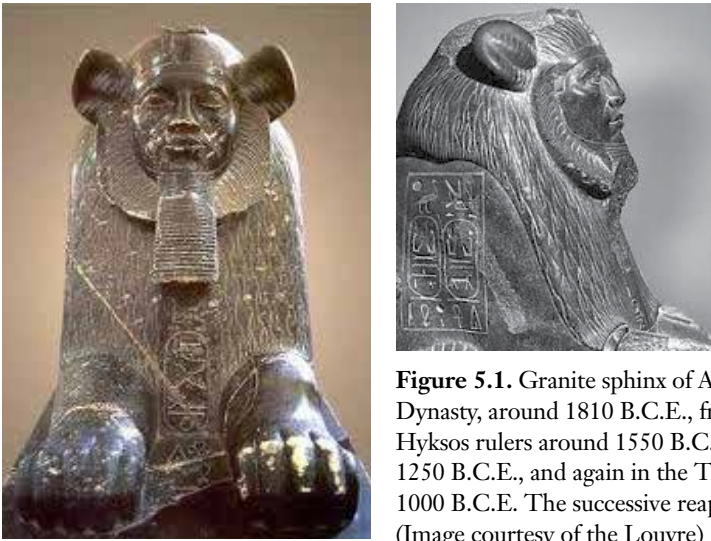
The use of multiples of a particular form of sculpture; the reuse of earlier coffins, inscriptions, and temples; or the appropriation of art from a different epoch from Egypt's own impressively long past are subjects little known outside the specialized field of Egyptology. It was already mentioned in chapter 1 that the authentic appearance of ancient sculpture may invoke a gaudy polychromy antithetical to the Platonic desire for pure form unadulterated by vibrant color. Egyptian sculptures were often colored. For example, various figures in a limestone sculpture of the Old Kingdom from the Fifth Dynasty had colored hair, with pale yellow for the lady and pale red for the boy and man. Deposited in the *serdab* of a *mastaba*, the sealed chamber had only a

small opening for offerings. So the sculpture was never intended for public display. Hence its original polychromy has survived, even if the original intention of the artist or the cultural setting has not.

The reuse value of art within the context of ancient Egyptian culture is usually referred to as an example of archaism rather than appropriation. From the perspective of the Egyptian specialist, the word is often used to refer to the material culture of the Saite period, which was marked by widespread replicas and free copies of an enormous range of past sculpture, reliefs, and monuments (Tait 2003:11). If the general tendency in the Saite period was to reinterpret and adapt the past, then this is an early example of emulation, analogous to Roman sculptures being an emulation of Greek bronze originals, although scholars of ancient Egyptian art seem not to use the term *emulation*. The large funerary structures of Theban high officials are direct copies of Middle and New Kingdom tomb and temple scenes. The value of reuse is evident in the Middle Kingdom. For example, Wildung (2003:67, figure 4.5) illustrates a granite sphinx of Amenemhet III (ruled 1860–1814 B.C.E.) in the collections of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. It comes from the Twelfth Dynasty, circa 1810 B.C.E., from Tanis. It was appropriated by Hyksos rulers around 1550 B.C.E. and by Ramesside kings around 1290–1215 B.C.E. It was appropriated again in the Third Intermediate period around 1050 to 1000 B.C.E. The sculpture is shown in Figure 5.1.

These successive reappropriations, which link together cultural milieus over 800 years, seem apposite for the ancient Egyptian setting; such appropriations are rarely exemplified by cultures for which 800 years spans

## The Ancient Old World



**Figure 5.1.** Granite sphinx of Amenemhet III, from the Twelfth Dynasty, around 1810 B.C.E., from Tanis. It was appropriated by Hyksos rulers around 1550 B.C.E., by Ramesside kings around 1250 B.C.E., and again in the Third Intermediate period around 1000 B.C.E. The successive reappropriations spanned 800 years. (Image courtesy of the Louvre)

completely different cultural environments. In some examples of reappropriation, sculptures are resituated without removal of the original hieroglyphic inscriptions, in reverence for the conceptual authenticity of an original. Even if a work's function or purpose is very different from the original, the work honors and valorizes the past.

During the Ptolemaic period, the replication of sculpture from the Thirtieth Dynasty created sculptural representations that are so similar to those of Nectanebo I and II and those of the early rulers that scholars have struggled to distinguish between them (Ashton 2003:213). A fragment of a colossal sculpture of a Ptolemaic goddess from Hadra in Alexandria, which formed part of a dyad with the depiction of a male, clearly dates to the first century B.C.E., although the facial features are more typical of works from the third century B.C.E. If considered purely on stylistic grounds, the work would have been regarded as an authentic Ptolemaic production, but the existing male figure shows that the date of both sculptures cannot be earlier than the first century B.C.E. (Ashton 2003:214–215).

Many issues of appropriation, copying, emulation, and veneration of past artistic norms in ancient Egypt and the Old World in general raise interesting problems regarding the notion of authenticity. Cultural appropriations often invoke not the aesthetic authenticity of the artifact that has been appropriated but the conceptual authenticity of its cultural associations, its meanings within the power structure of the society concerned, and its ability to represent the hegemony of ruling elites. The political advantage of appropriated works of art is that if seen as potentially powerful symbolic acts or matters of political goodwill or expediency, they can be returned to the original culture. Here the conceptual links, the intangible authenticity the work of art carries as an auratic presence, manifests the magnanimity of the conqueror—the symbolic act of return of a powerful image that has in some sense become subservient to the aims of the appropriator.

Lapatin (2010:255) gives several examples, such as the Athenian tyrannicides, stolen by Xerxes I (519–465 B.C.E.) in 480 B.C.E. They were commemorative sculptures of Harmodios



## Authenticity and Egyptian Art

and Aristogeiton (died 514 B.C.E.), two bronzes by Antenor, important symbols of Athenian identity. The Athenians were so distraught at their loss that they commissioned replicas to be cast in their stead. When Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.E.) conquered Persia, Alexander or one of his generals returned the original tyrannicides to Athens. This action invoked the conceptual authenticity of the originals and the association of the authentic nature of the ancient Greek States with Alexander himself. The symbolic denigration of a powerful sculpture is illustrated by the case of Kushite tribesmen who invaded Upper Egypt and pulled down many statues, one of which was an over-life-size bronze of Emperor Augustus of exceptionally high quality.

The Roman general Petronius sent ambassadors to the Kushites, demanding the statue of Augustus be returned. The Kushites refused to repatriate the statue, instead decapitating it and burying the head under the steps of a local temple to Victory (Lapatin 2010:261), where it was trodden on until it was excavated in 1910. It now resides in another afterlife as an exhibit in the British Museum in 2015. The intangible authenticity of the buried, appropriated sculpture was what mattered: the ritual degradation of the emperor and the power of the Kushites to keep the statue for themselves, not as an admired work of art but as a buried and degraded bronze captive. Appropriation itself can be discussed in terms of four categories. First *object appropriation*, where the physical object is removed from its original provenance and displayed in a different cultural setting. As can be seen from the examples given here, this kind of appropriation goes back to ancient Egyptian and Roman times. In *content appropriation*, concepts that originate in one culture are then taken over by another. Examples



**Figure 5.2.** Decapitated head of the Roman emperor Augustus, 63 B.C.E.–14 C.E.; inlaid with eyes of glass and stone. In 31 B.C.E., Augustus defeated Anthony and Cleopatra and took over Egypt. Strabo records that statues of Augustus were erected along the Nile at Aswan. An invading Kushite army looted them in 25 B.C.E. Although the Romans reclaimed many of the pieces, they did not manage to get to Meroë, where the head of one statue was buried under the steps of a temple dedicated to Victory as a symbolic trampling underfoot of the emperor himself. There it remained until it was excavated in 1910. It now resides in the British Museum. (Image courtesy of the British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum)

of this also come from the ancient world. In *design appropriation*, a particular style originates in one culture and is then used by people in another. It is often a means of ensuring content appropriation (Gracyk 2012). In *voice*

*appropriation*, representations made in one culture portray the concepts, behavior, and attitudes of another. A good example of design appropriation is that of *chi wara* wooden ritual masks (Jones 1992:figure 33), which actually show a greater resemblance to horned animal carvings. These sculptures are made by the Bambara people of Mali in West Africa for ceremonial purposes and have wooden pegs that enable them to be attached to basketwork caps. Carvings based on the *chi wara*, of the same artistic style, are made for tourists in Torajaland, Indonesia. The Indonesian appropriations even come with certificates of authenticity, informing the purchaser that the carvings are copyright designs by Torajaland carvers and are not to be reproduced for the tourist buyer. But the pegs are not present because the true purpose of the carvings has been lost in translation. This is a particularly egregious example of *design appropriation* for commercial purposes as compared with the original intentions of the Mali creators, which involved ceremonial use only. It is far from the most contentious case. Navajo sand paintings fulfill sacred tribal functions and are destroyed after use. The works have an ephemeral existence. Stabilized versions are produced by the Navajo for sale to outsiders, but these do not carry quite the same symbolism of the ephemeral authentic works (Parezo 1991). However, if outsiders themselves begin to appropriate the Navajo sand painting designs—those commercially made by the Navajo for sale—are these seen as legitimate artistic instantiations by the Navajo? The answer is certainly not. As Gracyk (2012) remarks:

Even when it is not offensive, appropriation trivializes the non-dominant culture, confusing its own members about the significance of its cultural indicators

and cultural heritage. In the United States, the National Congress of the American Indians and other Native organizations have denounced appropriation of their cultures as a form of cultural genocide, a racist eradication of genuine Native culture.

### Authenticity and Spolia

The appropriation of the cultural voice of an original has many ramifications in the ancient world and beyond. The appropriation of materials, often ancient, for reuse in a different architectural context of a later date is known as spolia. It might also represent the voice appropriation mentioned above. Richard Brilliant makes a distinction between *spolia in se* and *spolia in re* (Brilliant and Kinney 2011:2), which expands the concept of spolia to items reused as material remains (*spolia in se*), as well as to virtual aspects of spolia where the intangible associations of the material are more important than the material itself. The virtual has much in common with the concept of intangible authenticity, but the different languages used in the various disciplines rarely make a connection between the plethora of terms, such as *adaptive reuse*, *spolia*, and *appropriation*.

Indeed, spoliation can be seen as a form of appropriation, distinguished by dispossession or material removal of the object or person from its original context. The authentic voice of ancient fragments reappropriated for a new purpose led to the reuse of pieces of the *macellum* of Pozzuoli in the Cathedral of Salerno, while sculptural remnants from Rome were spoliated for a new purpose in the Cathedral of Pisa (Brilliant and Kinney 2011:15).

The most total instantiations of this kind of appropriation result in an entire architectural structure being transformed into

## Egyptian Fakes and Fancies

a museum exhibit, as the display of the ancient Egyptian Temple of Dendur at the Metropolitan Museum of Art illustrates. Part of the allure of the temple is the stunning audacity of removal of an entire temple from Egypt and its relocation to an internal space at the Metropolitan Museum. Part of its ambiguity as a museum exhibit is precisely how one feels about its displacement—perhaps pleasure at its existence in New York and a sense of dismay that it is not in Egypt in its original setting. What does its original setting now look like? The temple becomes an object of philosophical contemplation, not perhaps as the museum curator imagined it but imbued with various meanings for viewers, depending on how they conceive of the exhibition in terms of appropriation, loss of authentic location, and transformation.

### Egyptian Fakes and Fancies

Much as contemporary observers are still fascinated by the remains of ancient Egyptian cultures, so too were later Egyptian dynasties, such as the Saite-period Twenty-Sixth Dynasty. Then, numerous re-creations, adaptations, and replicas of much older artifacts were produced in an archaizing trend as part of an appropriation of earlier artistic styles.

There had been a burgeoning interest in Egypt among foreigners ever since Herodotus (484–425 B.C.E.), writing around the mid-fifth century B.C.E., reported on the marvels of the Great Pyramid (constructed circa 2560 B.C.E.). The Romans were both beguiled and revolted by Egyptian art (Fiechter 2009). Antinous (Hausrath 1882), in his romance of ancient Rome, writes that Hadrian (Publius Aelius Hadrianus Buccellanus, 76 C.E.–138 C.E.)

had been honored by works of temples he had visited: “In short, the intimacy between him and the monstrous divinities of the

Egyptian temples was displayed by all kinds of works of art heaped around him.” Lucan (39 C.E.–65 C.E.), in his *Pharsalia*, was incensed by the presence in Roman temples of Isis and Osiris, whom he referred to as deities of the entire world (Willoughby 1929). In the second century C.E., Emperor Hadrian made a Nile journey, bringing back to Rome a great collection of Egyptian antiquities. In Rome alone, there are more pharaonic obelisks than in Egypt itself.

The desire for collecting relics of the ancient Egyptian civilization has resulted in a host of problems regarding the authenticity of art objects and monumental sculpture purportedly from ancient times but frequently made since the nineteenth century. The allure of ancient Egyptian art for Western civilizations was especially great from the early Victorian period onward, spurring the creation of a plethora of fakes.

Problems with the acquisition of authentic Egyptian art have been exacerbated by a number of issues: first its great age, thousands of years old, meaning that often only fragments of authentic works survive. Second, the work is quite rare compared with our perception of how much has managed to survive into the present. Third, exports of antiquities from Egypt have been limited for a long time. Fourth, the mania for Egyptian art has never really abated.

This mania was also catalyzed by the decipherment of hieroglyphs by Champollion (1790–1832) in 1822, coupled with a considerable increase in European travelers to Egypt around the 1880s. The demand so greatly exceeds the supply, even at the turn of the twenty-first century, that huge numbers of artifacts—even those currently housed in some museum collections—are actually fakes, pastiche productions, heavily restored, altered, or entirely bogus or fanciful creations.



**Figure 5.3.** Cleopatra's Needle on the Thames embankment in London, far from home. The popular name for this obelisk is entirely erroneous, as it was already 1,000 years old in the time of Cleopatra. Made during the reign of the Eighteenth-Dynasty pharaoh Thutmose III, it is carved in red granite. It stands 21 m high and weighs 224 tons. It was erected in Heliopolis around 1450 B.C.E. and then moved to Alexandria and set up in the Caesareum, which was built by Cleopatra in 12 B.C.E., but was toppled over. In 1878 a time capsule of Victoriana was embedded beneath the obelisk. It was bombed by the Germans in World War I, and the damage remains unrestored. It was cleaned of grime and old wax coatings in 2005. (Photograph by Valerie A. Scott)

An old bronze sculpture in Turin, a head of Isis, was not realized to be a fake until the nineteenth century when Champollion visited, declaring the hieroglyphs to be completely wrong. The bronze must have been cast a long time ago in fascination with the ancient Egyptian language and art. In one sense, then, it was not intended to be a fake. It was a fanciful tribute to the Egyptian past—another example of Egyptianizing as an authentic expression of interest in the culture and its attainments, or an emulation of the Egyptian past in the Renaissance.

There are several examples of copies and replicas of Egyptian *ushabtis* being collected in seventeenth-century Europe. These copies and fakes, which evinced the desire for emulation of the ancient, were kept in cabinets of

curiosities for the educated elite, such cabinets being much in vogue at the time.

As early as the 1830s, Egyptians were producing forged *ushabtis* made of mud and sand from the Nile and cast in molds, often with spurious hieroglyphic inscriptions (Jones 1990:figure 272; Wakeling 1912:plate vi). Wakeling, an English doctor resident in Cairo for some time, is credited with writing the first account of ancient Egyptian fakes. Classier fakes include an example made in a green stone, in imitation of green-glazed Egyptian faience (Whitehouse 1989), housed in the Oxford Ashmolean Museum or environs since the seventeenth century. Another fake is made of bronze and kept in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Originally belonging to the imperial Habsburg collection, it is a

remarkably accurate rendition of an *ushabti* of the Late period, with a single column of hieroglyphic inscriptions below the hands, although these have been badly transcribed and are not accurate. Whitehouse (1989) remarks that this bronze replica may have come from the Kunstsammlung of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (1614–1662). It was transferred to Emperor Leopold I (1640–1705) in 1661, a surprisingly early example. Further fake examples cast in bronze are kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale, along with fanciful Egyptianizing compositions.

The desire for Spain to create an admired past resulted in the creation of a forged Spanish antiquity, in a vain attempt to compete with the wonders of ancient Egypt or Troy. This desire to legitimate a nonexistent past led to the creation of numerous forged Egyptian artifacts that were acquired by the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid between 1872 and 1875 (Pérez-Accino and Cueva 2003:104).

These fakes established a corporeal connection between the past of Spain's admired achievements and the present cultural need for validation of a past that had never existed. One wonders if this Spanish self-deception might more easily have been created in a society in which numerous religious relics were still regarded as powerful entities in their own right rather than in a country where the intangible power of such relics had long ceased to be active.

The desire to appropriate Egyptian art in the colonial and post-colonial period led to the removal of large monumental stone sculptures from Egypt to Italy, France, Germany, Spain, England, and North America. Everyone had to have an ancient Egyptian stone obelisk as a reflection of their own power and the intangible authenticity of the past of ages unknown but exotic and

desired—substances of reflected glory, or at least a collection of *ushabti*.

Some Egyptian fakes inspired *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, by Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680), published in Rome in 1652–1654. The writings presage some aspects of fractal morphologies (Scott 2005). The seventeenth-century emulations of ancient Egyptian art served not only as objets d'art in their own right but also as exotic reminders of a distant past whose accomplishments one could only marvel at. One could also consider that these are in fact fakes whose origination had been appropriated by those in the seventeenth century, desirous to use them for their own ends.

Wunderkammers have returned to fashionable status in the postmodern twenty-first-century art establishment, where the conceptual authenticity of the miscellaneous juxtaposition of exotic artifacts has been revalidated by the multiple identities of their creations or the choices involved in their collection (Amsel-Arieli 2009; Hoare 2014).

The problem with the aesthetic, material, or conceptual authenticity of Egyptian art is such that Jean-Jacques Rifaud (1786–1852), who put together a fine Egyptological collection in 1826, already had to contend with numerous fakes (Fiechter 2009). He mentions, in his fictitious memoirs, a saucer cast in lead with hieroglyphs, a copper saucer also decorated with hieroglyphs, and a host of other non-Egyptian items.

A contested real artifact is the magnificent head of Queen Nefertiti, excavated by Ludwig Borchardt (1863–1938) around 1910 and rather quickly hidden from view before resurfacing as a masterpiece in the Berlin Museums; Egypt still claims that the artifact was looted and has conducted a never-ending campaign to get it back, although there



**Figure 5.4.** *Egyptian Multiples: The Usabti 2014*, created by the author as a conceptual appropriation of the original as part of a postmodern dialogue with repetition and difference. The original Egyptian faience objects were produced as multiples for tomb burials. Here copies were produced as an assimilation of the multiplicity of their original function. For purposes of philosophical argument, let us postulate that I am worshipping Osiris and that each object is embodied with the intangible authenticity of its dedication to the god. (Photograph by the author)

is no indication that the Germans have any intention of returning this iconic object. But Borchardt, who arrived in Egypt in 1895 and stayed put, living in style on an island in the Nile, did a great deal of work for Egypt's archaeology. For example, he initiated the *Catalogue General* of the art collection of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

One distracting recent argument, made by Swiss scholar Henri Stierlin (2009), is that the head of Queen Nefertiti is a forgery and that Borchardt arranged for a contemporary artist to make a replica from it in 1912. Stierlin (2009), who has been studying the sculpture for 25 years and has written books on ancient Egypt, maintains that stylistically the work cannot be correct and is a replica of the original. This conclusion is described as ludicrous by the famous Egyptologist Zahi Hawass, and most commentators regard the sculpture as authentic, so much so that Stierlin's conclusions hardly seem to be taken seriously, especially as they seem to be based on only stylistic criteria.

Being an iconic image does render the sculpture susceptible to exploitation for a variety of works of modern art that seek to appropriate the aura of the Egyptian original. For example, in 2009 the Hungarian artist duo Little Warsaw created a conceptual work (Petrañyi 2003) that resulted in the famous head being lowered onto the headless bronze statue of a woman wearing a tight-fitting transparent robe. The Germans had supplied the artistic duo with a plaster replica of the head so that the bronze, made in Hungary, would fit exactly when brought to Germany for the culmination of the artistic event. The bronze itself was exhibited at the third Venice Biennale without the original head but with a video showing the head being lowered onto the body as part of the conceptual nature of this work. The event prompted outrage in the queen's homeland and accusation by the Egyptians that Queen Nefertiti was no longer safe in Germany. The art historian's view of the event is recorded by Petrañyi (2003), who

## Egyptian Fakes and Fancies

writes: “This is the phase in which the work of art is legitimated, the step that distinguishes creation from mere complementation, a symbolic ‘performance’ that validates the idea of a statue existing in two places by the act of joining these two parts.” Exhibition of this conceptual artwork in Venice successfully invoked the intangible authenticity of the filmed event as part of the overall conception of the work and its continued authentic existence as a headless form, or as a divorced and separated dualism, one inauthentic body and authentically conceptual head. It is very unlikely that there will be a repeat performance outside of the video recording of their brief conjunction.

American artist Fred Wilson has made use of casts of Queen Nefertiti in a study related to repetition and difference in a work called *Grey Area (Brown Versions) 2008*, currently in the collections of the Brooklyn Museum. The heads are identical, with the only variation being that the tonality of the sculptures becomes successively darker from one head to the next, in a graduation from white to black. Appropriation of the queen is part of Wilson’s commentary on race, class, and aesthetics, according to the Brooklyn Museum website, with the conjunctions of race and class being illustrated by the varying color of each cast.

French bibliophile Alfred Clercq (1890–1961) complained in 1843 that the huge numbers of British tourists wanting scarabs, idols, and *ushabtis* had ruined everything. He writes of fake wooden statuettes: “Makers of recent and fresh antiquities have a very simple method, with the primary goal of giving them an antique look. They take sycamore wood and carve it to shape, next they boil it in a tobacco decoction and rub it with powdered bitumen, thus making them smell of mummies and antiquity and giving them a suitably

yellowish hue” (Fiechter 2009). Clercq goes on to describe the faking of statuettes made from plaster, funerary scarabs made of painted plaster, carved bas-reliefs of limestone without the clarity of line of the originals, and bronzes made in Greece or Italy in the form of Egyptian drop earrings and rings of classical shape. The fine hotels being built during the first decades of the twentieth century necessitated the arrival of Italian craftsmen for the plasterwork. They then passed on their skills to Egyptian forgers. Wakeling (1912) mentions some fakers working in plaster and wood, but also in marble or even granite, and illustrates a series of wooden models of tombs and statuettes made by an elderly craftsman from Gurna. This forger used old wood taken from the coffins of mummies, then in plentiful supply, to begin his work. The statuettes were dipped into semiliquid plaster and then painted. Modern scarabs were glazed with fragments of old artifacts ground down, and faience scarabs with inscriptions were ground off to re-engrave more prestigious cartouches, which were then reglazed.

Reisner reports that several red pottery house models bought by his colleague Lythgoe in 1899 dissolved in a heavy rain (Firth 1912); they had been shaped out of mud by the potters of the region of Ballas, who were expert forgers. Because they were stylistically accurate, the fakes were hard to detect.

Some fakes have proved very problematic and were regarded as authentic for almost 100 years. These include the limestone statue of Queen Tetisheri, illustrated in Figure 2.17. The so-called Mond head in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, was declared a masterpiece by Gaston Maspero (1846–1916), director of antiquities, in 1903. Kept in the collections of the museum, the head was admired for decades. Charles Boreux, curator at the Louvre,

enthused, “One begins to wonder if this is not the apogee of Egyptian art.” In fact, the sculpture was said to have been made in Gurna and introduced to Robert Mond’s excavations by his workers, afraid that the English businessman might abandon the excavation if he found nothing of interest (Fiechter 2009). Particularly in Upper Egypt, excavators also paid workers for finding antiquities, spurring the creation of fakes still further. By 1934 Ahmed Fakhry (1905–1973) had recorded the confession of a Gurna workman who had been part of the deception. By this time, Egyptologists had severe doubts about the style of the sculpture.

Forgeries that create an apparently authentic presence in a collection of artifacts from a particular site are especially pernicious in subverting the corpus of material from which a stylistic, historical, or archaeological interpretation can be reliably deduced. Such is the case with the gold and silver treasure of the three foreign wives of Thutmose III (1481 B.C.E.–1425 B.C.E.). The site in question, Wady Gabbanat el-Qurud, had been discovered and looted by villagers in 1916. Some finds from the site were retrieved and purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1919 and made public in 1928. A series of publications by famous Egyptologists described the artifacts as fine examples of ancient Egyptian gold and silver work, and all were published as authentic Egyptian antiquities (Hayes 1959; Winlock 1948). However, in reassessment of the material from the site, Lilyquist (2003), together with Richard Stone at the Metropolitan Museum, realized that a large number of the gold and silver treasures were modern forgeries. These included Wadjet eyes, acacia spacers, Tawerets, falcons, Menat-shaped pendants, bowls, and scarabs, all in various gold alloys. They were determined to be forgeries, not on the basis

of stylistic criteria but as a result of scientific examination. Modern soldering, goldwork showing regular striations from the use of commercial gold sheet, and filing marks were typical technical details that were incorrect for ancient Egyptian manufacture. The extensive number of gold artifacts involved in the forgery seriously undermines the legitimacy of the entire treasure, especially since both Winlock and Hayes discuss them as if they are authentic. This is a typical example where art historical and scientific connoisseurship should have worked together to assess the material authenticity of the artifacts under study. Gold and silver artifacts are prone to creating these problems, partially because gold may not undergo general corrosive deterioration, although some reddish patina, which cannot easily be faked, often forms on ancient gold. Silver has a delicate patina that is possible to forge. Silver may also be blackened as a result of heavy sulfidic tarnishing, which can also be faked.

The retrospective determination of exactly who was responsible for the production of these gold forgeries in Egypt around 1918 is not an easy task, and efforts to track down the forgers failed. The simplest course of action was to consign the forgeries to storage in the Metropolitan Museum in perpetuity.

The problems with the authenticity of ancient Egyptian art around the end of the nineteenth century were considerable (Fiechter 2009). Borchardt realized that he had been fooled by several faked works of Egyptian art, at least one of which he had bought himself and presented to the Berlin Museum. When Borchardt retired, he was determined to examine as many dubious works in European collections as possible. This study took him 20 years, after which he concluded that there were more than 250 high-class fakes in a host of



## Egyptian Fakes and Fancies

museums across Europe and North America. In 1930, Borchardt exposed 56 of these fakes, including a limestone relief in the style of the Old Kingdom that he had purchased in 1912 (Fiechter 2009). The publication by Borchardt (1930), in an obscure German journal, did not please most European curators. One hundred of them wrote angry letters to Borchardt, insisting that his opinion was wrong. He answered all of them. But Borchardt had the eye of the true Egyptian connoisseur. His trail led him to consider that the forger responsible was the mysterious figure Oxan Aslanian, known as the Master of Berlin. To the few art dealers who know of his existence, Aslanian was an Armenian who had lived in Italy, Syria, and Greece—a master forger who was never brought to justice. Documents signed by H. Schafer, head of the Berlin Museums in the early twentieth century, show that he had purchased about 10 works of ancient Egyptian art from Aslanian over a period of some years. As Fiechter (2009) writes:

It was only after Aslanian's death in Munich in 1968 that antiquary Heinz Herzer thought of contacting his widow. The forger had left two large dossiers of photographs illustrating some of his creations and other possibly real artifacts he had also sold or copied or restored. Herzer published, and once again, museum curators were irate. The reaction to his work alarmed Herzer, and he abandoned his research, fearing for his job, but the Egyptologist, Dr. Dietrich Wildung, then chief curator of the Munich Museum was made of sterner stuff. In 1983 he organized a large exhibition on the False Pharaohs Art at Munich's Staatliche Sammlung, much of which exposed the work of Oxan Aslanian.

For example, the relief shown in Figure 5.5 was purchased from Aslanian in May 1924 for 11,000 gold marks.

Other works purchased from Aslanian may have been genuine, heavily restored, or pastiche creations, so there was a complex mixture of goods. Borchardt refused to accept his own verdict that so many of these works could be forged, but then he found other, similar examples, and he then realized that his doubts had been justified (Fiechter 2009).

Aslanian's files were discovered in 1968, 30 years after Borchardt's research had described the artworks as forgeries. One of the works was illustrated in the old files. This research by Borchardt represents a triumph of art historical connoisseurship. Still other fakes led to further investigations by Borchardt (1930), which have been well described by Fiechter (2009), who carried out much of the background research into Aslanian and the Egyptian fakes discussed here. Fiechter's 2009 book *Egyptian Fakes* is a detailed account of the story given briefly here and is an excellent work on the subject of ancient Egyptian fakes, which has not been greatly explored in the literature by any other recent writer. Borchardt was put in touch with Paolo Dingli, a Maltese painter, sculptor, and sometime forger, by an antiques dealer in Cairo. For more than two years, Borchardt would meet him in his small apartment in Cairo. At the root of this forgery problem was the Restoration Department of the Egyptian Museum. Emile Pasha, who worked in various museums in Cairo for 40 years, had hired Dingli. But who was responsible for the numerous fakes, some of which ended up in the Louvre, was never established (Fiechter 2009:80).



**Figure 5.5.** Old Kingdom–style relief by Oxan Aslanian in the Berlin Museums, purchased for 11,000 gold marks in 1924. The workmanship of Aslanian is often too perfect and regular; otherwise, there is little to suggest that the work is a forgery. The relief was on exhibition for 60 years, Wildung exposed the forgeries of Aslanian. (Image courtesy of the Berlin Museums)

### **Authentic Greenhalgh Productions**

Today, of course, fakes and forgeries continue to be produced, the most astonishing being fabricated by the English working-class Greenhalgh family, living on welfare in Bolton. Starting in 1989, they accumulated \$750,000 with a wide range of forgeries, such as a ceramic faun in the style of Gauguin, which was even authenticated by the Wildenstein Institute in Paris. Getting a work of French art authenticated by the somewhat fearsome Wildenstein Institute is no mean feat, and as a result, the faun was purchased for \$700,000 in 1997 by the Art Institute of Chicago, which described it as a major discovery until British scientists exposed the work as a fake in 2007 (Artner 2007). An Egyptian marble sculpture of

Princess Amarna was purchased in 2003 by the Bolton Museum for £440,000, a very substantial sum, and was authenticated by both the Egyptology Department of Christie's and by the British Museum (Malvern 2006). But instead of being 3,300 years old, it had been made in 2001 by Shaun Greenhalgh in three weeks in a very modest English garden shed.

A wooden sculpture in the collections of the Louvre depicts an elegant carved wooden head on a long neck. It was one of the most popular Egyptian antiquities in the Louvre, reproduced in many expensive books of ancient Egyptian art, and it was pictured on one of the highest-selling postcards until 2006, when scientific dating of the wood proved that the sculpture could not possibly be ancient Egyptian (Fiechter 2009:140).

## Egyptian Fakes and Fancies

If a sculpture is so admired, does its authenticity reside in its intangible public admiration for more than a generation, its social biography, and its aura of being made authentic by being exhibited in the Louvre for so long rather than in its material essence? The constructivist approach to this question might well take the view that the participation of this sculpture in its public existence has been validated by its instantiation as an admired work of art from the Amarna period. Forgeries may lie about their origins, but they may not commit a lie about their presence if the aura of their existence is accepted by generations of museum visitors as something tangible and real.

Yet another problem beset the Louvre in the shape of a granite sculpture of Sesostris III. There is another granite bust of the king in the museum in Cairo. The example in the Louvre was held to be authentic by the curators of the Egyptian Department, Elisabeth Delange and Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt.

The sculpture had originally been purchased by a French multimillionaire named Pinault, for five million francs in 1998. But Professor Dietrich Wildung declared the sculpture suspect. The French curators did not alert Pinault to the views of Professor Wildung, who decided to publish his opinions in a German art magazine, which came to the attention of Pinault. As a result, he sued to get his money back (Lüger 2009). Desroches-Noblecourt maintained that the sculpture was genuine and dated to a period after the death of the king, from the end of the Twelfth Dynasty to the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty. According to archaeologist Luc Watrin, the work is a fake (Gentleman 2003; Lüger 2009). Pinault lost the first court case. The court decided, due to the testimony of the French experts, that the statue was indeed

authentic. Watrin was blacklisted from all research libraries in Paris by the power of the Louvre, but that did not stop him and his research. Scientific connoisseurship confirmed Watrin's view; the stone used was a speckled granite from Aswan, which had never been used by Middle Kingdom artists, who preferred more refined stone. A second court case ensued, and this time Watrin took a prominent role, backed up with a score of



**Figure 5.6.** Alabaster torso of an Egyptian princess of the Amarna period, presumed to be 3,300 years old. Because of the high quality of the carving and the presence of the side-lock of hair, experts at the British Museum held the work to be a depiction of one of the daughters of Akhenaten. The forgery was made in the small garden shed of the Greenhalgh family, living on welfare in Bolton, England, around 2003, and was authenticated by Christie's and by the British Museum. The Bolton Museum wanted to place the famous fake on display, but it is currently the property of the Metropolitan Police. The connection between a citizen of Bolton and the Bolton Museum adds to the significance of location. (Image courtesy of Bolton Museum and Art Galleries)

letters condemning the sculpture from mostly British and American Egyptologists (Lüger 2009). The second court case resulted in victory for Pinault and Watrin, and the sculpture of Sesostriis III, which even appears in a small photo book called *One Hundred Masterpieces in the Louvre*, is now hidden away in storage. The whole affair is a most unedifying spectacle of self-interest on the part of the Louvre in opposing the international expert evaluation of the material authenticity of the sculpture offered by numerous Egyptologists and validated by scientific evidence showing that the sculpture could not possibly be from the ancient Egyptian period but was a modern forgery.

The scarcity of ancient Egyptian art and the West's avid desire for it are the principal factors responsible for the large number of forgeries, many of which undoubtedly still reside in museums today.

### **The Authentic Minoans and Their Re-creation**

The nature of the authenticity of the Minoan civilization, which arose during the second millennium B.C.E., in virtue of the site of Knossos and the artifacts associated with it, has continued to represent a major problem of interpretation and representation, inextricably bound up with European projections of mythic proportions, hyper-restoration, and extensive forgery (Papadopoulos 2005). The site of Knossos and the performative nature of the Minoan civilization play a roman à clef role in their relationship to the authentic remnants of what has become a topos of the modern imagination of what an ancient civilization might be like (Leontis 1995). The very influential work of Sir Arthur Evans (1851–1941) in single-handedly creating the phenomenon of the Palace of Knossos and the fame that the Minoan civilization

achieved is one of the most impressive individual achievements in archaeological scholarship, one made even more remarkable by the disconnect between Evans's vision of the Minoans and the factual and artifactual evidence afforded by the site itself. Evans sought a prehistory on which European civilization could be based, and Knossos was the medium that he used to create the message. The site was restored as a re-creation of something that never existed in the concrete form, in both senses of the word, in which it is presented to the visitor. Knossos is an economic success for the island of Crete in terms of its value as a tourist destination. MacGillivray (2000) notes that it is the second most-visited site in the whole of Greece, attracting about one million tourists a year. One early visitor of refined aesthetic judgment was Evelyn Waugh, who wrote in 1929:

I think that if our English Lord Evans ever finished even a part of his vast undertaking, it will be a place of oppressive wickedness. I do not think that it can only be imagination and the recollection of a bloodthirsty mythology which makes something fearful and malignant of the cramped galleries and stunted alleys, these colonnades of inverted, conical pillars, these rooms that are mere blind passages at the end of sunless staircases.

This was a very astute summation by Waugh (1930) at a time when the ordinary visitor was in thrall at the vestiges of the Minoan civilization and the restorations that Evans had fabricated out of painted concrete. Indeed, much of what Waugh saw during his visit did not represent an authentic Minoan palace but only Evans's version of what such a palace should look like.



**Figure 5.7.** The North Portico at Knossos, Greece, which is almost entirely a fictional reconstruction by Arthur Evans. (Photograph by Bernard Gagnon, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

When Papadopoulos (1995) visited the site and descended the Grand Staircase, human traffic over the previous 70 years had completely disintegrated the original paving stones while poured concrete from the 1920s was still in good condition. However, the “reconstitutions” inaugurated by Evans are themselves beginning to fail structurally. This decomposition has the added irony that what never existed as a restored version of the palace in the first place must itself undergo restoration to enable the structure to survive into the future as an inauthentic remnant of something that has assumed a whole series of new meanings in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The intellectual context and material inauthenticity of some of the most revered artifacts from Knossos are a continuing source of concern. Now so far removed from the original context, the artifacts have assumed the legitimacy of their social lives over the past 80 years in the sense offered by Appadurai (1986) and have created a whole set of meanings and values for themselves. The Minoan Snake Goddess, one of the prized possessions of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, has been illustrated in hundreds of books, both popular and academic, and is well-known by art history students everywhere. As Lapatin (2002:14) writes: “Numerous books have featured her image as a frontispiece; she has graced museum guides and catalogues,

handbooks and encyclopedias, and has appeared in newspapers, magazines and scholarly journals.” Both art historical and scientific connoisseurship have failed to conclusively prove what most observers regard as almost certainly true: that the Boston goddess is a forgery. When Lapatin was conducting his study, a staff member of the Classical Department of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts remarked that it did not matter if the goddess was a forgery, for she had introduced generations of Bostonians to the glories of Minoan civilization (Lapatin 2002:187). The historiographical conceit of the goddess figures, for there are several, represents instantiations of desire rather than fact. MacGillivray (2000) writes:

In the end only Knossos itself and the artifacts unearthed there remain as solid proof of Evans’s Minoans, but these too have become problematic. The Palace and surrounding buildings are crumbling as fast as Evans’s intellectual reconstruction of his ancient Minoan society. The building techniques of the twentieth century have not withstood the rigours of the Cretan climate or of the relentless passage of more than one million visitors who flock to Knossos each year. . . . In restoring Knossos we are now not trying to re-create some golden past but preserving a building that has taken on a series of new meanings in the twentieth century.

Knossos and artifacts associated with the site, such as the snake goddess, have become iconic (Lapatin 2002). The tale is a tangled one of authentic artifacts; artifacts badly damaged in an earthquake that struck Crete in 1926, some of which were possibly restored in a deceptive manner; artifacts forged by workmen and restorers associated with Evans’s excavations that

were designed to conform with Evans’s predilections of his version of the Minoans; and falsifying restorations that altered the site of Knossos, which themselves have to be restored. The hermeneutics of the re-created site have become part of the story of the historical authenticity of Knossos, a conceptual authenticity, one could argue, independent of the material and archaeological authenticity of the original.

### *La Tiare de Saitapharnès*

The Louvre and other major collections, such as the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, have been beset with problems regarding the authenticity of their collections. A famous example is *La Tiare de Saitapharnès*, once the pride of the Louvre. The problem here is to decide, based on the *intention* of the artist who created it, if the crown is authentic or not. The definition used by Tietze (1948) encompasses artwork that was not conceived—or in this instance literally forged from gold—with fraudulent intent. With respect to latent fraudulence, Tietze (1948:9) asserts: “The author of the work or object need not always be directly involved in the fraud.” Yet if it is exclusively art dealers who are misappropriating the item (without any involvement on the part of the artist), is it possible to ascribe the work as a forgery? Or does the criminality of the art exchange rest on those who misrepresented the artwork? To respond to these questions, it will be important to investigate the nominal shift from an authentic work of art to art considered a forgery. During the mid-nineteenth century, local farmers in the area of the Southern Bug, Ukraine excavated a number of extraordinary ancient Greek artifacts from meridional Russia. These discoveries fostered a strong consumer demand, thereby encouraging forgers to make artistic contributions to this region of the Ukraine.

## *La Tiare de Saitapharnès*

According to Rieth (1970), these knowledgeable forgers were careful to hide their tracks: “They passed their new creations into the hands of farmers who offered them to dealers so as to be able to provide a more or less credible provenance” (Rieth 1970:177). Among the furtively unearthed archeological discoveries in Olbia (an ancient Greek city on the shore of the Southern Bug estuary in the Ukraine) was a golden crown believed to date to the early Hellenistic period. Despite its age, the gold was in excellent condition, not heavily corroded or patinated, as it had been well preserved beneath the earth’s surface.

When the crown was transported to Berlin for sale, the “inconsequential arrangement of reliefs on the crown,” as Rieth (1970:119) phrases it, raised immediate suspicion for German archaeologist Adolf Furtwängler (1853–1907), who prevented a transaction from taking place. Moreover, Furtwängler found the crown’s appearance to be inconsistent with its supposed age, principally because of a lack of corrosive accretions or patina on the metal. Despite this first refusal to purchase the crown, the seller, named Hochman, did not relent, pursuing the British Museum as his next potential client. Though the British Museum initially rejected the item on the grounds of its alleged inauthenticity, its fierce rivalry with the institution prepared to purchase the crown, the Louvre, almost caused it to reconsider the decision shortly thereafter. In 1896 the Musée du Louvre purchased the ornate golden crown, believing, as it had been told, that the fine design had been made by repoussé from a single piece of metal as early as the latter part of the second century B.C.E. Louvre conservator Heron de Villefosse gushed effusively in 1896 over the recently purchased masterpiece, unsure of whether its condition, the engraving, or its

historical intrigue deserved the most admiration (Embree and Scott 2015).

The crown featured masterfully detailed depictions of scenes from the *Iliad*: the Greek embassy before Achilles (*L’ambassade des Grecs à Achille*) and the butcher of Patroclus (*Le bûcher de Patrocle*). The craftsmanship was much admired by the public and Villefosse himself (1896:142), who showered effusive praise over the piece (Embree and Scott 2015). The language Villefosse employs to describe the artifact emphasizes the captivating beauty of what he endearingly calls a “precious monument.” Though the success with which these scenes were executed is practically uncontested, Furtwängler was correct in pointing out a number of temporal inconsistencies in the composition, which would eventually cause scholars to doubt the ancient origin of the crown. Tietze (1948) cites *La Tiare de Saitapharnès* as an archetypal instance of art forgery, pointing out a number of specific anachronistic shortcomings in the crown’s composition: “The forger used line engravings from a few embossed Homeric scenes. He disregarded the fact that they were frequently inaccurate and taken from sources of widely different date and origin” (Tietze 1948:36). Because many illustrations of ancient civilizations shared these anachronistic moments, it would have been very difficult to detect what didn’t belong without extensive knowledge on the subject (Embree and Scott 2015).

Additional material evidence—namely, the excellent condition of the metal and the inconspicuous solder that was ultimately spotted as holding the two halves together—fueled further discussion concerning the crown’s (in)authenticity. Furtwängler spoke of the gold’s modern appearance, “which lacked the peculiar reddish brown patina which is the chief characteristic of true antique gold

pieces” (Rieth 1970:122). However, this objection is deceptive, for it could be argued that the depth at which the crown was buried might have suppressed any corrosion from occurring, and perhaps the solder had been a modern repair to reconcile the fragmented state of the once solid crown. In other words, the lack of conclusive evidence meant that for all intents and purposes, the crown was genuine—that is, until Israël Rouchomowsky, a highly skilled goldsmith, made a trip to Paris to present the Louvre with information it could not repudiate. As news of the Louvre’s controversial purchase quickly spread, Rouchomowsky claimed authorship for his work. It was then discovered that Rouchomowsky had been commissioned two years previously by two art dealers to complete the crown, unaware that it was to be sold as an ancient artifact. While the Louvre’s art connoisseurs were reluctant to accept Rouchomowsky’s claim, he was able to produce documentation and studio photographs and, without seeing the crown, recall and re-create minute details from the composition (Rieth 1970:127). The weight of this evidence was enough for the Louvre to confirm that its latest acquisition was in fact a modern fake. Unfortunately for the public, and for the story of the crown, the Louvre decided to cover up this embarrassing situation by putting the crown in storage for the next century. The almost too painful irony of the April 1, 1896, publication of Villefosse’s laudatory (to the point of being inaccurate) descriptions came back to haunt him. In spite of (or perhaps *because of*) the attention received by this embarrassing purchase, Rouchomowsky received high praise for his craftsmanship and even earned a gold medal from a decorative arts salon in Paris.

Though the truth of the crown’s origins took an astonishing number of years to surface, it is important to emphasize that the fraudulent

intent was not on the part of the artist himself but rather on the part of the art dealer. In such instances, we must ask ourselves if the secondary (or dealer) intent is transferable to the artifact or if it should bear the title of “forgery” since the intent to deceive was appropriated to the object post facto. Financial gain played a primordial role in the dealers’ *misrepresentation* of the crown. However, at the crown’s conception, the artist sought to emulate a previous style of art, and no attempt was made either by the artist or the dealers to artificially age the crown to the supposed time period from which its aesthetic qualities were borrowed (Embree and Scott 2015).



**Figure 5.8.** *La Tiare de Saitapharnès*. Apparently from the second century B.C.E., the crown was in fact created by master goldsmith Israël Rouchomowsky in the 1880s. The artist’s intention is most important here, as Rouchomowsky had no intention to deceive or pass off his work as ancient. That was undertaken by the dealers. The crown was purchased by the Louvre in 1887 as a Greek antiquity of great significance. After the truth emerged, the Louvre kept the crown in storage for 100 years as an embarrassingly inauthentic object. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)



It is very possible that the art dealers simply overlooked this detail, or perhaps they were well aware of the deceptive aging processes that metallic antiquities can undergo, since metallic corrosion often lacks uniformity and relies heavily on the soil in which a piece is buried (Scott 2002). Thus, in this last instance, arguing for a well-preserved artifact rather than falsifying an identifiably incorrect corrosion on the crown would be the less complicated route to take.

### Greek and Roman Authenticity

We know more about originality, copying, and emulation during the Greek and Roman periods than during the Egyptian period. Perry (2005:158) quotes an interesting passage from the Greek writer Dionysius of Halicarnassus (circa 60–7 B.C.E.):

On the whole, one might discover two different kinds of imitation as it relates to ancient prototypes. Of these, the first is natural, and is achieved after much instruction and familiarity; the second, which is closely related to the first, is achieved through the rules of the craft. Concerning the first type, what more might one say? Concerning the second, what can one say but that a certain natural charm and grace is conspicuous in all of the models, but that [the works] that are created after these, even if they attain the highest ideal of imitation, nevertheless have something studied and unnatural about them.

From this statement it can be gathered that the first category of imitations, those formed by the fluid movement of the hand of the copyist, was regarded in a different way than the second category of imitations,

which, it could be argued, were seen as less authentic copies than those within the first category.

The kind of distinction that Dionysius of Halicarnassus makes here is much the same kind of judgment that an informed viewer could make of an imitation of a David Hockney drawing today. Similar thoughts were expressed during the Renaissance and have been repeated often since: A skilled faker captures the essential style of the artist by long observation and practice, until the copyist can create a convincing and spontaneous imitation. The neophyte simply reproduces the lines and colors of the original in a mechanical manner, lacking any insight into how the original artist worked.

Examples include some of the classier works by British forger Eric Hebborn (1934–1996), such as his drawing *Roman Harbour Scene*, after Giovanni Piranesi (1720–1778), who was inspired by the physical ruins or imagined ruins of ancient Greece and Rome. This drawing definitively falls into the first category of imitative works: Hebborn studied a copper plate etching by Piranesi, which may well have been reduced in size from a preliminary drawing. Hebborn then created the imagined original drawing on the same kind of paper Piranesi himself used, employing an old sample of eighteenth-century bistre. The drawing was accepted by the art market as authentic, and for a long time the National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, refused to admit that its Piranesi *Roman Harbour Scene* was a recent Hebborn creation of a supposedly lost original, which in fact never existed. Hebborn was a relatively close friend of the British art historian and infamous Soviet spy Sir Anthony Blunt (1907–1983), keeper of the queen's pictures and former director of the Courtauld Institute of Art. But there is considerable doubt whether

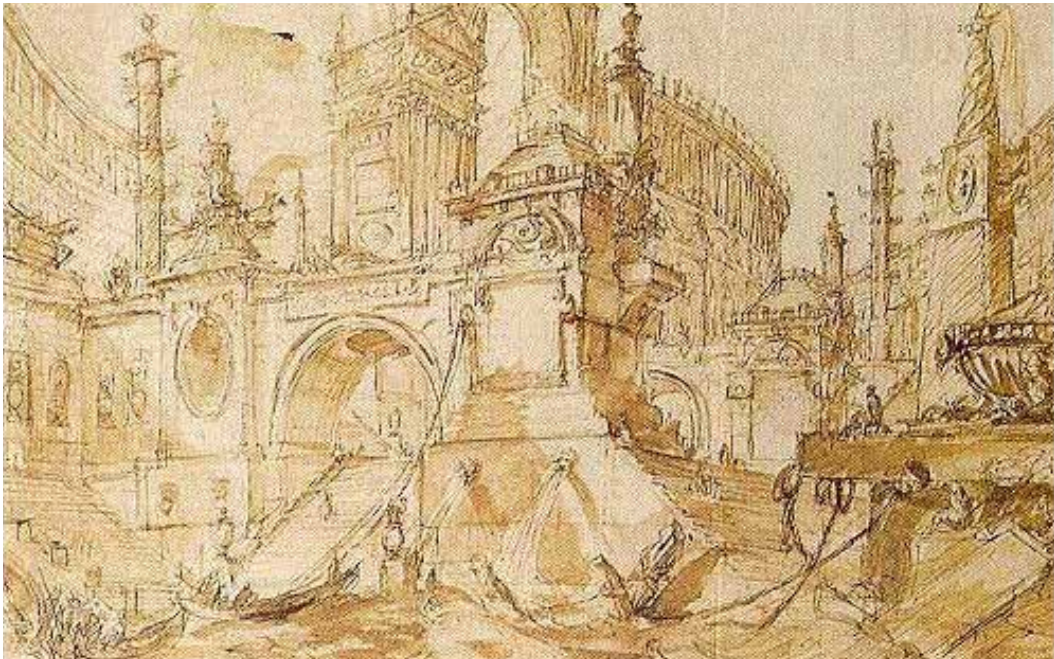
Blunt actually realized that some of the work passing through Hebborn's hands was by Hebborn himself rather than by Renaissance masters (Carter 2001).

As far as the ancient world is concerned, references in Pliny the Younger (Book XXXIV.47) suggest forgery. When an artist named Teucer, famous as a worker of plaques in low relief, died, the art fell into abeyance, and only the ancient plaques were of any value. Pliny argues that the age of imitations and forgeries followed. The metalsmith Calamis, for example, was skillfully copied by Zenodorus.

Casting and molding, which today may appear to be fundamentally opposed to the authentic in terms of the possibilities of endless duplication, have been in use for thousands of years. Fragmentary evidence shows that plaster molds and casts were used for making portraits and for the reproduction of Neolithic sculptures from Jericho (Howard 1991). Molds were used for making identical ceramic figurines from Ecuador and many other cultures, and the Roman imperial workshop at Baiae contained scores of casts of classical statues (Beazley Archive 2013; Waywell and Laev 1986). Baiae, in the Campania region of Italy, was a Roman seaside resort, where a cache of plaster casts of Hellenistic sculpture was discovered in a cellar, strongly suggesting that numerous plaster copies were being fabricated there. In fact the fragmented plaster casts from the first century B.C.E. match some extant marble sculptures, such as the Sciarra and Mattei Amazons, the Athena Velletri, and the Aristogeiton from the group of tyrannicides that stood in the Athenian Agora (Mattusch 1996:191). The plaster cast fragment preserves only part of the face of Aristogeiton, including engraved hairs of the beard, which are so finely modeled that they reproduce hairs taken from a

bronze original rather than from a marble. Another plaster fragment has indications of sculptured hair on the chest of the figure, which is never portrayed in marble, and other plaster fragments exactly match large bronze statues from Baiae. All this attests to a healthy interest in duplication, although whether any generations of casts were regarded as more or less inauthentic at the time cannot readily be stated. Mattusch (1996:191) refers to a quotation from Lucian strongly suggesting that some bronze sculptures were so admired that a succession of plaster molds were taken from them by different artists. An example is the statue of Hermes in the Athenian Agora, which was, according to Lucian, "covered over with pitch because of being molded every day by sculptors." The pitch covering would ensure that the plaster piece-molds could be easily removed from the surface of the bronze sculpture.

Since indirect lost-wax casting was already known and used in ancient Greece, there is no material evidence linking a specific bronze cast by this process to a supposed original model, since multiples could readily be produced. Then many bronzes cast by the indirect process were themselves able to be copied, as the molds from Baiae show. Plaster casts taken from them could be used as models for the sculptor to create a marble version, or wax could be poured around the inner surface of the plaster molds to create a wax figure. It was subsequently invested with core material and cast in bronze, creating another series of bronze "originals" derived from a bronze cast that might itself have multiple identities. Depending on how these later casts, versions, or marble copies are conceived of in terms of their cultural context, they may be regarded as *forgeries* (Hallett 2014b) or as *emulations* (Marvin 2008). The complexities



**Figure 5.9.** *Roman Harbour Scene*, attributed to Piranesi (1720–1778), imagined by Eric Hebborn as the preparatory drawing Piranesi would have made for a copper etching plate, which may well have been reduced in size from the original drawing. Hebborn produced this drawing as a forgery of an original that never existed. It was purchased for \$20,000 by the National Museum of Denmark in 1969; the local newspaper announced that it was then worth \$35 million. A number of international experts, including Erik Fisher and Christopher Fischer of the Kobberstiksamlingen at Statens Museum for Kunst, held that the drawing was an authentic Piranesi. In fact, it is forgery by Hebborn. Once it was seen as such, some experts recognized the quality as not consistent with a Piranesi. Others clearly regarded the work as indistinguishable from an authentic Piranesi. (Image courtesy of Eric Hebborn)

of unraveling the material authenticity of some of these Roman or Greek bronzes is well illustrated by the fragmentary cast-bronze torsos known as the Florence Torso and the Metropolitan Torso, which are discussed in detail by Mattusch (1996:197–206). In 1892 Kalkmann dated the Florence Torso as a Greek original from the late sixth or early fifth century B.C.E. In 1927 Kluge declared the torso a copy, a Roman overcast of a Greek statue. Mattusch (1978) noted that a pentagonal patch was reproduced in bronze, perhaps with a patch on top of the original patch, evidence of a wax overcast from a Greek bronze original. Formigli (1981) disagreed and stated

that the apparent wax patch on a patch was actually caused by corrosion, that an unleaded bronze composition was evidence of Greek manufacture, and that a bronze worker would have smoothed out any impressions of repair patches for casting in subsequent bronze versions. Mattusch (1996) still maintains that the Florence torso is a Roman copy of a Greek original because of the cast impression of the patch, but there is still no definitive answer regarding its authenticity. Is it Greek? Is it Roman? Is it a cast made in Greece for a Roman customer? Later Roman bronzes usually contain lead, and this bronze torso does not. For scientific connoisseurship to say that

this is a Roman casting, further research is clearly needed. The Metropolitan Torso also reproduces in bronze patches from the original bronze from which this bronze must have been copied. Modern repair patches also appear, but many seem to be ancient. As Mattusch (1996:205) writes: “What at first glance, look like holes where patches have fallen out are not necessarily what they seem. Quite a few are actually casts of the holes for patches that were already missing from the statue that was copied.” The bronze torso is in the style of the early fifth century B.C.E., but its date of production is much later, perhaps the early centuries C.E. This is an example of the archaizing tendency of later Roman bronze sculpture. Hallett (2014), invoking a series of interesting cases, refers to the overcasting of a bronze “original” to produce a later Roman “original” as forgery.

One of the principal condemnatory arguments connected to the use of copies in Roman culture is that they were simply imitations of Greek originals and therefore hardly to be counted as original works of art. In the case of the Hellenistic casts mentioned above, this may well be the case, but the unabated demand for Roman copies of Greek originals entailed adaptation and rendering in a manner befitting Roman cultural norms rather than Greek ones. Ridgway (1984) writes:

In the course of my investigations I became increasingly aware that the very core of our beliefs needed reconsideration. Mechanical copying, as we understand it in modern terms, probably did not exist, nor was it conceivable in antiquity. . . . More than ever before I came to realize that the so-called replicas were instead adaptations, imitations, variations on certain themes and styles,

and above all were intensely Roman despite their apparent Greek formulae and iconography.

In many cases, the actual medium of fabrication was also different, frequently being transferred from bronze to marble. The Roman versions are often described as emulations (Gazda 2002; Marvin 2008; Perry 2005). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, this is a sixteenth-century C.E. word whose usual definition is “an imitation of something.” Nowadays, the word is often used of computer programs or devices that seek to imitate other programs or devices. So is an emulation of something just a fancy way of describing it as an imitation or a copy? In terms of modern art, these free copies of other artists’ works can be viewed as appropriation, as has already been discussed, in the sense that Elaine Sturtevant’s copies of Warhol (1928–1987) silk-screens are not direct reproductions but her own versions of Warhol’s originals.

Emulative work may still mean that some of the admired Roman sculptures are, in fact, direct copies of the originals in terms of materials and fabrication, despite the fact that many artists imitated the style of the Greek originals and adapted them for Roman taste, and in so doing created apparently authentic Roman sculptures.

False pigments and fake precious stones are mentioned by Pliny, who describes a simple test for distinguishing genuine verdigris pigment from its cheaper substitutes: heating a sample on the end of a shovel to examine the color alteration (Scott 2002). Precious stones were widely faked by imitations made of colored glass or by artificially dyed mineral substitutes designed to fool the purchaser. Today, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires are often irradiated to enhance color centers, continuing

the theme of deception that began thousands of years ago (Craddock 2009).

The usual view regarding concerns about authenticity is expressed by Bucklow (2009:252), who holds that the concept, as it is understood today, appeared in the tradition of European art about 350 years ago. But those of us interested in ancient or medieval art would disagree: The evidence does not support Bucklow's view.

A statement from Pliny (Book XXXIV.61-62) that could be taken as additional evidence for the desire for the authentic concerns the reprehensible actions of Emperor Tiberius (42 B.C.E.– 37 C.E.):

Lysippus as we have said was a most prolific artist and made more statues than any other sculptor, among them the Man Using a Body-scraper which Marcus Agrippa gave to be set up in front of his Warm Baths and of which the emperor Tiberius was remarkably fond. Tiberius, although at the beginning of his principate he kept some control of himself, in this case could not resist the temptation, and had the statue removed to his bed-chamber, putting another one in its place at the baths; but the public were so obstinately opposed to this that they raised an outcry at the theatre, shouting "Give us back the Apoxyomenos"—and the Emperor, although he had fallen quite in love with the statue, had to restore it.

Clearly, the people themselves were not prepared to accept the inauthentic statute erected by Tiberius in place of the original *Apoxyomenos*, which had been cast in bronze by the Greek sculptor Lysippos of Sikyon around 330 B.C.E. The artwork was already more than 350 years old when it was taken by Tiberius.



**Figure 5.10.** Marble version of the lost original bronze *Apoxyomenos* by Lysippos. Height 2.05 m. The commonly illustrated version is a marble replica in the Museo Pio-Clementino in Rome, discovered in 1849. Plaster replicas of this version are found in many national collections. (Photograph by Marie-Lan Nguyen 2009. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

The dissenting voice of the Roman people is a faint echo from the distant past revealing that assumptions made by Renaissance scholars regarding when the desire for authenticity in art became part of human consciousness cannot be correct.

It was, of course, quite possible for scholars to deceive themselves in relating treasured antiquities to admired stylistic archetypes. Winter (1892) considered the Apollo Belvedere to be significantly similar to the statuette Ganymede and the Eagle in the Vatican. Perry (2005:1) notes that the statuette was probably a table leg that had been heavily restored by Vincenzo Pacetti (1746–1820). The entire dog except the paws, the wings and head of the eagle, the right leg of Ganymede below the knee, the left leg between the knee and the ankle, the right arm below the elbow, most of the left arm, the neck, the chin, part of the mouth, and the nose were all restorations. The dangers of stylistic comparison between the Apollo Belvedere and Ganymede and the Eagle are clearly revealed by this example. In fact, the Apollo Belvedere was itself restored in the sixteenth century by Giovanni Montorsoli (1506–1563), and the restored piece is in the Vatican Museums (Mattusch 2002:figure 3.1).

The German concept of *Kopienkritik*, or copy criticism, is partly to blame here. Perry (2005:2) remarks that it was the dominant methodological approach to Roman sculpture for more than 75 years. It was thought to be axiomatic that Roman sculptures were a series of replicas, or more or less exact copies, of Greek originals, a view that is now regarded as hopelessly simplistic. Winter's argument, writes Perry (2005:6), requires acceptance of several propositions regarded as axiomatic: that both the Apollo and the Ganymede were replicas; that they replicate

Greek masterpieces; that the lost masterpieces can be identified from documentary sources; that the handling of material of a particular artist cannot be reproduced by another artist many centuries later; that it is possible to determine whether a work is a good copy or a poor copy, even when the original is lacking; and finally that stylistic commonalities between two sculptures are indicative not only of region but also of the time period and the original artist's hand. So is the Apollo Belvedere an authentic copy of anything? It may be a replica or a Roman emulation of a classical form, but can this analysis be taken any further?

In the restoration of these Roman masterpieces, Italian Renaissance humanists distinguished between *translation*, *imitation*, and *emulation*. Translation meant to copy an original without deviation. Imitation involved the eclectic exploitation of the original. Emulation disclosed the innovative mode of Renaissance adaption. Two translational marble caryatids from Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli are direct replicas of two of the six maidens from the porch of the Greek Erechtheion in Athens. They are exact copies. Roman emulation did not necessarily mean Roman reinvention, although it often did. How are exact copies to be valued in terms of their authenticity? Artist Edward Allington produced his *Roman from Greek in America 1987* in 50 plaster copies made from a synthetic resin replica of the Medici Venus that he had purchased from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. As Allington writes: "Reproductive technology may be regarded as a device which not only produces objects but also invests them with value as objects. Conceptual art has employed reproductive techniques and other strategies that denied the value of the artist's touch to favor not

the material object but the intangible entity constituted by the idea or concept.” Some of these plaster casts now require restoration 25 years after they were copied, which connects our world of originals, replicas, emulations, fakes, and restorations. Common restoration processes seek to complete fragmentary artifacts in the name of the aesthetic unity of the work. In some cases, this may be regarded as permissible. In other cases, the true purpose, function, or material authenticity of the work is denigrated. In others, it could be argued that the work is essentially a fake.

Apart from modern debates concerning whether the existence of these Roman sculptures can be assumed to be essentially Greek manifestations in another guise, there are important arguments relating to the conceptual authenticity of the space, building, or setting in which the Roman works were displayed and that imbued them with the intangible authenticity of their space-time location. Many of these arguments propose that the works are indeed replicas of Greek bronze originals (Mattusch 1996, 2002), which may or may not be the case. The search for the Greek bronze original sculptures has tended to consign the Roman marble versions to the status of copies, which does a disservice to Roman cultural attainments.

Productions of replicas and copies, it should be remembered, are essential facets of a sculptural work of art in which the original model in clay, plaster, or wood is transformed by skilled artisans into masterpieces in bronze or marble. It is quite possible that Pausanias is describing the practice of making copies when he writes about the Greek artist Kanachos, who worked during the archaic period (Alcock et al. 2001): “The statue [of Apollo Ismenios in Thebes] is the same size as the one in Branchidae, and the form

is no different; whoever has seen one of these statues and learned who its sculptor was, does not need great skill in looking at the other to see that it is a work by Kanachos. They differ in this way: the Apollo in Branchidae is bronze, but the Apollo Ismenios is [made of] cedar.”

It is interesting that works identical to each other were made at this time in bronze and wood, the whole context calling into question the oversimplified idea that Greek originals were unitary masterpieces in bronze while the Romans made numerous marble copies based solely on the concept of the existence of a unique bronze original. Mattusch (2002) draws attention to the fact that the Riace bronzes, which were cast around 460–420 B.C.E. and found in 1972 in the Ionian Sea near Riace, Italy, are slightly different in size and details. The cast of the younger of the two warriors is 203 cm high, while the more mature-looking warrior is 196.5 cm in height. But these two bronzes were probably made from the same “original” model, which the artist had prepared in clay, gesso, or wood. Molds were taken from the carved original and coated or layered with wax. The wax was removed, and the hollow spaces were filled with core material. The individual wax arms, legs, torso, and heads could then be manipulated or altered before the casting of a complete figure, with parts being joined in the wax, or soldered or cast on in the bronze. This, in brief, is the indirect lost-wax casting procedure, so called because the direct method produced a singular model, perhaps originally modeled in the wax itself over a clay or plaster core. This wax model was then covered with an investment and was melted out as the bronze was poured in, resulting in the loss of the wax original. It was transformed into bronze, and the plaster core

was baked inside. The direct method results in the loss of the original model, while the indirect method preserves it for future use, possibly for the creation of multiples of the original or altered forms of the original with different heads, expressions, limb positions, or other attributes. This is one of the central points of Mattusch's argument: that the belief of archaeologists and art historians that there is a single, uniquely authentic Greek original is founded on the mistaken notion that each Greek bronze was an original without the means for replication, which is in fact inherent to it, and corresponding possible alterations from the artist's original model. This may still mean that the Romans saw an admired version of a Greek bronze casting that, for the purposes of emulation, was in fact the original on which the later Roman work was based, even if it was an adaptation of the work viewed as an original.

Plutarch (45 C.E.–120 C.E.) proposes an early argument based on the disparate notions of the importance of the material and conceptual authenticity of an object. He writes:

The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned from Crete had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, in so much that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same.

Plutarch asks whether the ship was still that of Theseus. Heraclitus (535 B.C.E.–475 B.C.E.), who was much concerned with

change, suggested an analogy to a river, whose water replenishes the flow. Arius Didymus, a Stoic philosopher of the first century B.C.E., quoted him as saying, "Upon those who step into the same rivers, different and again different waters flow." Plutarch disputed Heraclitus's claim about stepping twice into the same river, citing that it could not be done because "it scatters and again comes together, and approaches and recedes."

The philosophical argument was extended by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1649), who introduced a further mind experiment: What would happen if the original planks of the Ship of Theseus were gathered up after they were replaced and used to build a second ship? Which ship, if either, is the original Ship of Theseus?

John Locke (1632–1704) proposed an analogous problem regarding a favorite sock that develops a hole (Locke 1690). He wondered whether the sock would still be the same if a patch was applied to the hole and whether it would still be the same sock after a second patch was applied, followed by third and so on, until all the material of the original sock has been replaced with patches.

A possible answer to these questions invokes the intangible or conceptual authentic, which has been discussed earlier. The materiality of Theseus's ship is only of interest to those of a historical and materially scientific turn of mind, in which the condition, degradation, and description of the original timbers is of greater interest than that which Theseus would probably consider to be *his* ship, namely the one sailed himself, not the collection of old planks used to create the other ship. There are cases in which a discussion regarding the material authenticity of an art object could be aligned with its conceptual authenticity, but this is not such a case: There



cannot be two authentic ships for Theseus to sail in. There is only one, which he is currently using and which possesses the conceptual authenticity of the vessel, as all its materiality has been substituted.

Another way to examine the authenticity of the ship is to consider the problem in light of the four causes proposed by Aristotle (Aristotle 1933:book 5, section 1013a; Falcon 2015). The *material cause* is determined by the materiality of the object or subject in question. For example, a statue of Hermes might be made of wood, bronze, or marble. The substance of the artwork constitutes the material cause. The *formal cause* is a change or movement created by the arrangement, shape, or appearance of the sculpture undergoing alteration or moving. If the marble sculpture was given an extra arm, this would be a formal cause. The *efficient or moving cause* considers the agency of change or manufacture, such as a conservator repairing a marble statue to remove an extraneous arm. The *final cause* is the aim or purpose the statue serves—in this case veneration to the god Hermes in a Greek sanctuary. As regards the problem of the ship, the *efficient cause* is the design of the ship and how and by whom it is made. For example, in the case of the Ship of Theseus, the workers who built the ship in the first place could have used the same tools and techniques to replace the planks in the ship. The *material cause* is the materiality of the form: the matter the ship is made from. The essence of a thing, according to Aristotle, is its *formal cause*, and therefore the Ship of Theseus is the *same* ship, because the formal cause, or design, does not change, even though the matter used to construct it may vary with time. Aristotle also considered the *end* or *final cause*, which is the intended purpose of a thing. If the intended purpose of the reconstructed Ship of Theseus retains the

same ends, namely transporting Theseus and convincing the Athenians that Theseus was once a living person, even though its *material cause* would have changed with time, the *final cause* would not have altered. The Aristotelian view that the *formal cause* is the essence of an artwork and the *final cause* the intended purpose of the work, with the *efficient cause* being its mode of fabrication or conservation and the *material cause* its intrinsic materiality, represents an interesting analysis of the problems inherent in restoration of works of art. The approach is sympathetic to the conceptual authenticity of a work but does not consider the intentions of the artist as of paramount importance. However, the *final cause*, the intended purpose of the work, could be argued to include the component of the artist's intention, because that was part of the nature of its purpose. One could also argue that the designer of the ship was adamant that only timbers made from cedar of Lebanon were adequate for such a vessel and that these could not be replaced or substituted. So while the Ship of Theseus was still Theseus's ship, it was not the designer's ship, as the designer was preoccupied with its *material cause*. This comes back to the question of which is valued more: the conceptual authenticity or the material authenticity.

### Contexts of Roman Restoration

One of the most important aspects of the alteration of works of art over time is the damage that may occur to them and the subsequent restoration, alteration, repair, or reworking of them. The only philosopher to directly address the problems inherent in these kinds of change, and the processes necessary for restoration to create an aesthetic whole, was Sagoff (1978a), whose work is discussed in chapter 2. Sagoff suggested that authenticity is a necessary condition of an aesthetic value, that a

work of art cannot be appreciated simply for the sake of its appearance or for the feelings it induces but must also be appreciated for conceptual factors. What would a present-day philosopher have to say about Sagoff's work? Hsu (personal communication 2014) writes that in certain cases, his thought leads him into logical impasses:

In: "Restoring Art," Sagoff says that the Pietà post-integral restoration is the same statue it always was, but is no longer a Michelangelo. Sagoff seems to flirt with the idea of "relative identity": The unrestored Pietà is identical to the restored Pietà qua statue, but not qua Michelangelo. I don't believe this is coherent. Philosophers are used to thinking about authenticity only in connection with traditional problems of metaphysics, epistemology, value theory, etc. ("Can an empiricist account for differences in the value assigned to original artworks and copies of them?") But those discussions don't help with conundrums raised by the actual cases—e.g., problems of restoration. Those problems quickly push the usual frameworks of discussion to their limits—and, as I believe Sagoff's article shows, beyond.

Whatever the merits or demerits of this work, it is a useful addition to the literature since, as Hsu says, the conundrums raised by actual cases are all too often not addressed because they raise arguments that can be explicated only by reference to the works of art themselves and how restorers have interpreted them. It is these conceptual factors that conservators and restorers have had to struggle with for some time in relation to restoration and its effects or affects on the original.

The thoughts of important theorists such as Brandi (1977) and Philippot (1966) have been discussed in chapters 1 and 2, and the subject of replicas and copies has been briefly explored above, but what of restoration? A wealth of different viewpoints on restoration has been provided by the seminal publication on historical and philosophical issues in conservation (Price et al. 1996), much of which pertains to the problems of how restored, derestored, or reresetored works of art are to be regarded. Is a restored work of art the same as the original in terms of its meaning and significance? Are fragments of sculptures in their broken condition more authentic than entirely restored works? Should sculptures that have been restored with foreign elements be de-restored in order to discern what was original? Can one know what the original state of the sculpture was? Do eighteenth-century restorations to Roman marble sculptures invoke or create an authentic existence for the sculptures, which now preserve what eighteenth-century artisans thought of them? How does derestoration of earlier restorations affect how the work of art is regarded today? If an apparently restored sculpture is actually shown to be a forgery, should it be removed from exhibition? Are modern copies of eighteenth-century restored sculptures inauthentic versions of an inauthentic sculpture? There are no easy answers to some of these questions, which often have to be considered on a case-by-case basis. But how they affect the perception of what authenticity means for these often fragmentary or heavily restored works of art is an interesting area of debate, with different opinions voiced by members of the public, curators, artists, conservators, art historians, and philosophers.

A good example is provided by a marble statue of Marcus Aurelius that was re-

rerestored at the J. Paul Getty Museum in the early twenty-first century, following interventions in the Renaissance and the nineteenth century. Marcus Aurelius ruled the Roman Empire from 161 to 180 C.E. The statue is housed in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin and was restored as an assemblage of 40 fragments of four different kinds of marble over various time periods spanning the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The restored sculpture was deteriorating due to neglect and rusting of the iron pins that held the disparate parts together. It was brought to the Getty Museum in Malibu for rerestoration. This work involved the complete disassembly of the sculpture and its reconstruction from scores of cleaned components, previously joined with shellac and iron rods fixed in lead pours in the marble. The remaining patina of the marble surface was kept as far as practicable, new fills were textured so that on close inspection they would be visually discernible, and joins were made mechanically reversible to allow for easy disassembly of the different components (Sanchez and Risser 2006, 2012). The remaining original marble pieces of the Marcus Aurelius are just a collection of headless body parts. A very substantial part of the sculpture is not Roman at all but eighteenth- and nineteenth-century marble restorations. Without the illustrative diagram shown on the Getty website for this restoration, it would be very difficult for a casual observer to see any difference between original and restored parts of the sculpture. By the strict interpretation of Brandi's axioms of restoration, discussed in chapters 1 and 2, the Marcus Aurelius restoration could be viewed as compromising the authenticity of the original fragments on two counts: First, the restorations cannot be visually discerned from the original. Second, the completed sculpture is conjectural, as the

head is ancient but foreign to the original Roman sculpture. The American Institute for Conservation (2012) "Codes of Practice" refers to restoration principally as a process of *compensation for loss*, implying that only parts that are physically missing should be replaced by new components, not that new components be added to an existing form to provide compensation over and above those that are missing. The codes state: "Any intervention to compensate for loss should be documented in treatment records and reports and should be detectable by common examination methods. Such compensation should be reversible and should not falsely modify the known aesthetic, conceptual, and physical characteristics of the cultural property, especially by removing or obscuring original material."

By Brandi's strictures, it is not possible to go back in time and remove old compensations that not only made good losses but also added to the physical existence of the object. An example is the old but unrelated head added to the Marcus Aurelius shown in Figure 5.11. To retain the head would deny part of the history of the object in which a different period had appropriated the Roman work for its own and altered its physical presence. The historical authenticity of the sculpture cannot be transformed in the twenty-first century just because an observer today does not like what happened in the eighteenth.

At least that is one view. It was not the conservation philosophy of the 1970s, when old marble restorations were removed and replaced with modern synthetic polymer fills. The concept behind this philosophy was that marble additions made to a marble object were visually confusing to the viewer, who might not be able to distinguish between the original components and the restorations. Therefore, if stainless-steel rods



**Figure 5.11.** A fully reresetored sculpture of Marcus Aurelius that came to the Getty Museum in 1999 for treatment. The original Roman components are shown in yellow. Restorations made in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are in blue and are very extensive. The sculpture is completed with an ancient head, but not the head of Marcus Aurelius. The body of the statue was created around 69–98 C.E., while Aurelius’s head was created around 144–145 C.E. The statue was originally cut from one piece of marble and was restored at least three times in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The statue, now in the Pergamon Museum, consists of 40 fragments of four different types of marble (due to previous restoration projects) and weighs about 1,400 pounds. The problem is how the authenticity of the artwork is to be assessed. (Image in the public domain)

were aesthetically undesirable, a modern twentieth-century synthetic resin component would be created. It would be slightly recessed from the original marble, so that there would be no visual confusion between original and compensation provided for loss, while on the principles of Gestalt psychology, the latter would recede in the viewer’s perception, allowing better contemplation of the original fragments. This idea formed part of a scientific approach to conservation in which the form and function of the ethic of removal were self-evident.

There are plenty of examples where eighteenth-century restorations have been totally removed, leaving sculptural fragments lying helplessly in a drawer or held in place with steel rods. One example is pedimental sculptures from Olympia that were reresetored by a Greek sculptor, Stelios Triantis, who removed all the old restorations and created a series of visible connecting rods, drilled into the remaining fragments.

### **Marcus Aurelius from the Pergamon Museum**

The reresetoration of the antique marble sculpture of Marcus Aurelius was the subject of a collaborative project between the Pergamon Museum and the J. Paul Getty Museum. The statue, a partially preserved first-century body with a second-century head representing the Roman emperor, originally came from the seventeenth-century collection of the Villa Montalto Negroni in Rome. It was then acquired by the Royal Cabinet Collection of Berlin in 1791 and displayed in the Pergamon Museum at the beginning of the twentieth century. The pastiche sculpture had been restored, with a different ancient head and other body parts, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was de-restored during

## Marcus Aurelius and His Restorations

the purist philosophical phase of conservation in Germany in the 1970s. The aim of the treatment in 1998 was to reresore the de-restored seventeenth- and eighteenth-century restorations.

Many of these remained intact, due to a lack of resources for further reintegration at the Pergamon Museum. The reresoration project at the Getty used a zone system: assembled components were first joined and merged together, followed by mechanical integration of the zoned parts to allow for disassembly in the future should the reresoration have to be reversed once more. What is valued here is the historical authenticity of what happened to the sculpture during its reconfiguration as a completed aesthetic object in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, not the original conception or appearance of the sculpture, which is preserved only in the disparate fragments of the original work. This decision represents a contested field of debate between viewers who valorize only the fragmentary original and those who desire an aesthetically completed work, even if the head of Marcus Aurelius is not the head of the sculpture at all but from a completely different body. It is not just an aesthetically unified work. Its historical biography is not perceived as a contingent event but as an essential component of appreciative reintegration.

There are, in fact, five possible approaches to dealing with composite or fragmentary Greek and Roman sculptures, which are the majority of those that have come down to us in the twenty-first century. In a *purist reconstruction*, they would be rejoined together with synthetic modern materials so that the original fragments could be visually discerned from the restorations. In the *minimalist conservation* approach, the broken parts would be held in place and separated with stainless steel

rods. In the *purist deconstruction*, the original fragments would be placed on display on a board or plinth, or returned to storage. In an *aesthetic reconstruction*, eighteenth-century marble restorations would be placed back with the original fragments in a complete restoration of what existed or had been created in the eighteenth century. An *integral replication* would substitute a complete artwork in place of the original fragments or the original, which would be housed elsewhere. This replication could be virtual rather than physical. The choice of action depends on which aspects of the different authenticities discussed in chapter 2 are declared the most significant or most value-laden for the different groups of stakeholders.

### Marcus Aurelius and His Restorations

The delineation of the restorative choices briefly outlined above shows that the distinction made by Sagoff (1978a) between an *integral restoration* and a *purist restoration* is an oversimplified approach to the questions raised in this chapter. But his analysis of what restoration may mean in terms of his four principles of individualizing, historical, relational, and cognitive, discussed in chapter 4, is much more substantial. Individualizing is a similar thought to Brandi's: that the recognition of the work of art in its present instance is the moment at which it becomes an object of consideration for conservation. Historical means that we are aware of the multiple processes that have brought the sculpture to us. In terms of social biography, the sculpture may have been through a lot: It is carved by a skillful Roman artist in imitation or emulation of a Greek original, normally a Greek indirect bronze casting. It is painted in polychromy and placed on view in a Roman temple, where it begins to acquire a patina. It is

smashed into pieces when Rome is invaded by various people. The fragments become buried as part of an archaeological assemblage and are lost to the world. The marble may suffer from loss of polychromy and a greatly extended patination. The fragments are excavated or found in the Renaissance and are cleaned, cut as appropriate, and reconstructed as a Roman sculpture with a new ancient head and Renaissance marble restorations for the limbs and base. Loss of most of the patination may occur at this time.

The sculpture in this case study, the Marcus Aurelius, was subsequently purchased by a member of the German royalty. It may have been recleaned and then restored again before eventually being donated to the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. By this stage, all traces of polychromy were gone, and the belief that ancient marble sculptures should be a pure white was firmly held in art historical circles. The sculpture was partially reres-tored in the nineteenth century, with more shellac and iron pins. Additional recutting of the original may have been undertaken by the restorers. It was shipped to Malibu for derestoration: The rusting old iron pins were cut away, the lead and decayed shellac removed. New stainless-steel joins were made so that pieces would be mechanically locked in place. The sculpture was returned to the Pergamon Museum in a newly restored and cleaned condition. Its different components can now be mechanically disassembled, adhering to the principles of *reversibility* of a conservation treatment.

The different states of the sculpture are evident from this brief historical biography, and each stage could be considered as more authentic or less authentic than the other, depending on how the sculpture is regarded. The desire for a return to what is seen by

some observers as a more authentic state has seriously impacted many restored sculptures because of an adherence to an early twentieth-century scientific empiricism, with definitive statements regarding exactly what course of action to follow during derestoration, unfettered by aesthetic fantasies or longings for completeness. The same approach could very well have been used for the reres-toration of the Marcus Aurelius if it had been done in the 1970s and not in 2004.

### **The Pedimental Sculptures from Aphaea**

The marble sculptures from the Temple of Aphaea on the Greek island of Aegina are among the last sculptures of the Archaic period, dating to the early fifth century B.C.E. The sculptures were taken and removed to the Glyptothek in Munich, where in the late eighteenth century the famous Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770–1844) extensively restored them, desiring that his restorations be visually indistinguishable from the original fragments.

However, in 1972 the director of the Glyptothek, Dieter Ohly, ordered them to be de-restored to reveal the original fragments, destroying in the process Thorvaldsen's re-created components. In physically removing Thorvaldsen's restorations and replacing some of the restored limbs with stainless-steel rods emanating from truncated limbs, Ohly was influenced by the purism of fragmented sculptural components, obliterating the neoclassical restorations of one of the eighteenth century's most famous sculptors. What Ohly overlooked was the fact that the Greek sculptures had been extensively recut by Thorvaldsen, so returning the sculptures to a de-restored state did not mean regaining the authenticity of the fragments in their as

## The Pedimental Sculptures from Aphaea

excavated state but only in the state they were in when Thorvaldsen had finished reworking them into new, wholly complete works.

Philippot (1997 [1966]) wrote, “The big failure of archaeological conservation was that it could not re-establish the continuity of lived history.” The recognition of the historical progress of time as an essential component of the authentic story of these sculptures from Aphaea would be acknowledged by most conservation decisions taken today. In 2016 Thorvaldsen’s inauthentic versions of the completed sculptures assume a new set of meanings: a reflection on the neoclassical understanding of restorations made by the famous sculpture, which illuminates part of that neoclassical world; a course of historical understand that has been well described by Appadurai (1986:3–63) in his essay on the social life of things.

What if the restored sculptures were intended to be returned to their Greek Island homeland? What would then happen to the eighteenth-century restorations? The neoclassical connotations would have no place on the island of Aegina, or would they? Is it an ethnocentric assumption to say that the inhabitants of Aegina would not want to see the original fragments of their Doric temple fully restored, even if the restorations lacked archaeological veracity? What might seem to be an authentic work of art in one context could easily become an inauthentic work of art in another. But Lowenthal is wrong to imply that considerations of these questions do not form part of the conservation dialogue. Lowenthal (1995) writes:

In art as in architecture, ruinations of time and misfortune were routinely repaired. . . . Only in the late eighteenth century did wholeness succumb to the contrary cult

of fragments and ruins. . . . To be authentic, an object, a structure, or a landscape must be truncated or fragmented. In contrast, nineteenth-century conservators “restored” venerable structures and traditions to what they ought ideally to have been. Authenticity meant replacing defective original remnants with modern realizations of the spirit of antiquity. Anti-scrape advocates altered the principles of restorers more than the practices; most who claimed to respect original works were, consciously or not, beautifying, antiquating, or modernizing them. Not until the mid-twentieth century, in most of the arts, did improving the past give way to archeological exactitude, a scholarly purism that deplored tampering with what was original. Honest authenticity now came to mean intervening as little as possible and making manifest every unavoidable alteration, even to the sacrifice of visual integrity.

A cultural milieu in which the Aphaea fragments retain their original authenticity would undoubtedly mean that they be returned to the island of Aegina. Western nations are reluctant to return classical Greek antiquities to allow them to undergo this kind of repatriated existence. The different meanings the Aphaea sculptures have acquired since their reconstruction and completion by Thorvaldsen cannot be assumed to be without historical significance for us today, which is why faithfulness to context is so important and why the nature of this context may change over time. European museum consciousness tends to see the authentic existence of these sculptures in their conserved state within the confines of a major European collection, as is indeed the

case with the marbles from the Parthenon at the British Museum, even if the surfaces of them have been scraped and scoured during old conservation campaigns (Oddy 1999), destroying the authentic surface finish or patina they once had.

The analysis of authenticity in terms of material authenticity, aesthetic authenticity, and conceptual authenticity is of help here. There is a continuum of possible restoration choices within this triangle, which helps reveal what is being valued. Eighteenth-century Renaissance reworkings of these sculptures sought to modify or complete a version of aesthetic authenticity, while the events concerning the Aphaea sculptures show that the material authenticity of the artwork was more highly valued during the 1970s than retaining the very skilled eighteenth-century completions.

### The Getty Herakles

There are three important figures in the life of the marble sculpture of Herakles now in the Getty Museum in Malibu: Emperor Hadrian, the first Lord Lansdowne (1737–1805), and J. Paul Getty (1892–1976). The restored sculpture, which once belonged to Emperor Hadrian, was one of Lord Lansdowne’s prized possessions, even if Lady Lansdowne was reputed to have chiseled away his penis as an indecent appendage before the sculpture was sold to J. Paul Getty for £5,000, an astonishingly low sum in the 1970s considering that the sculpture is now worth around \$25 or \$35 million.

The Herakles derestoration was described in Howard (1978), and the reresoration by Podany (1994a, 2003). The eighteenth-century artisans recut the Herakles to some extent by altering features of the head—for example, by reducing the size of both ears and flattening the curves of the head. In fact,

a majority of the surface of the sculpture, including the club, the proper left shoulder, the legs, and the front chest—was recut and severely acid cleaned. The 1970s derestoration saw itself as a completely justified and logical process. Zdravko Barov, the Getty conservator at the time, wrote in Howard’s monograph of 1978: “The new restoration of the statue was made not only for technical reasons but also to show the original as much as possible free of alien additions. The emphasis is now on what is left of the original, with additions limited to those necessary to cover the technical joins.” In this treatment, which was in accord with the conservation ethics of the time, the following parts of the Herakles were removed: “the tip of the nose, several vine leaves of the crown, the left hand and wrist, all the external part of the lion skin, most of the club except parts near the fist, all of the fingers of the right hand except the third. The right forearm and the large chip in the left flank have been replaced with plaster. Most of the iron rods were replaced with brass.”

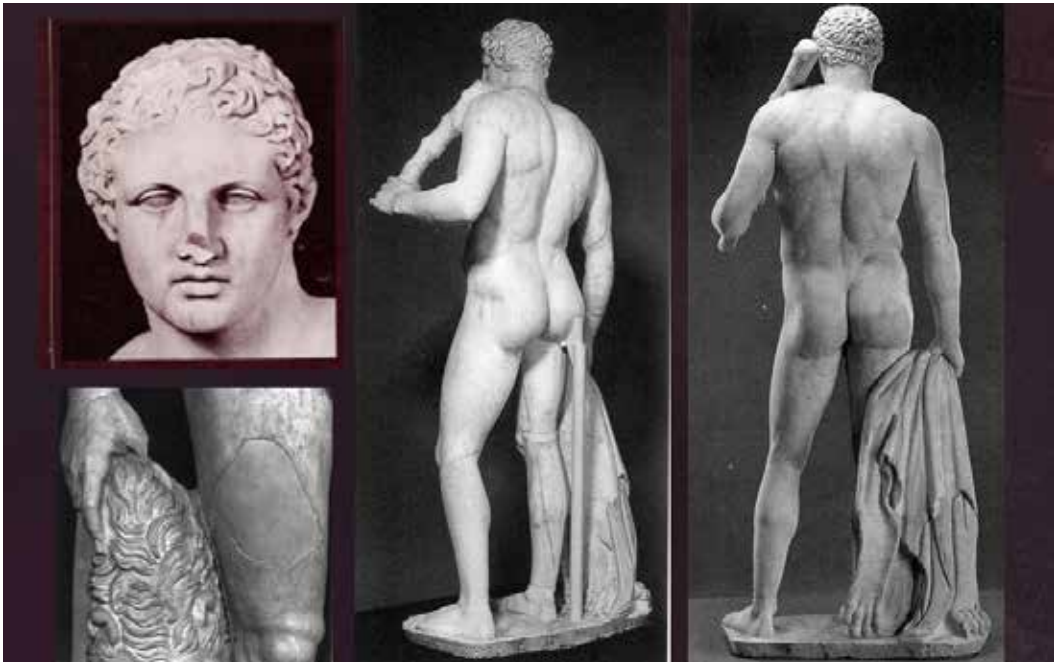
Figures 5.12 and 5.13 make clear some of the alterations to what was considered to be the authentic condition or state of the sculpture in some of its incarnations. Podany (2003) questioned what had happened to the sculpture in 1974 and remarked that the sculpture on display revealed more about the recent history of restoration than about the Herakles that had been so much a part of art history for two centuries. This question led to a reevaluation of the sculpture and the decision to strip away all the somewhat deteriorated 1970s restorations and to replace them with the eighteenth-century carved marble components, most of which had been saved in the 1970s. This is how the sculpture now appears in 2016. Such conservation decisions are dependent on how much value is



## The Getty Herakles



**Figure 5.12.** The Getty Herakles, circa 125 C.E., shown in its reresored condition in 2016. The broken nose and end of the club, which are both modern restorations, improve on the 1970s purism of derestoration, part of which is shown in Figure 5.13. (Image courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu)



**Figure 5.13.** The Getty Herakles, circa 125 C.E. Upper left: the derestored face with broken nose; lower left: the recessed polyester fill of the 1970s restoration can be seen; center: the unsightly support rod; right: as restored in the 1990s. (Image courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu)

placed on *material authenticity* as compared with historical or *aesthetic authenticity*. As far as the ethics of conservation as expressed in the 1970s are concerned, compensation for loss must be visually discernible and carried out in materials that do not mimic those of the original, thus emphasizing at all times the notion of material authenticity. However, as Figures 5.12 and 5.13 make clear, this approach denies the aesthetic authenticity of the fully restored sculpture. As Podany (personal communication 2014) writes:

To fully express why the decision to return what was left of the eighteenth century restorations one must also take into account historical authenticity or value. It is often missed when the work is discussed, but I make the case that the sculpture was returned to a state that reflected its condition after its last major irreversible alteration, reflecting more appropriately its aesthetic and historical authenticity while still revealing, through documentation, the material authenticity, of which little was actually left.

### Leda and the Swan

More than two dozen copies of Leda and the Swan survive, attesting to the theme's popularity among the Romans. The Getty website does not mention just how much of this sculpture is an eighteenth-century restoration, but a recent display at the Getty Museum, shown in Figure 5.14, helps correct that. Another version of the sculpture, recently discovered, sold at Sotheby's in London in 2011 for £19.6 million, which puts the combined world worth of restored Ledas at more than \$500 million in 2016 monetary terms.

The two Lansdowne sculptures present different restoration issues as regards their



**Figure 5.14.** Leda and the Swan, first century C.E.; 132.1 x 83.5 x 52.1 cm. Leda was the queen of Sparta, whom Zeus desired. Disguising himself as a swan, he enjoyed intercourse with her. Found in 1775, this is one of two dozen extant copies of an earlier Greek statue from about 300 B.C.E. and attributed to Timotheos. (Image courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu)

historical and aesthetic authenticity. As far as Leda and the Swan is concerned, we could remove Leda's head, part of the right arm, and part of the drapery, all foreign to her. Both are copies of Greek sculptures of about 300 B.C.E., so in that sense neither is an original, but these ancient copies are not regarded as

## Leda and the Swan



**Figure 5.15.** Leda and the Swan. Left: derestored restoration, about 1976. Right: rerestoration of the derestored fragment. (Left image courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Trustees. Right image courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu. Photograph by the author)

forgeries but as adaptive emulations. A side view of how Leda and the Swan looked after derestoration at the Getty Museum in the 1970s is shown on the left in Figure 5.15, compared with the rerestored sculpture on the right.

Yeats could not have written his poem to Leda and the Swan from contemplation of purist de-restored remnants:

How can those terrified vague fingers  
 push  
 The feathered glory from her loosening  
 thighs?  
 And how can body, laid in that white rush,  
 But feel the strange heart beating where  
 it lies?

In terms of these de-restored original fragments, one should heed Lowenthal's castigation: "The authentic worth of unrestored objects divested of recognizable form is solely academic; aesthetic defence of time's erosions is a quixotic passion for pentimenti and limbless torsos." The desire for the original features of limbless torsos was motivated by the logical positivism of scientific conservation as a rational and justified system and the revolutions in archaeology that sought excavated authentic fragments. The removal of spurious restorations was intended to free the original, authentic fragment from its foreign additions, to allow archaeological contemplation of a collection of purified and disassembled components. The dictum of Brandi that

“for restoration to be a legitimate operation, it cannot presume that time is reversible or that history can be abolished” was not part of the philosophical dialogue with this object. Conservation had not yet developed a sense of its own historical phenomenology by the 1970s, but that position is completely different today. Derestoration might reveal the extent to which restorers had cut away broken surfaces to affix new limbs or heads. The exposure of these alterations, it could now be argued, would leave fragments as no more than anachronistic and amputated uncertainties, neither ancient nor historical, neither beautiful nor informative, even if an archaeological fiction.

Many artworks depicting Leda and the Swan, including lost works by Michelangelo and Leonardo, have been destroyed as being too erotic. One of the values of copies and fakes is to preserve what was once authentic, such as a copy of Leda and the Swan by Cornelius Bos after Michelangelo, which has survived. Indeed, by the Renaissance, Leda and the Swan had become a popular subject, especially since swans apparently have a kind of penis, a fact unknown to many modern viewers but common knowledge in the Renaissance.

It is still startling that so many of these sculptures have foreign heads, even if they are ancient, while eighteenth-century restored marble carvings and a small amount of twentieth-century restoration complete this erotic image in the Getty collections.

### **Bacchus**

The fate of some sculptures is not to exist in a comfortable museum but to be bombed to pieces. A marble sculpture of Bacchus was shattered in Dresden when the British destroyed the city in the Second World War.

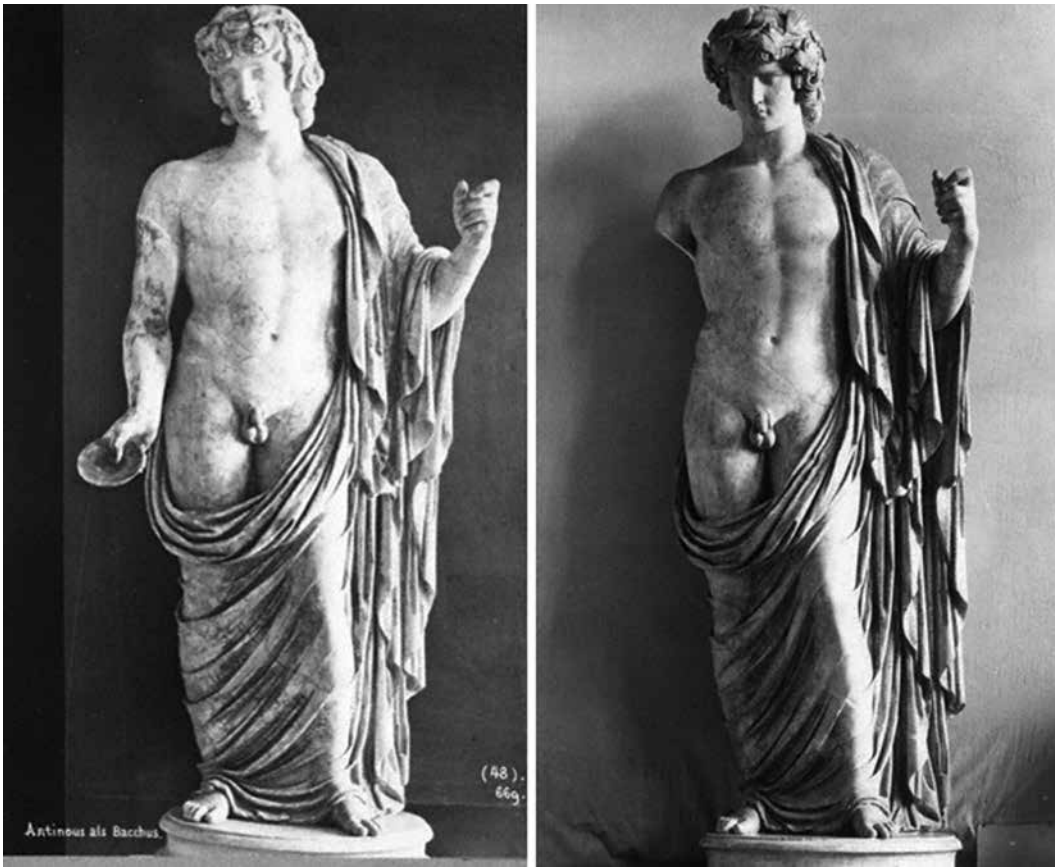
It was broken into hundreds of fragments, which were carted away by Soviet troops to Leningrad, where they remained in a wooden crate for 70 years. The captors returned the decayed fragments to Dresden in 2006.

Before the Second World War, the Bacchus had been restored in various ways, just two of which are illustrated in Figure 5.16.

From Dresden the fragments made their way to the Getty Museum for restoration and reconstruction. There are multiple heads for the variety of identities the sculpture has represented. A separate right arm was removed in the nineteenth century, when the sculpture was thought to be a version of Bacchus, but Bacchus would have held a drinking vessel, so the disembodied arm was resting in a vitrine alongside the sculpture in an exemplary display once held at the Getty Villa. If it was not Bacchus, the sculpture could be given a Roman head, the first being attached to the fragmentary sculpture in the 1600s. With the addition of a Baroque marble helmet and arm removed, the sculpture was transformed into Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.E.). But this head was probably from the warrior goddess, Athena. It was sculpted with a truncated and flattened top to carry a separately carved helmet, typical for the goddess and not Alexander the Great at all.

Archaeological discoveries of the 1800s showed that the restoration as Alexander the Great could not possibly represent the authentic state of the sculpture. So who did the sculpture depict? With another new head, it changed identity to become Antinous, in the guise of the wine god, the favorite of Emperor Hadrian. In 1830 the helmeted head was replaced with a portrait of Antinous as Bacchus, and a new right arm holding an offering vessel was added. Both of these restorations were

## Bacchus



**Figure 5.16.** Two restored versions of the same figure of Bacchus, Roman, 100–200 C.E. Marble; 203.20 cm high. Left: Bacchus restored with new right arm as Antinous in 1830 and reresored in the late 1880s as Bacchus. Right: Bacchus with the right arm derestored. (Image courtesy of the Getty Museum and the Skulpturensammlung, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden)

removed between 1888 and 1894, when the head was substituted with a cast from an ancient Roman bust of Antinous as Bacchus.

The multiple identities of the work add intrigue to the restoration. Following its discovery, the statue was restored with both ancient and modern parts. A Roman head of the warrior goddess Athena was combined with a seventeenth-century helmet that was added to the sculpture, creating the new identity as Alexander the Great. A modern right arm and staff were also added at this time. The alternative to a headless state was to create

an alternative persona as Bacchus or perhaps Antinous, but only in the guise of Bacchus.

The superb exhibition at the Getty Villa displayed the sculpture with the hundreds of shattered fragments skillfully restored but without a head. Contiguous vitrines displayed the recut head of Athena translated into Alexander the Great and a cast from the ancient Roman bust of Antinous assuming the persona of Bacchus. The contested and confused biography of the sculpture is in this way aligned with the least inauthentic form of its materiality. In the absence of the original

authentic head that the sculpture possessed in its Roman past, the exhibition not only explained the archaeological context of the sculpture; it also told the story of its 70 forgotten years as a collection of fragments in a crate in Leningrad, its historical existence as a former museum exhibit, and its resurrection as an enigmatic and powerful presence. The authenticity of condition here was not passed over in silence. The hermeneutic inquiry into the state of conservation presented to the viewer allows insight into not only the conflicting identities of the sculpture but the contemplation of how it could be viewed as an authentic fragment whose story is not artificially finalized. This would have pleased Phillips (1997:191), who castigates museum exhibitions in general for their neglect of authenticity, which can be manipulated by conservation to present a biography or image that gives the viewer no insight into the process by which the artwork came to be the way it is presented. What kinds of authenticity may be impacted by this neglect? Both conceptual and material, because how Bacchus or Alexander the Great are regarded alters our own perception of the context of the sculpture, how the work is situated either as the portrayal of a god or of a human being, and materially how the fragmented state of the work is to be appreciated. The biography of the object has been fully explained and the different authenticities of its past and present displayed to the public, which allows contemplation of the identities of the sculpture.

### **The Lansdowne Boxer**

More problematic is the authenticity of sculptures whose identity has been manipulated or altered in the course of restoration. A fragmentary Lansdowne Herakles in the

Getty Museum collections remains as an identifiable Heracles, but if a neoclassical restoration changes a marble male athlete that also once belonged to Lord Lansdowne into a standing male boxer with added arms, a codpiece, a worked-over base, a repaired sliced head, lips, and a mended damaged nose, how can its authentic state be assessed if we know that it should represent a male athlete? Is the thrall of the social life of things sufficient to give credence to the works in their intangible authenticity or are we unhappy with the false identity of the former sculpture?

The curator at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) removed the arms, codpiece, upper part of the head, lips, and restored nose, stating that these restorations falsified the work, and this is how the sculpture appears on LACMA's website (LACMA 2015). But in the gallery, the sliced head has been reresetored, a new compensation for loss has been provided to complete the broken nose, and the lips have been replaced. The authenticity of condition (Phillips 1997) is not explained to the viewer. What is not shown in the exhibited biography of the object is the crucial importance of restoration in its interactions with what might be regarded as different concepts of what constitutes the authentic state or states of the sculpture. The broken arms are now kept in storage, their amputation denying the 200-year history of the Lansdowne boxer. If the disembodied arm were to be displayed adjacent to the existing sculpture, the layers of meaning that the male athlete assumed could be revealed to the viewer. This is one of the problems of restoration: the functional disjunction between art historical theories and the altered nature of material reality as it is impacted by restoration.

## Preferential States

Typical examples of this disjunction are the numerous art historical writings that account for the spiky hairstyle of the *Dying Gaul* in the Capitoline Museums in Rome (Fraser 1932; Parma 1983). However, all the original long locks of the *Dying Gaul* have broken off over time; its present condition is a result of the splintered stumps having been reworked to give the sculpture a convincing, if fragmented, head of hair, which has nothing to do with its authentic original state (Martellotti 2001). Incidentally, all the sculptures in the collections of the Capitoline Museums were scoured with acid and repolished completely to give them the look they should have had rather than the appearance they actually had.

A new level of literal realism within figurative sculpture typifies the work of American artist John de Andrea, who made his own *Dying Gaul*, 1984 in polyvinyl with oil pigments and acrylic hair, with molds taken from a live model (Portland Art Museum 2015). Molds were taken in Roman and later times of the second-century C.E. copy of the Hellenistic original (Marvin 1989, 2008), resulting in more than 25 replicas of the *Dying Gaul* by the eighteenth century, now emulated in the twentieth century not from stone or bronze originals but replicas taken from living flesh.

Not only did Renaissance workshops create replicas or pastiche works from various marble parts; some were outright forgeries, such as a statue of Dionysus in the Museo Nazionale Romano Palazzo in Rome (Marvin 2003:235). It is a created antiquity—neither a collaboration nor an assembled work. Broken at the neck, knees, and biceps, it assumes the evidentiary damage of time as attesting to its authentic state, its apparent restoration merely a blind, an added deception of apparent authenticity to what

is essentially a forgery. As it has been on display for 250 years as an original Roman work, should this now too be consigned to storage or should it be seen as an emulation of the Renaissance rather than an admired Roman emulation of the ancient Greeks?

## Preferential States

There is no one answer as to which is the more desirable state of some of these sculptures. In teaching students about these issues at UCLA, I have found that a sizeable minority of students is completely unconvinced by the aesthetic or historical argument for the preservation of eighteenth-century additions as authentic components of work that is now imbued with eighteenth-century cultural mores. These students regard the artworks as essentially forgeries, or at the very least false and deceptively restored pastiches. Others take a more historicizing stance and are prepared to accept that the reresoration of the Herakles and the Leda and the Swan at the Getty are in the best interests of aesthetic contemplation of the sculptures as works of art rather than as assemblages of authentic archaeological fragments. One could argue that these eighteenth- and twentieth-century restorations are now part of the biography of the objects and that derestoration signals not necessarily an alteration to a more authentic condition but alteration to a different state of being in the name of a spurious originality (Podany 2003; True 2003). Kuspit (2011:237) wonders if carving the name Ramses II on statues of previous pharaohs was an act of appropriation or despoilment? He does not have a definitive answer, but an interesting strand of thought is derived from Gombrich (1978): A distinction is made between context-independent appropriation and context-dependent appropriation. In the former, what is appropriated is a concept. In

the latter, the form or style is derived from the symbols of the context, as in pop art's appropriation of brand names and commercial brand images. Kuspit (2011:247) writes: "Ironical appropriation and applied appropriation is yet another distinction. . . . In ironical appropriation, the motif is double-coded so that it becomes meaningful in contradictory contexts. In applied appropriation, the motif is used as an ornament or emblem, which assumes that its meaning remains constant whatever the context." These thoughts are revisited with the discussion of the modern and postmodern later in this book, but returning for the moment to the example of Ramses II, a more cogent argument is the association of the formerly great and admired in terms of an impressive statue whose power has been usurped by Ramses II and legitimated by the authentic sculpture of the past. It now has a different biography, a venerated biography infused not only with those admired rulers of the past but with a ruler of the present who is the equal of them and, since time cannot be reversed, has now succeeded them, has supplanted them in the eyes of the people and given the sculpture a renewed vigor and legitimacy.

Brilliant (2011:168) even takes the concept of spolia as a form of identity theft, because the identity of the borrowed original, in whatever form, retains some associative value, even if only in the visual authority of its imagery. If we view spoliation as also an influence on the removal of artworks from their places of origin, it can be viewed as both a retrospective orientation and a proleptic coloration. According to this view, "The original source cannot be fully obscured if the newly combined elements are to have any meaningful saliency in the present. The Janus-like character of such ambivalent references endows spoliated artworks and monuments

with their particular, synthetic historicity" (Brilliant 2011:169). In the totalizing instantiations created by restoration, there is often no meaningful saliency in terms of disaggregated composites of the statues discussed here. The original head of Leda and the Swan in the Getty is subsumed as a complementary appendage to the entire sculpture. The viewer does not want to imagine the original Roman sculpture from which the head of Leda was taken. Does that mean that the work after restoration lacks any meaningful saliency, as Brilliant maintains? That depends on which aspect of the authenticity of the sculpture is most valorized: the conceptual, the historical, the material, or the aesthetic. The audience can respond to an evaluation of the work using the concepts of conceptual, historical, material, or aesthetic authenticity, each of which may valorize different states or appearances of the sculpture.

### **Authenticities of the Archaeological Past**

From the viewpoint of scientific empiricism, forgeries that create a new class of works, in Goodman's sense (Goodman 1968), are the most damaging to the archaeological record. Imitations of existing works, while potentially confusing, do not necessarily create interpretative problems for the archaeologist or art historian. But those that alter the chronological perspective regarding when certain artifacts were thought to exist or that create entirely new or fictitious archaeological styles of production, and archaeological sites that are in fact fake, are forgeries that have the potential to modify the archaeological record and create an entirely spurious historical phenomenology in which they become incorporated as authentic works of art, authentic styles of production, or authentic



## The Getty Kouros

sites. Or they create such doubts that genuine antiquities are thought to be fake when they are in fact vestiges of the authentic past (Field 2009).

The contested nature of authenticity is often the result of disputes concerning evidential inquiry as to what is real and what is false. These disputations often involve art historians and archaeologists on the one hand and archaeological or conservation scientists on the other. Stylistic or archaeological evaluation may be in conflict with the view of the scientist investigating the same artifact, who may arrive at conclusions that contradict the stylistic evidence.

### The Getty Kouros

The Getty Kouros is an over-life-size statue in the form of a Late Archaic Greek standing male figure. The dolomitic marble sculpture was bought by the Getty Museum in Malibu in 1983 for \$9.3 million and was first exhibited in October 1986. As the Getty website states, a kouros is a statue of a standing nude youth that does not represent any one individual but the *idea* of youth. Used in Archaic Greece as both a dedication to the gods in sanctuaries and as a grave monument, the standard kouros stood with his left foot forward, arms at his sides, looking straight ahead.

Thomas Hoving (1997) wrote about his first encounter with the Getty Kouros in 1986, during a meeting with the Getty's former curator of Greek and Roman art, Arthur Houghton Jr., son of the former president of the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Houghton showed Hoving the secret purchase, then hanging on well-padded chains in the conservation laboratory, as it was removed from its crate. Hoving (1931–2009) had a well-trained eye and thought that the work was a forgery as soon as he saw it, an



**Figure 5.17.** The Getty Kouros, unknown artist, Greek, about 530 B.C.E., or a modern forgery. Marble; 81 ¼ x 21 ½ inches. This dolomitic marble kouros in the Getty collections in Malibu has been a source of contested identity and doubtful authenticity. (Image courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu)

opinion with which many others disagree. The authenticity of the sculpture split the art historical community into two camps: those who believe it dates from about 530 B.C.E. and those who think it dates from about 1980. The detail of Hoving's account is not quite correct, as True (1992:11) notes that the sculpture arrived from Switzerland, broken into seven pieces, in 1983 and was originally purchased by Getty curator Jiri Frel (1923–2006), who had to flee the United States due to fraudulent antiquities practices. True divides the problems of art historical connoisseurship of the Getty Kouros into three components: the statue's apparently anomalous combination of stylistic features; the unusual type of marble, which contained several imperfections; and its problematic documentary evidence. Flawed stone was rarely used for Archaic sculpture, while individual stylistic elements cover almost a century of variation in Greek decorative practice, according to some scholars. There is no trace of any pigment present on the surface, unlike most if not all other kouroi, while the modern history of the piece revolves around the lack of any secure provenance.

All the original documents had apparently been lost and were presented only as photocopies. Some were actually forgeries themselves, such as a letter from Professor Ernst Langlotz (1895–1978) postmarked 1952 but employing a postal code that did not exist until 1972, so that document is a forgery. Additionally, there has been no demand from Greece for repatriation of the statue, which might be taken as indicative of the Greek view of the authenticity of the work. In general terms, what we have learned so far from the art connoisseurship side of the investigation should give cause for concern: There is a great deal of disagreement

regarding stylistic features, and none of the documentary evidence is convincing, especially since fake documentation has often been used to pass off as real something that is not authentic. On the other hand, it could be argued that in this case, which is perhaps a masterpiece looted from Greece, fake documentation had to be concocted to obscure the trail of its movements.

The problems with the scientific connoisseurship of the marble, which is actually a form of dolomite rather than pure marble, have been considerable. Norman Herz, a professor of geology at the University of Georgia, measured the carbon and oxygen isotope ratios and traced the stone to the island of Thasos. The marble was found to have a composition of 88 percent dolomite and 12 percent calcite. Isotope analysis revealed that  $\delta^{18}\text{O} = -2.37$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C} = +2.88$ , which from database comparisons admits one of five possible sources: Denizli, Doliana, Marmara, Mylasa, or Thasos-Acropolis. Further trace element analysis of the kouros eliminated Denizli. With the high dolomite content, Thasos was determined to be the likeliest source, with a 90 percent degree of probability. The provenance of the marble is relatively uncontested, but the real problems began when the Getty Conservation Institute hired geologist Stanley Margolis (1943–1992) to study the composition of the patina of the sculpture. Margolis (1989) employed powder X-ray diffraction (XRD) to determine that a layer of pure calcite existed on the surface. This conclusion was confirmed at the Getty Conservation Institute when examination of a sample in the electron probe microanalyzer found only calcite as the principal patina constituent. As a result, Margolis concluded that the surface patina of calcite had formed by a process known as dedolomitization, in

## The Getty Kouros

which magnesium carbonate is lost to the environment preferentially, leaving a pure calcite crust behind, and that this process could occur only over extended periods of time and could not be forged. The Getty Conservation Institute undertook a complex series of experiments to try to achieve dedolomitization artificially. The experiments never succeeded, despite years of toil. Margolis published in 1989, in *Scientific American*, concluding that the dedolomitization provided significant evidence for the authenticity of the Getty Kouros.

There was just one problem, however: The supposed dedolomitization of the surface that assured the material authenticity of the statue never existed. Many art historians and archaeologists relied on the scientific evidence to assuage their doubts. How could such experienced scientists have made such a fundamental mistake? The truth was discovered when a relatively inexperienced junior scientist at the Getty Conservation Institute's laboratory at the Getty Villa discovered, using XRD, that the patina on the Getty Kouros was not calcium carbonate but calcium oxalate. The entire premise of the numerous experiments conducted by the Getty Conservation Institute was false.

The reason for this erroneous conclusion was a failure of scientific connoisseurship. Margolis had started running his XRD experiment on the dangerous assumption that certain crystal reflections would not be present. He therefore detected only crystal reflections for calcite because he did not run a sweep across all angles for unknowns, as is common practice in museum laboratories. Since it can never be known for certain exactly what will be discovered, everything is treated initially as a virtual unknown. Margolis was not an experienced museum scientist but a university

geologist. The EPMA machine had been run at too high a current, which decomposed the delicate calcium oxalate under the power of the beam, producing peaks only for calcite. Hence an incorrect diagnosis was confirmed by an incorrect confirmation of the initial diagnosis. The only positive thing about this outcome is that, unlike art connoisseurship, scientific connoisseurship can correct itself by the application of further investigations, which is what happened when the calcium oxalate crust was eventually discovered. For several years, a further series of experiments was conducted on marble coupons at the Getty Villa to try to match the oxalate crust that had formed on the Getty Kouros, without any definitive results. Apparently oxalic acid is often used by stone forgers to alter a pristine carved marble surface, which would betray no trace of age if not artificially patinated. Another problem surfaced when Miriam Kastner (1984) discovered that it is indeed possible to create dedolomitization under laboratory conditions, although this is unlikely to have been known to any potential forger. Eric Doehne (personal communication 2012) comments: "This fact was mentioned by Kimmelman in a New York Times article in 1991. Geochemists produced dedolomitization at high temperatures and pressures in 1987. The issue is whether the reaction can take place fast enough at ambient temperatures and pressures."

Experiments over an eight-year period (Podany 1992; Preusser 1992) did not resolve the problems of material authenticity. (For a useful summary see Craddock 2009:261–263.) Podany exposed several hundred coupons to different oxalic acid concoctions for hours and even months. Preusser carried out trace element studies and microstratigraphic studies and attempted to date the oxalate



**Figure 5.18.** Monumental head of Zeus. Height 52.5 cm. The head is described as possibly made of Pentelic marble on the Getty website but is characterized as dolomitic marble from Thasos by Doehne et al. (1992). Analysis shows that the marble has a 5-mm-thick weathering crust that consists predominantly of calcite. (Image courtesy of the Trustees of the Getty Museum)

crust using accelerator mass spectrometry for  $^{14}\text{C}$  content. But both the laboratory and kouros samples gave dates of thousands of years old, because the carbon within the oxalate is derived from the ancient carbonate of the rock itself, not from atmospherically incorporated carbon. Therefore it cannot be used as a dating technique.

A large head of Zeus, made of dolomitic marble and shown in Figure 5.18, also from Thasos, was examined to compare the alteration crust with that of the kouros. Scientific examination showed the presence of a

5-mm-thick weathering layer consisting predominantly of calcite with smaller amounts of quartz, iron oxides, and clay minerals (Doehne et al. 1992).

Analogous Thasian dolomitic artifacts were also used for comparison. A partially exposed Roman sarcophagus had a 70-micron-thick weathering crust with a mixed calcite and calcium oxalate patina. As examination of the oxalate crust of the kouros using UV light revealed a complex morphology of surface fluorescence. What is needed is a much more detailed examination of various regions of the surface to account for the different fluorescent features, since micromorphological variations in a recently forged oxalate patina would be unexpected. Differential response to UV illumination could be indicative of aged features rather than artificially patinated components, but to advance this argument further, a new research strategy is required.

The whole topic deserved a much more comprehensive account than the meager publication devoted to the Getty Kouros that came out in 1992. Guralnick (1992) maintained that the proportions and design of the kouros were within the mainstream for kouroi, with no anomalies to distinguish it from the bodies of 25 fellow kouroi. Kleeman (1992) thought that one of the strongest indications of authenticity came from measurement of the plinth and feet. The variation of the Getty Kouros, turning to the right, with a broken axis of the left foot and an oval or rhomboid plinth, is found in the Melos Kouros and the Tenea Kouros, suggesting an authentic understanding of how these feet should be rendered. Delivorrias (1992) could not accept the use of Thasian marble in an exported Archaic context or the statue's execution in an unknown artistic center. He believes it to be a patchwork of

## The Getty Kouros

stylistic allusions and feels an intuitive repulsion to the work, convinced that it cannot be authentic. However, the Getty head of Zeus is made of Thasian marble, so that tends to contradict this viewpoint. Triantis (1992) regards the sculpture as a fake, an eclectic combination of features found in several other kouroi. Kyrieleis (1992) states that he would not like to express an opinion on the authenticity of the kouros, as he has had very little exposure to spurious works. Dontas (1992) thinks that elements from various earlier styles have been employed, very adroitly, but that the work suffers from a lack of a deeper sense of organic cohesion. Marcade (1992) sees the kouros as an eclectic work with bits comparable to the Tenea Kouros, the Anavyssos Kouros, and the Ptoon 12 Kouros, which does nothing for its authenticity. Lambrinouidakis (1992) thinks that similarities to a number of other kouroi of different dates means that the authenticity of the Getty Kouros cannot be answered satisfactorily. Looking at several authentic kouroi in a volume by Richter, Boardman (1992) says that if they were to appear without any context, he would doubt the authenticity of several. He writes that many kouroi seem stylistically disorganized or internally inconsistent. As regards the authenticity of the Getty example, Boardman does not say exactly what his conclusions are. Holtzman (1992) notes the frailty of stylistic judgments and states that until proved otherwise, the kouros should receive the benefit of the doubt. Harrison (1992) finds the kouros, with its girlish face and apologetic shoulders, to be an ingratiating work of a modern faker. Sismondo-Ridgway (1992) discerns many technical details that bear comparison with authentic examples and notes that the Getty Kouros has a “dead” surface and that a comparable dull appearance is seen on the

Keratea Kouros. The detailed comparisons she makes with a variety of kouroi and parts of carved limbs in numerous collections make one doubt the veracity of judgments based on stylistic criteria by other commentators. Heller and Herz (1995) found no evidence for dedolomitization of calcite on exposed and weathered marble from Thasos, only lichen-induced calcium oxalate formation.

Doehne et al. (1992) hold that oxalate patinas can form on exposed marble stone from samples studied from Thasos, but not on buried artifacts, which rather complicates things. Does that mean that if genuine, the broken fragments of the Getty Kouros were never buried? Or were they buried but subsequently cleaned? On a *prima facie* basis, it is unlikely that such a large sculpture would have remained outdoors without having been recognized if it were never buried. If not buried and complete, it would probably have been taken away and been known a long time ago, since such kouroi are very rare. Craddock (2009:262) says it would be interesting to examine the broken fragments before restoration to determine if any calcite had formed on them and if dedolomitization had occurred. One suspects, however, that these are simply new or recent breaks to allow shipment in sizable pieces or to create the authentic appearance of something that had been broken historically. The calcite is of interest here, not only because of its mistaken presence in the work performed by Margolis but because calcite can indeed form as a result of the loss of magnesium from dolomite from a Thasian locale in authentic artifacts, as shown by the work of Doehne et al. (1991, 1992). Whether oxalate crusts are never found on buried marble, or mixed with calcite, is an open question and one that requires further research.

At an exemplary exhibition held at the Getty Villa in the 1990s, a special gallery was set up for the Getty Kouros, which was displayed alongside plaster casts of two authentic kouroi, the Tenea and the Anavyssos (Walsh 1992). Explanatory panels discussed the nature of the problem and the kinds of scientific and art historical investigations that had been undertaken. On random visits to the Villa galleries, I observed how long visitors spent reading and examining the objects on display and how long they stayed to read the various panels. The conclusion: a remarkably long time. Visitors were prepared to engage with the exhibition in a surprisingly meaningful way. Truly, the authenticity lamented as being fundamentally absent all too often by Phillips (1997) was well exhibited in this case. The effect of time's interactions with the fashionable status of such exhibitions is to gradually consign them to oblivion. Such was the case with this kouros exhibition. The Getty Kouros is now displayed in a gallery with relatively little comparative material. The next stage in its unhappy existence is probably to be consigned to storage.

Despite being of Thasian marble, the kouros cannot be securely ascribed to an individual workshop of northern Greece or indeed to any ancient regional school of sculpture. Archaic kouroi conform to a canon of measurement and proportion (albeit with strong local accents) to which the Getty example also adheres. A comparison of like elements in other kouroi may be a possible means of further art historical connoisseurship and may provide additional clues to the origin of the sculpture. Some indication of tool marks remains on the work. Though the surface is weathered (or artificially abraded) and it is not clear if emery was used, heavy claw marks can be seen on the plinth and the use of a

point in some of the finer detailing. For example, there are point marks in the outline of the curls, between the fingers, and in the cleft of the buttocks. Traces of the point are also in the arches of the feet and seen randomly over the plinth. Though the tools evident here (fine point, slope chisel, claw chisel) are not inappropriate for a late sixth-century B.C.E. sculpture, their application might be considered problematic.

Triantis (1992:52) remarks, "No sculptor of kouroi would hollow out with a fine point, nor incise outlines with this tool." This view is contradicted by Rockwell (1992), who writes that the kouros exhibits four techniques characteristic of Archaic stone carving: First, the figure was carved prone. Second, under the right arm is a place where the form of the torso seen from the front does not match that seen from the back, a typical problem in opening spaces without the use of a drill. Third, the details of the figure, ears, hair, and eyes were isolated as separate geometric entities before any carving of the details, which Rockwell finds analogous to detail in other authentic works. Fourth, the direction of the blow of the tool is either vertical or at a high angle. Again, Rockwell finds comparison here with the Taranto Kore. One more strange piece of evidence should be mentioned. Apparently, the Getty Kouros has a rounded tang on its base, while extant published examples all have rectangular tangs. However, when a kouros in the National Museum in Athens was removed from its plinth, it was discovered that it too had a rounded tang, which some observers regard as strong evidence for the authenticity of the Getty Kouros.

In 1990 Spier published the discovery of another kouros torso, a certain forgery that exhibited notable technical similarities to the Getty Kouros. After samples determined

## The Japanese Paleolithic

that the fake torso was of the same dolomitic marble as the Getty piece, the torso was purchased by the museum for study purposes. The fake's sloping shoulders and upper arms, volume of chest, and rendering of the hands and genitals all suggested, to some, the same hand as the Getty's example, although the aging had been crudely done with an acid bath and the application of an iron oxide stain.

Further investigation showed that the fake torso and the kouros were not from the same block and that the sculpting techniques used were dramatically different. The problematic nature of the oxalate crust on the Getty Kouros remains unproven. Comparative ancient material from Thasos from a burial context does show dedolomitization, which the Kouros lacks. The other source of doubt concerning an easy resolution of the Kouros debate is evidence for its carving in a supine position, which authentic kouros also manifest. It's not impossible for a forger to carve this way, but the factor certainly gives one pause.

The conclusions from this story are that neither the historical authenticity nor the material authenticity of the Getty Kouros can be said to be uncontested. Investigations into the kouros now languish, as the initial momentum for determination of its authenticity in either sense has been lost. Both sides seem to have reached an impasse, which can probably be broken only with a new set of scientific studies, such as new isotopic studies for nitrogen, strontium, or other exotic elements and further work on patina characterizations. The longer doubt exists concerning the authenticity of the kouros, the more the sculpture becomes tainted by association with this uncertainty, so that it appears neither genuine nor fake but a hybrid species, both ancient and twentieth century. There is an inevitability to evaluative historicism here in how prolonged

questioning of authenticity afflicts a work of art and how it is perceived. That is the current enigma of the Getty Kouros. Its materiality has an evanescent quality because it cannot at present be defined unequivocally. That does not mean, á la Goodman, that it will not be possible to distinguish between the different states of the Getty Kouros at some stage in the future. It is my firm opinion that the Getty Kouros should remain on display and should not be relegated to storage while its biography remains unfinished. Once the sculpture is in storage, it will be forgotten until it is resurrected in a different and entirely new context, as a result of either renewed art historical inquiry or scientific connoisseurship.

## The Japanese Paleolithic

Examples of the manipulation of time are the activities of Japanese archaeologist Shinichi Fujimura. He was a believer in inherent Japanese superiority, and promoted the theory that the earliest known ceramics in the world were Japanese, and the occupation of Japan by Japanese peoples was as early as 600,000 years ago. Fujimura was found planting artifacts at the Paleolithic site of Kamitakamori by two journalists, suspicious of his archaeological acumen. Fujimura's 20-year archaeological career began in 1981, when he discovered the oldest known artifact in Japan. He subsequently worked at 180 different archaeological sites, received many honors, and was appointed deputy director of the Tohoku Paleolithic Institute, earning the sobriquet "Divine Hands" for his skills at unearthing older and older artifacts. It was not the academic archaeological community that exposed Fujimura but the two reporters from the *Mainichi Shinbun* newspaper (Lovata 2007:46). A subsequent investigation by the Japanese Archaeological Association



**Figure 5.19.** *Discussion on the Piltdown Skull* by John Cooke. Oil on canvas. The painting was exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1915. C. T. Trechmann presented the picture to the Geological Society in 1932. It now hangs at the society's premises in Burlington House, Piccadilly. Back row, left to right: Mr. F. O. Barlow, Professor G. Elliot Smith, Mr. C. Dawson, and Dr. Arthur Smith Woodward; front row, left to right: Dr. A. S. Underwood, Professor Arthur Keith, Mr. W. P. Pycraft, and Sir Ray Lankester. (Image courtesy of the Geological Society of London and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2012/feb/05/piltdown-man-hoax>)

discovered that Fujimura had manipulated the artifactual record at more than 150 sites.

The distortion of the distant past of Japan was extraordinarily successful. The vast majority of Japanese archaeologists failed to detect the forgery in front of them. The fake evidence for an increasingly older Japanese Paleolithic supported a desired ethnic identification of a uniquely Japanese past, untainted by empirical evidence that migrants from the Korean Peninsula were the first settlers of the Japanese islands.

### **Piltdown Man**

A similar psychologically comforting fiction, on a lesser scale, was created by the Piltdown forgery, usually called a hoax, as if it were merely the result of some innocent joke foisted upon the British anthropological community. In fact, Piltdown Man was responsible for disinformation concerning the origins of man and the missing link between apes and humans on the European subcontinent for decades, although some researchers had their doubts and omitted mention of Piltdown



## Totonac and Zapotec Ceramics

Man from their anthropological studies of early man.

In 1913 Charles Dawson found in Sussex the remains of a skull, jawbone, and canine teeth, stained with age, along with contiguous primitive bone tools and bones of animals no longer found in Britain, such as elephants and hippopotamuses. Piltdown Man was stated to have lived in Sussex 500,000 years ago, mastered fire, used complex tools, worn clothes, and possessed thought and undoubtedly speech. After Piltdown Man entered the textbooks as authentic, in 1953 scientific examination of the finds by Oakley and others found that fluorine levels in the teeth were totally incompatible with the alleged age of Piltdown Man. Dawson's forgery was ingenious: The bones had been treated and stained to age them convincingly. The canine tooth was from a fossilized chimpanzee; the skull fragments from a medieval Briton dating to about 1300; and the jawbone from an orangutan. The jawbone was about 500 years old and was broken at the articular surfaces to align with the medieval skull. Cleverly, Dawson had even buried his finds in the correct geological stratum.

When the forgery was exposed in the 1950s, it created a worldwide sensation. Questions remain as to whether Dawson, who earned a telling sobriquet as the Wizard of Sussex, acted alone or had help from others, a cast of characters that included eminent anthropologists such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Arthur Smith Woodward, and Arthur Keith.

Scores of books and articles (e.g. Chippindale 1991; Clermont 1992; Gould 1983; Moore and Campbell 1999; Tobais 1992; Walsh 1996; Weiner 1955; Woodward 1948) have revisited the Piltdown hoax over the past 50 years, and more might be written concerning the nonexistent Sussex Man

in the future; his or her afterlife is proving to be far longer and more authentic than anyone anticipated. The intellectual damage of the past is largely forgotten, but Rieth (1970) reminds us of the fallout and states that scores of Ph.D. theses from 1916 to 1950 invoked evidence of Piltdown Man in their anthropological research.

## Totonac and Zapotec Ceramics

Numerous forgeries in ceramics from Mexico were known for some time and led to the seminal 1910 publication of Leopoldo Bartres's *Antiguedades Mejicanas Falsificadas: Falsificacion y Falsificadores*, which included 63 illustrations of artifacts identified as forgeries by that date.

The invention of an entire Mexican archaeological style of ceramics is not a straightforward accomplishment, but Brigido Lara is credited with that achievement. The Mesoamerican Totonac culture, existing from about 600 C.E. onward, was an important culture of the Veracruz area of Mexico, a culture that helped bring about its own demise by sending 13,000 warriors to help the Spanish defeat Tenochtitlán.

The Totonac culture developed in the central part of Veracruz in the late Mesoamerican Classical period and made an impressive array of ceramic figures, some of them monumental. Lara and others were arrested in 1974 for looting archaeological sites and selling authentic Totonac ceramics. During the trial, archaeologists from the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) testified that the ceramics had been taken from ancient sites in the Cempoala region, in the central part of Veracruz. Lara asked for a large ball of clay to be brought to his cell and proceeded to make authentic-looking Totonac ceramics; rather than being a looter of archaeological ceramics, he was a creator of Totonac-style ceramics

for more than 20 years. He faked Aztec and Mayan ceramics too, but his specialty was the ceramics of the ancient Totonac. The replicas were taken from the jail and shown to the same experts from INAH whose testimony had led to Lara's conviction. The archaeologists pronounced them to be authentic Totonac ceramics from the site of Cempoala (Lerner 2001). Lara was released from jail in January 1975.

Lara was subsequently employed by the state Anthropology Museum in Xalapa, second in the country to only the National Museum in Mexico City, to restore ancient pieces and to review the collection for forgeries. He has since been licensed as a maker of replicas by the INAH, the very institution that once condemned him as a looter, and he now signs all his ceramics. Lara claims to be responsible for making more than 40,000 forgeries over a period of two decades. Lerner (2001:13) writes, "Agustín Acosta Lagunes, then governor of Veracruz, spent considerable sums overseas in order to purchase and repatriate numerous ancient objects for a pet project, the Xalapa Anthropology Museum. After the governor returned with a number of purchases made at Sotheby's in New York, Lara came forward with a dramatic announcement. He had made these ceramic pieces." In fact, his creations have been purchased as authentic works of art by the Dallas Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, the Morton May Collection at the St. Louis Art Museum, the Metropolitan Museum, the British Museum, and important collections in France, Australia, Spain, and Belgium. The modern-day Totonac ceramics Lara created, which he liked to call his "own originals" have themselves created part of a Totonac past that never existed. Lara may be an outstanding case, but the probability is that

several other forgers have been producing pre-Columbian art, particularly ceramics, for decades. According to Lerner (2001), some speculate that during the conquest, artisans sought to preserve older religious objects by providing the Spaniards with an unending supply of forgeries to destroy, thereby helping to preserve the authentic.

The possibility that Lara is the most famous of a succession of Mexican forgers is revealed by the case of the Metropolitan Museum's 3-foot-tall hollow ceramic figure of the Totonac god Ehecatl, the Mesoamerican wind god, illustrated in Figure 5.20.

There is a problem with the thermoluminescent dating of some of the ceramics from ancient West Mexico; some ancient pieces contain volcanic mineral assemblages that produce a luminescence that overwhelms the standard thermoluminescent signal from the fired clay.

However, in general, if a ceramic does give an old thermoluminescent date, then either that date is a genuine reflection of the age of the ceramic or the piece has been artificially irradiated to give it the thermoluminescent age it should have had. The application of thermoluminescent dating has revolutionized studies of the material authenticity of a wide range of ceramics, including Zapotec and Totonac examples, but some of them cannot be dated by the technique.

Part of the problem in this case is that the demand for Zapotec ceramics began around 1900. As usual when supply is limited, the demand created a flood of fakes. This had begun even earlier: Holmes (1886) traces the existence of high-class forgeries back to the 1820s. The ceramics are attractive figurines of deities and were much sought after by museum curators (Ekholm 1964). Many years after these purchases, the Zapotec capital of

## Totonac and Zapotec Ceramics



**Figure 5.20.** Totonac wind god Ehecatl, a 3-foot-tall ceramic in the Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection of Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas at the Metropolitan Museum. It was previously exhibited in New York's now defunct Museum of Primitive Art. Before that it was in Nelson Rockefeller's private collection. It would have been made when Brigído Lara was eight. He seems to know a lot about its construction, suggesting that he may have been an apprentice during its making, although Lara denies this (Lerner 2001). This Ehecatl is no longer on display at the Metropolitan, since scientific and art connoisseurship evaluations have failed to reach any conclusions regarding its authenticity. (Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

Monte Albán, outside of the city of Oaxaca, was discovered. It was excavated extensively between 1930 and 1960 (Blanton, 1978; Blanton et al 1999).

Ceramics from the site were nothing like those that had been studied as authentic

in museum collections for decades. When knowledge of the ceramic assemblages of the site filtered through to museums, there was still no way to determine if the material authenticity of the ceramics they had collected was acceptable for age or not; this was before the advent of thermoluminescent dating in the 1970s. Studies of the ceramics began in the 1970s at the Museums für Völkerkunde in Berlin and Vienna, the St. Louis Art Museum, the British Museum, the Peabody Museum of Harvard University (Craddock 2009:118), and numerous French collections (Mongne 1992, 2000).

Shaplin (1978) carried out several investigations on artifacts in the collection of the St. Louis Art Museum and the Peabody Museum. He found a range of unusual materials, surface treatments, and iconographic detail. A number of pieces were similar to other ceramics that were already suspected to be forgeries. Curatorial staff suspected some ceramics to be fake because they simply looked too attractive compared to a modern aesthetic view of what ancient Zapotec figurines might look like. However, the art historical and archaeological evaluation was undermined when out of 101 ceramics in the St. Louis Art Museum, only 5 were found to be forgeries by thermoluminescent dating and 14 of the 16 most suspect ceramics proved to be authentic. As Craddock (2009:119) writes,

This engendered concern that some of the ceramics could have been artificially irradiated to create a spurious TL. Zimmerman carried out zircon inclusion dating on three of the suspect pieces to check this. In each case the zircon inclusions had received beta doses about 10 times higher than for the ceramic as a whole, thereby showing beyond

doubt that the irradiation has come from within the zircons, not from an outside source, and was thus natural.

Up until the 1960s, few archaeological sites were looted, so most of the museum material collected before that date was forged. From the 1960s onward, the urban development of Mexico revealed many sites where looted ceramics could be obtained, so ceramics acquired later from this region were looted but authentic. For example, six ceramics acquired by the Peabody Museum between 1900 and 1930 all proved to be forgeries; the collections of the British Museum over the same time period also contained a high percentage of forgeries (Craddock and Bowman 1991). That this chronological divide is not straightforward is shown by problems compounded by forgeries produced by Lara; some of them are so authentic stylistically that art historical connoisseurship has been unable to pronounce whether they are authentic or not. As some of his creations have probably defined the Totonac style of pottery, they constitute a phenomenological problem of self-referencing artifacts absorbed into the class of authentic Totonac works as far as the outsider is concerned. Lara still produces his aesthetically admired ceramics in Totonac style today, but as high-end tourist art, signed as replicas by Lara rather than as museum-bound forgeries. The artifacts he creates have not changed from those that entered many museum collections; only the perception of them has changed. But unlike the cases envisaged by Goodman, it is still impossible to separate authentic Totonac ceramics from Lara ceramics. Lara disputes the fact that his works were ever intended to be forgeries and insists on calling them “original interpretations” of Totonac cultural norms.

The problem for archaeologists here, as Bruhns and Kelker (2010) have stated, is that the very high-quality fakes may be incorporated into studies on ceramics assumed to be authentic. As a result, inexperienced archaeologists may authenticate the fake artifacts as real. This has already happened with the Zapotec forgeries discussed above; even experienced museum curators and archaeologists were unable to distinguish authentic ceramics from those eventually shown to be inauthentic, even after Monte Albán had been excavated and published.

Stanish (2009) records that one Peruvian faker makes grass-tempered reproductions of a 2,000-year-old pottery style, having learned to get his grass from archaeological middens close to his house. If fired correctly, the burned straw provides an authentic radiocarbon date. Forgers on the north coast of Peru (Stanish 2009) utilize original molds to produce clay vessels in exactly the right style and, having read the appropriate archaeological reports, employ original clay sources and minerals to make and paint the ceramics. Thermoluminescent dating would normally be able to tell that these ceramics were recently made, but only in professional circles are these scientific tests routinely employed since they cost about \$400 each for terra-cotta wares, \$500 each for high-fired wares, and even more for zircon grain dating, the technique needed to defeat the false aging of ceramics by exposing them to radiation. As the original ceramic may have cost only a few hundred dollars, the cost of ensuring material authenticity becomes prohibitive.

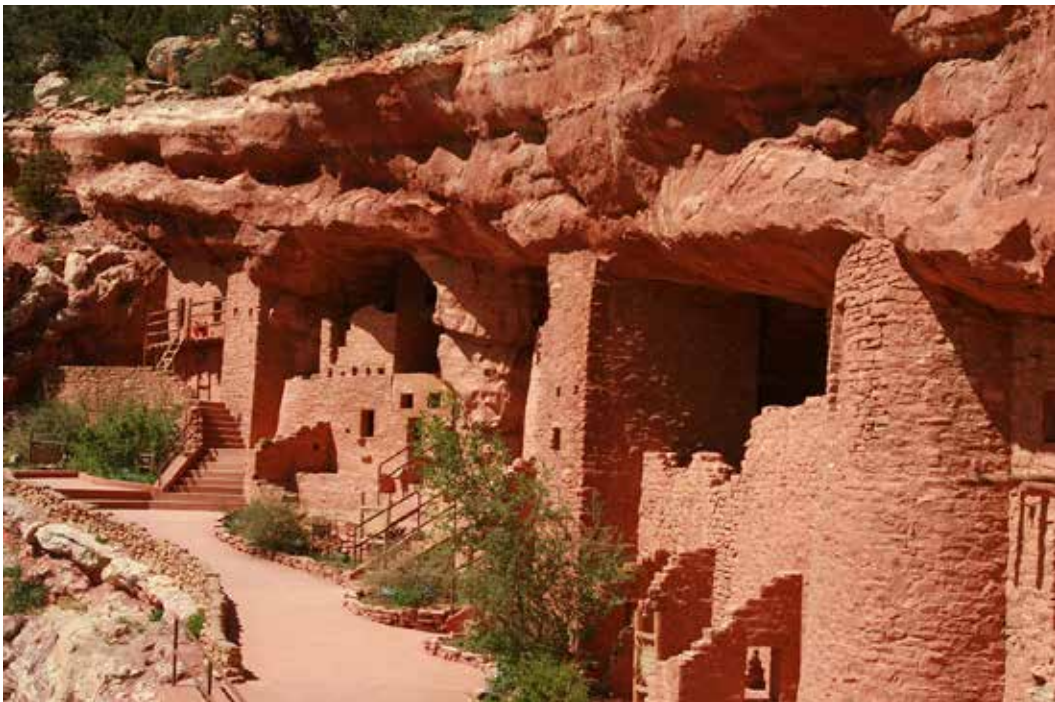
### **The Manitou Springs Site**

The archaeological site of the Anasazi at Manitou Springs is an archetypal case. Its geographical existence dates from 1906;

## The Manitou Springs Site

construction began in 1896. The site, an impressive array of cliff dwellings, is a principal tourist attraction in Phantom Canyon in Colorado. The site includes numerous Anasazi artifacts, didactic displays, a visitor's center, and a gift shop. The stones used in the construction are authentic Anasazi stone from a collapsed and ruined site in the southwestern corner of Colorado. The site also seems to be eroding, adding to the authenticity of the created past. Two Southwest archaeological figures—Edgar Lee Hewett (1865–946) and Virginia McClurg (1850–1931)—are an important part of the story of Manitou Springs. Hewett was much involved in shaping the nature of archaeology in the American Southwest and founded the anthropology departments at the University of New Mexico

and the University of Southern California (Hewett 1930; Thompson 2000). Part of the site's background is a typically American disjunction between the rights of individual states and the desire of the government to declare certain sites as federal property. Mesa Verde National Park and many other Anasazi sites were taken under federal control; McClurg had argued that they should be under state control. Perhaps to siphon off some of the tourist trade to Mesa Verde, McClurg and Hewett supported construction of the newly old site at Manitou Springs; perhaps they also saw it as more educational, profitable, and geared toward the interested but uninformed visitor. As Lovata (2007) notes, professional archaeology played important direct and indirect roles in the construction of the fake



**Figure 5.21.** Manitou Springs in Colorado. This is a translocated site; its original location was McElmo Canyon, Colorado. The fake Anasazi site, dating not from 1400 C.E. but from 1906, allows for a more interactive visitor experience than an authentic archaeological site, which cannot be walked upon or touched. (Image in the public domain)

Manitou Springs cliff dwellings and their validation in Southwest archaeology.

Signs at the site explain how many families lived in certain structures. The stones can be touched and examined, and a sense of accessibility characterizes the site. Visitors appreciate this accessibility, even if some of the information presented does not reflect recent research; even though instead of dating from around 1400, the site dates from 1906; and even though there was no archaeological site at Phantom Springs before Europeans created it in 1906 (Lovata 2007). As the site of this Anasazi dwelling is 300 miles from the site where the stones originated, in McElmo Canyon in southwestern Colorado, the translocation to Manitou Springs can be viewed as an inauthentic archaeological event and seriously misleading to the public. In principle, the visitor is able to learn that the site dates from 1906 and that the Anasazi never lived there, but this is not the impression most visitors leave with; they believe it is an authentic Anasazi site.

The more austere and restricted experience of a real archaeological site, such as Mesa Verde National Park, does not encourage visitor interaction with the site beyond the visual stimulation of looking at it; no touching is allowed (Lovata 2007). From the visitor's viewpoint, touching real Anasazi stones, handling real (or replica) Anasazi artifacts, and experiencing reenactments of Native American dances provides a more authentic personal experience than one gets at a real site.

Museums and sites have often privileged the inability to touch anything over the human desire to feel connected with the past through touch, taste, or smell. Some museums have addressed touch in particular, allowing visitors to touch selected artifacts, either real or virtual (Geary 2007; Pye 2007).

### **Stonehenge II**

Appreciation or veneration of the past may be a sufficient intent for the replication of artifacts of the past. The desire for the ambience of the past may have nothing to do with monetary gain. Daniels (1959) notes that there are many fake megaliths scattered across England, made as imitations, appropriations, or emulations. A dolmen in the Cotswolds was erected in the eighteenth century; a nineteenth-century replica of Stonehenge stands near Masham in Yorkshire. Another, more bizarre replica is Stonehenge II, a re-creation of Stonehenge, together with replicas of two statues from Easter Island, located in the Texas Hill Country outside Hunt, Texas, contiguous with State Highway 39 (Lovata 2007:139). Automobile drivers stop to observe the site and are able to enter through a fence. Most of the stones are crafted from chicken wire, stucco, and concrete. The entire henge was made by a retired Texas rancher, Alfred Shepperd, who died in 1994. Shepperd, who had visited both Easter Island and Wiltshire, wanted to interact with visitors and allow them to enjoy the experience of freely wandering around the area, a recontextualization of the site as a curiosity.

Stonehenge II is neither a park, museum, nor moneymaking venture. There are no tour guides, brochures, or billboards (Lovata 2007:140). The site is a reenactment of the past that encourages visitors to play among the stones and touch them. The visitor can imagine what being at Stonehenge might be like if one were able to play with the site itself, even if most of the stones are hollow constructions. The celebratory nature of Stonehenge II is part of the phenomenology of the site: the knowledge that it is inauthentic. But like Disneyland, the site has a physical presence and provides a real experience for

## Conclusions from These Case Studies

the visitor, who may become curious to see the real Easter Island statues or Stonehenge itself. If Shepperd is viewed as an artist, then his appropriation of Stonehenge can be seen as a work of art in itself, especially in terms of his desired interaction with visitors, which forms an important part of the artist's intent. New Mexico once had a Fridgehenge made out of refrigerators, but it was demolished on the pretext of public safety (Hernández 2013; RecyclArt 2013).

### Paleolithic Rock Art

André Brouillet's 1845 discovery of an engraving of two female deer on bone in the cave of Le Chaffaud in Vienne, France, and the 1874 discovery of engravings of browsing reindeer on bone from the Magdalenian period in a cave near Thayngen, Switzerland, met with enthusiastic interest, especially since some archaeologists regarded these as fakes. The existence of art as old as the Stone Age did not accord with evolutionary ideas of human development and abilities held by nineteenth-century scholars (Rieth 1970:50). For this reason, the curator of the Musée de Cluny ignored the find from 1845 for 10 years. The finds remained unpublished until 1861, by which time a number of fake Stone Age artifacts had appeared. Some had Sanskrit inscriptions, which did not help the situation (Rieth 1970:51). As a consequence of a continued series of forgeries, in 1876 German archaeologist Ludwig Lindenschmit (1809–1893) published his conclusion that all Stone Age incised drawings were forgeries and not to be taken seriously (Rieth 1970:51). The inhabitants of the Stone Age were regarded at the time as crude troglodytes, incapable of such artistic perfection. The cave drawings of Altamira and later Lascaux came as a revelation to nineteenth- and twentieth-century

archaeologists. In fact, when Altamira was discovered in 1879, in northern Spain, there was general scholarly agreement that the drawings were forgeries: they had to be forgeries because it was impossible that primitive man could be responsible for their creation. Drawings of the Altamira cave paintings were scrutinized at the 1880 International Congress for Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology in Lisbon, where they were dismissed as fakes, or as a "pleasing joke" (ICAPA 1969 [1880]; Rieth 1970:54). The prevailing philosophical attitude of the time resulted in the Altamira cave paintings being ignored as forgeries until 1901, 22 years after their discovery, when new finds were made in caves in the Dordogne at Font de Gaume and Les Combarelles. These included wall paintings as well as scratched drawings (Bahn 2007; Daubisse et al. 1994). These discoveries forced a revision of earlier prevailing opinions regarding these works of art. The pleasing forgeries now became admired masterpieces.

This story shows the contiguous influence of both preconceived ideas concerning the development of artistic expression and the effect that fake engravings had on the appreciation of the authentic, to the extent that archaeologists were prepared to dismiss as fakes some of the greatest surviving art from our distant past because the whole corpus of Stone Age art had become infected with forgeries.

### Conclusions from These Case Studies

These classic cases illustrate (1) an inability to reach a definitive conclusion regarding authenticity in which the artifact remains as a contested object; (2) chronological distortion of the archaeological record in the case of Fujimura; (3) subversion of the authentic Mesoamerican archaeological record by Lara and other unknown forgers; (4) the creation

of a fictitious Anasazi archaeological site that seems more real to many visitors than an authentic Anasazi site; (5) the modern replication of archaeological sites in an appreciation of past human achievements, not necessarily for monetary gain; and (6) the belief that newly discovered antiquities are actually forgeries because of an inability to distinguish between real and fake artifacts, obscuring the achievements of the past.

These conflations partially helped to bolster nineteenth-century beliefs in a linear evolutionary scheme. There are many more

such forgeries to contend with, but from the methodological point of view, these six cases can be taken as archetypes, sufficient to prove the point. Some of these inauthentic archaeologies are damaging to the extent that they enter the historical record and subvert or alter what was known about genuine excavated material. This is certainly the case with ancient South American gold work from Colombia (Scott 2013), where the sheer volume of looted and faked material completely overwhelms golden artifacts of known provenance and archaeological context.



## Chapter 6

# The Ethnographic and the Authentic

Ethnographic Issues in Authenticity  
Intangible Heritage  
African Fakes

Aboriginal Art  
Chinese Forgeries  
Tuduc Rugs

*The Western positivist meta-narrative is linear, scientific, isolates the parts to gain an understanding of the whole, and contends that the World benefits from universal access to knowledge.*

—Miriam Clavir, *Preserving What Is Valued*

### Introduction

*Ethnographic* is a contested term because of its associations with those who defined what the ethnographic is: cultures of the other, as seen by Western sophisticates.

Ethnographic artifacts are traditionally regarded as originating from primitive, non-Western societies, and ethnology is defined as the study of the cultures and people

of such societies (Brewer 2000). The implicit assumption that such societies are “primitive” forms part of a Western philosophical problem in the description of these societies. In the twenty-first century, the ethnocentric nature of some of these discussions has become all too apparent (Lyons 2002; Steiner 1994).

This chapter examines notions of authenticity as related to ethnographic arts

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

and to the artists who produced the work. A sign that the entire discourse is changing is the incorporation of modern and contemporary African artists into museum displays and galleries as the diaspora of contemporary art seeks new audiences and as new dialogues recognize that African and Polynesian arts are not preserved in aspic but are living expressions of cultures and peoples subject to change.

The French Revolution and the changed perception of culture that resulted from the period around 1790 inspired the formation of the Louvre and eventually the collections of “primitive man” across Europe (Barringer and Flynn 1998). One of the major repositories of African art and material culture is the Royal Museum for Central Africa (2012) in Tervuren, Belgium, founded in 1897. It holds material from the Kongo, Kuba, Chokwe, and other cultural groups in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden was established in 1837 from King Willem I’s cabinet of curiosities (Carbonell 2004) and the von Siebold Collection. The Musée du Quai Branly, which opened in Paris in 2006, combines the extensive ethnographic collections of the Musée de l’Homme (successor to the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro), founded by Paul Rivet in 1937, and the Musée national des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie, founded in 1931.

No satisfactory name could be found for the French museum, due to the sensitivity of the ethnographic and political issues, and so the problem was sidestepped by naming the museum for its location, not its collection. The British Museum (founded in 1753), the Smithsonian Institution (1846), and the Pitt Rivers Museum (1846) are three other collections with important ethnographic holdings.

Ethnographic artifacts were categorized, displayed, and usually stored in natural history museums, not art museums, because they were regarded not as works of art but as artifacts representative of primitive societies. To the casual observer, this demotion of often astounding sculptural forms, heaped up in neglected museum warehouses, appeared as an artificial divide between the world of fine art and the world of the ethnographic, the latter appellation itself imbued with a Western ethnocentrism by which some cultures were relegated to a less prestigious status or their art was seen as products of “the other,” foreign to the Western canon of artistic creation.

There are many problems with the concept of authenticity as applied to ethnographic arts, and some of these are debated in this chapter. Chinese art is included here, as prominent forgers have been part of the artistic canon themselves, in the same way some modern African artisans do not see themselves as producing fakes of their own past but authentic productions of the twenty-first century. The chapter ends with three thought-provoking cases: the Maori forgeries produced by the English dealer James Little; the work of the nonexistent Aboriginal artist Eddie Burrup; and “real” Persian carpets by Tuduc, which have been collected by major museums across the world.

While being able to see ethnographic artifacts as art objects in their own right remained unknown in the nineteenth century, the beginnings of a perceptual shift were apparent in the early years of the twentieth century. Some Western artists in particular were very sensitive to the artistic merits of ethnographic collections: Picasso was already admiring some sculptures in the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro as

## Introduction

early as 1909 (Richardson 1991). The collections were regarded at the time as artifactual for what could be learned of the “primitive” societies that had made the works, not for any intrinsic aesthetic value.

The search for genuine native cultures in the twentieth century encouraged a reification of the “primitive” and an essentializing of others, which Lindholm (2002) sees as aiding the justification of ethnic purges and ethnic cleansing, subverting the quest to appreciate different cultures for what they were and resulting in foreign elements being expelled or displaced. The angst of the anthropologist is seen as a romantic quest for creative authenticity in terms of the anthropologist’s own spiritual trajectory. Lindholm (2002:336–337) writes:

In response to the unforeseen misuse of romantic ethnography by racists and nationalists, and in light of the all too obvious displacement of peoples in the contemporary world, many anthropologists have repudiated their disciplinary history of divine theft and have valorized instead the plural realities . . . of late capitalism. All of these, they say, invalidate any assertion of authenticity. . . . Any claim to authenticity is assumed to be, at best, a “misrecognition” of what is in reality an unwarranted assertion of hegemony. . . . An alternative is to reorient the quest for the authentic inward, toward the subjectivity of the seeker, an approach now expressed in anthropology as phenomenology or the anthropology of the senses. Painful experience has also taught us how claims to authenticity can be used to oppress and destroy. As a result, even our role as conservators of the relics of lost wholeness has been

made problematic. The search for a sense of authenticity is the most salient and pervasive consequence of the threats modernity makes to our ordinary reality and sense of significance. The impossibility of absolutely validating the origin of artworks or saintly relics has not meant they have lost their fascination or power, rather, modern artists appropriate icons from the past and forge them into new works by imitation, parody, bricolage and pastiche. As Daniel Miller has brilliantly argued, contemporary culture too is forged in this double sense—“Authenticity is created out of fakery.”

It is interesting, from a conservation perspective, to reflect on the view of a prominent anthropologist that even our role as conservators of the relics of lost wholeness has been made problematic and his statement that the *furta sacra* of the medieval period is as relevant as more modern problems to the phenomenology of anthropology. It is not clear exactly what Lindholm (2002) means. Does he refer only to fellow anthropologists whose attempts to record the cultures they study are fundamentally problematic? Or is he actually referring to conservators’ problems in trying to preserve the material culture of the society concerned? Is the conservator bound up in the phenomenology of the authentic in the way Lindholm suggests?

The unwarranted assertion of hegemonic power over native cultures to determine what might be considered authentic or not is clearly seen by Lindholm as a mode of thought that has had its day (Maurer 1981). The reorientation of the search for the authentic within oneself parallels the conservation professions’ reevaluation of scientific rationalism as the *sine qua non* of conservation

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

choices about object preservation of ethnographic materials, particularly as treatment decisions might be influenced by tribal needs or prerogatives rather than by the purely scientifically determined conservation needs of the objects themselves (Clavir 2002). This realignment with traditional cultural norms may be desirable but may still leave us with the problem of what to do with “fakes” of African art and the ways scientific authentication of these artifacts interacts with the desire or need for a personal view or experience of object authenticity.

Some early private collectors of ethnographic art of the twentieth century, such as Helena Rubenstein (1870–1965), were able to see past old anthropological distinctions between art and artifact. They formed important collections of African art (O’Higgins 1971) at a time when museums were still storing masses of these artifacts away in neglected storerooms and outbuildings, without the same degree of conservation care as given to their more illustrious Renaissance or modern art neighbors, the latter now often valued in tens of millions of dollars. An example from Los Angeles is the discrepancy in the conservation budget between the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. Indeed, in the latter museum it can be practically impossible to obtain permission to examine an artifact in storage for study purposes.

Nelson Rockefeller (1908–1974) had a hard time convincing the Metropolitan Museum in New York to curate and create a display of “primitive art.” In 1954 the Museum of Primitive Art was founded, funded by Rockefeller (Errington 1994). In an archetypical example of “a machine for making authenticity” (Clifford 1988:224), some African artifacts moved from a tribal setting in Central Africa to New York

to enter the American Museum of Natural History, on the west side of Central Park, then to Midtown on 54th Street to the Museum of Primitive Art, and ultimately to the East Side location of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Errington 1994), ascending Clifford’s diagram (shown in Figure 2.1) to become valorized as masterpieces of art, no longer mere tribal artifacts but independent objects of art.

With the increasing prominence and need for conservation in terms of its application to modern materials and artists, and with the continued use of the word *ethnographic* to refer to more recent investigations of cultures and societies (Brewer 2000; Fine 1993), there may be a dichotomy in how ethnography is used in different fields of inquiry (Lassiter 2005). It is a pity that *graphic* cannot be appended to *indigenous* to produce a term to replace *ethnographic*.

### Ethnography of the Authentic

Within the conservation field, there has been a great deal of debate about describing artifacts as ethnographic. In 2008 Bloomfield questioned the use of the term within the ambit of “ethnographic conservation,” which in its connotations might be regarded as “at best old fashioned and inadequate, and at worst offensive and racist.” Bloomfield (2008) further called for “conservators who work with cultural material to find another, more appropriate name for the material they work with,” a matter then under review by the ICOM-CC Working Group on Ethnographic Collections (Dignard 2011), which decided not to keep the name “ethnographic materials.” Members voted to change the name after substantial debate about what to change it to. However, the directory board of ICOM-CC would not accept a change in name, so the debate was rendered impotent (Bloomfield 2008).

The semiotic problems of ethnography are connected with the activities of ethnographers as participatory observers and whether their participation already negates their ability to observe different societies without cultural bias, creating an inauthentic version of the culture they are supposed to observe (Steiner 1999). Ethnographers seek to discover the emic (insiders') perspective rather than their own etic (outsiders') perspective, but the mere fact of observance introduces the lack of distanced or neutral observations that has become widely acknowledged with the entire enterprise. This is apparent especially as a self-referential problem when supposedly disinterested observers are found to have engaged in sexual relationships; in dubious hierarchical assumptions of power in which an anthropologist acquires tribal assistants or servants, as in the case of Margaret Mead (1901–1978); or when anthropologists write highly derogatory views of natives in their personal diaries, as was the case with Bronislaw Malinowski (Stuart and Thomson 2011). Because of the importance of the writings of Malinowski (1884–1942) for the history of anthropology itself, it is of interest that his diaries reveal, in particularly pejorative terms, his personal thoughts regarding the natives he so incisively studied. One of the most infamous lines is: "At moments I was furious with them, particularly because after I gave them their portions of tobacco they all went away. On the whole my feelings toward the natives are decidedly tending to 'Exterminate the brutes,'" which is a quote from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (Malinowski 1967:69). Another entry states: "I see the life of the natives as utterly devoid of interest or importance, something as remote from me as the life of a dog" (Stuart and Thomson 2011).

From the viewpoint of authenticity, one could argue that Malinowski was involved

with at least four versions of the anthropological situation: the view of the culture as expressed by the tribe; the view written by Malinowski in his academic work; the view of the audience of his work; and the view expressed by Malinowski in his personal diaries, which seem to lack respect, empathy, or any scientific detachment regarding the natives and their lives.

Various anthropologists have had to come to terms with their own critiques regarding this situation. For example, Edmund Leach, quoted by Stuart and Thomson (2011), writes: "Since (the Diary) does now exist as a printed text, the carrion crows of anthropology are entitled to peck it about as they choose. But those who engage in this unsavoury activity need to appreciate that the corpse which is thus dissected is not that of Malinowski but their own."

Many of Malinowski's former students, such as Raymond Firth, Hortense Powdermaker, Phyllis Kaberry, Audrey Richards, and Edmund Leach, disapproved of the diary's publication, seeing it as, as Firth says, "an act of betrayal" to Malinowski and the discipline of anthropology (Stuart and Thomson 2011), as is obvious from the quotation by Leach given above. However, surely the corpse that is dissected here is the discrepancy between the public and the private, between what is being portrayed as one version of an authentic truth and the existential, personal truth of the individual observer. As a website devoted to the controversy concerning the diaries notes:

As a literary product genre addressed to an audience of one, a message from the self-writing to the self-reading, it poses a problem which is nevertheless general, and one that haunts the ethnographic

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

writings of Malinowski like a spirit-double unreturnable to the bush: how to draw from this cacophony of moonlit nights and exasperating natives, momentary excitements and murderous de-spairs, an authentic account of an alien way of life [Geertz 1988:78].

The disjunction between the personal statements of Malinowski and his academic writings could be taken as an example of bad faith rather than a problem of an authentic voice per se. Perhaps he was exasperated with the Trobrianders, although it is hard to reconcile this opinion with his statement that the lives of the natives were utterly devoid of interest to him.

In a wider context, native viewpoints were disempowered through adherence or embedment in colonial, Darwinian, or Christian agendas (Barringer and Flynn 1998). In other cases, ethnographers functioned as agents commissioning tribal art from the very societies they were engaged in recording and documenting, the societal expression of authentic art subverted by the incipient commodification of its existence.

The authenticity of ethnography has come to be seen as prejudicial in its reference to indigenous societies, their art and culture, distorting them through the lenses of Western anthropological theories and sometimes through the prejudicial observations of anthropologists themselves. Debaene (2004) writes that in the historical evolution of ethnography: "Ethnology can be thought of as archaeology by anticipation," presumably meaning that the (apparently) objective facts established by archaeology are not the facts established by ethnology, which can only create an understanding of a culture without fully grasping it, a self-referential nexus of relationships.

The words *ethnography* and *ethnology* may be subject to legitimate questions of validity in terms of their interpretations of the past, but with the continual advances that Western theoretical anthropology continues to make, authentic ethnographies of a different persuasion may help correct the Victorian preconceptions of the past. As Cull (2009) writes:

Today there exists academic fields such as critical ethnography, feminist ethnography, and anti-racist ethnography, which often have an auto-ethnographic focus in which the observer becomes participant, and the participant observer, blurring or removing the distinction between emic and etic perspectives. These auto-ethnographic approaches have been considered "the postmodern successor" of ethnography by Bloor and Wood (2006). These developments have become important tools for subaltern groups to subvert the established power structures and to gain a voice; to, as it were, tell their own stories. These methodologies are being utilized within the conservation field in the form of community consultations, collaborative and participatory conservation (Wharton 2008), which, counter to Bloomfield's argument, would suggest that ethnography has much to teach the conservation field about counter-hegemonic discourse and the potentials of first person narrative and collaborative working.

There has been considerable discussion among online ICOM-CC working group participants concerning the merits or demerits of these arguments. Dignard (2011), for example, notes instances when the word *ethnography* has been eliminated by institutions

## Critics of the Ethnographic

and museological departments to achieve a broader, more culturally inclusive mandate and to simultaneously jettison the aura of colonial values that clings to the word. The word *indigenous* may represent a less inauthentic aura within the conservation profession, where indigenous voices are currently gaining ground and are supported by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations 2007), to which some nations are signatories.

This declaration sets out a number of principles. Among them, “It describes the individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples. It sets out a number of principles that should guide harmonious and cooperative relationships between Indigenous peoples and States, such as equality, partnership, good faith, and mutual respect” (UNESCO 2007).

### Critics of the Ethnographic

Some, such as Cuno (2008), take issue with the concept that indigenous peoples have the same rights as nation-states. He asks, Who assigns the same level of legitimacy to indigenous tribes as nation-states? His question is not answered but left as a rhetorical aside, but the implication is that native societies should not have the same rights as nation-states, which would interfere with the collecting mores of encyclopedic museums, of which Cuno is a firm advocate. For a recent critique of these arguments, see Scott (2013).

Lowenthal (1992, 2005) offers his own scornful assessment regarding the present anxiety to address the needs of ethnic peoples, casting modern agencies as sanctimonious entities that have enabled the victims of history to become the victors of the authentic. Lowenthal (2005) makes no allowance here for Western collective guilt or the need to

atone for a past in which indigenous peoples were pawns in a Western philosophical game of manipulation of the primitive. The desire for authenticity in Lowenthal’s view fossilizes native claims in a fictitious version of the past, sanctified by modern protocols in which any criticism of the aspirations of native tribes to embody the authentic past is seen as racist or prejudiced. Lowenthal (2005) writes:

Authentic cultures too are obsolete. They belonged to tribal, savage and peasant peoples of the past, not to their uprooted, évolués and acculturated modern descendants. Anthropology’s true authentic are the untouched folk of the pre-contact “ethnographic present.” Since these folk are by definition gone, scholars aim to reconstruct authentic pictures of them in the faith that if you chip away at the colonial shell . . . you will get back to the traditional core.

It is not entirely true that the untouched folk of the ethnographic present are not surviving in very remote locales: several tribes in the Amazonian region are still living without the benefit of the rest of us. In 2013 more than 100 members of the Mashco-Piro tribe appeared across the Piedras River from the remote community of Monte Salvado in the Tambopata region of Madre de Dios, Peru (Associated Press 2013). Authorities are unsure what provoked the three-day encounter, but the Mashco-Piro may have been upset by illegal logging in their territory, as well as drug smugglers and the ever-expanding oil and gas exploration activities of international petroleum companies, which are slowly destroying their authentically indigenous way of life and habitat in the name of our insatiable demand for energy.

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

Lowenthal (2005) is of course correct to challenge the retroactive authenticity of many attempts, intrinsically flawed, to get back to what was once a traditional core belief. It may also be true that acculturated modern descendants have originated from an authentic culture that is now obsolete.

However, in our contemporary multicultural world, it is hard to envisage how we could maintain that even degraded modern descendants of tribal societies, whose authentic existence is in the past, should not be able to try to re-create what they lost in the present. Sanctimonious modern agencies may indeed seem to view tribal societies as holier than thou, with an attitude of self-justification, but given what happened to some of these tribal societies in the past, this is a counter-reaction to past depredations; victims of history have indeed become today's cultural victors, even if in name only.

The empowerment of Native Americans and other indigenous groups rarely extends to giving back land illegally taken from them by European settlers, who assigned land to only Christian groups (Saunt 2014), thus legitimizing the theft in legal terms, almost analogous to a *furtiva sacra*. In California, for example, the most desirable tracts of land are all occupied by immigrants, while the remaining Native Americans, the autochthonous inhabitants, are contained in reservations in arid, dusty, remote, or excessively hot regions of the state. As Lakota chief Floyd Westerman (2009) writes:

I would like to quote a very prejudicial doctrine that was handed down by the Supreme Court in 1823. It said that the Indian Nations do not have title to their lands because they weren't Christians. That the first Christian Nations to

discover an area of heathen lands have the absolute title. This doctrine should be withdrawn and renounced to establish a new basis for relationships between indigenous peoples and other peoples of the world.

The most expedient solution in the modern Western world is to accept uncritically the legal decisions enshrined in the Supreme Court verdict of 1823 and to compensate for collective guilt by enabling indigenous societies to regain lost artifacts or those considered by tribes to be authentically sacred, thereby emptying museum storerooms where bones, baskets, spears, and skulls have been piled up for generations of museum workers to study. As regards Native American land, there is no chance of the Supreme Court reversing any of its imperialistic, Christianized American decisions any time soon.

There are, of course, many complications with the return of native artifacts, which in North America is facilitated by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which came into effect in 1991 (National Park Service 2012). There is an extensive literature on its implementation. Works by Thomas (2002), Fine-Dare (2002), Chari and Trice (2009), and Chari and Lavalley (2013) are all relevant to the discussion here.

In some cases, artifacts have been treated with toxic fumigants by museums, resulting in objects that cannot be safely worn or handled (Hawks 2001). Some tribes are crestfallen when they learn what has happened to artifacts kept in Western museum collections: preservation by poisoning, rendering the conceptual authenticity of the artifacts invalidated, disturbed, or violated.



## Critics of the Ethnographic

Artifacts that have undergone this kind of conservation treatment may no longer be regarded as authentic by the tribes concerned (Moses 1999). In some native societies, where the passage of time is part of a cyclical process of birth, life, and death, artifacts have to be returned to the earth to continue to fulfill their authentic functions, which as discussed in chapter 3, Heidegger would very much have approved of. Indeed, the Igbo of Nigeria choose to destroy their artifacts, to eliminate the product but to keep the process that made it (Achebe 1988 [1958]), so that every occasion and every generation will receive its own impulses and kinesis of creation. This kind of action and intention on the part of the producer has much in common with the post-modern period, where artists may refuse to allow permanent documentation or the preservation of an artwork itself.

Among the Zuni, a Native American cultural group mentioned in chapter 1, everything ceremonial is meant to disintegrate and conservation is viewed as a disservice to tribal prerogatives (Blom 2002). But Bloomfield (personal communication 2014), disagreeing with Blom's statement, writes:

I can't speak for the Zuni, but I find these sorts of broad statements about tribes problematic (and inauthentic). My own experience of working with indigenous communities is that opinions on preservation/conservation range hugely. Some people think it should all be buried, some that it should be in museums or available to tribal members and many more have an opinion that is somewhere in between or are completely apathetic. These broad statements about how a certain tribe or indigenous people as a whole think are the exact issue myself

(and many other indigenous scholars) have. There is no single perspective for indigenous people and much of the issue about defining authenticity in terms of the indigenous comes down to—who are you asking?

For example, museum retention of Melanesian *churinga* is disapproved of by the Melanesians themselves, as these artifacts, essential in tribal exchange rituals, must be destroyed after use so that new *churinga* can be fabricated (Kasfir and Lablyl Babalola 2004). Melanesian *malanggan*, which are structures built to house rites of passage for the newly deceased, are subsequently obliterated to free the dead from earthly angst (Appadurai 1986).

A colored sand mandala pattern, designed for tantric initiation in northern India and then dismantled, is now designated as a UNESCO Living Human Treasure (UNESCO 2007).

Some Native American artifacts, if judged authentically sacred, may not be handled or seen by women, which is especially problematic given that the conservation profession is over 90 percent female. Some artifacts housed in museum storerooms are outfitted with altars or other sacred fixtures so that Native Americans can travel to museums to venerate the sacred objects still kept there; most of these arrangements are mediated through conservation (Teeter, personal communication 2012). Objects may need to be ritually fed, which conflicts with conservation prerogatives regarding the absence of any foodstuffs in museum storerooms. The problem is felt especially with Native American artifacts, which are frequently made of organic materials and therefore prone to be consumed by insects, fungi, molds, and bacteria.

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic



**Figure 6.1.** Malagan wood carvings with polychromy, Papua New Guinea. Traditionally, these wooden effigies, made for long and complex Malagan ceremonies, must be either burned or placed in a cave to rot away. This authentic loss is beginning to break down in the twenty-first century, and some are retained. In isolation in a French museum, they become mere art objects. They are validated, even if decontextualized. (Image courtesy of Fanny Schertzer)

### Contextual Authenticity

Some contextual issues with Native American artifacts are analogous to those of the East, where buildings may be destroyed and rebuilt because the essence of the place is the locality. The pristine condition of the replacement, constructed as a replica of the original, is seen as authentic (Hvass 1998).

In his review of the subject, Lowenthal (2005) cites the *malanggan*, the mandala, and the Igbo and Zuni approach to authenticity discussed above, but he does not mention the other side of the equation, in which artifacts important for currently perceived tribal purposes, which without NAGPRA or the encouragement of UNESCO might still languish in museum storerooms, have been returned to the original owners. What suffers in this approach to cultural heritage is the authenticity of the scientific information regarding the nature of the original materials, their deterioration, and their diachronic alterations.

This indigenous conservation action is oblivious to our Western concept of time as far as the interaction of materials and the inherent interest in the way they degrade are concerned. For the scientist, this may represent a significant loss of information, loss of the material sense of cultural heritage, and loss of information regarding deterioration mechanisms. For most other people, this loss is of no concern.

Pearlstein writes (personal communication 2014) that an increasingly important Native American and New Zealand discussion concerns political self-governance and the exercising of post-colonial rights in terms of tribal museums, ownership, and self-representation. An example is Enote's work (2014) recataloging all things Zuni in museums and deciding what information to share with the museums. Many North American scholars embrace the kinds of information that conservation brings to light as long as this knowledge is communicated to or undertaken with the participation of the tribe. This transfer across borders helps to "repatriate knowledge," a subject on which Sven Haakanson (2000) has written eloquently.

## Contextual Authenticity

Research in the service of the tribe corrects a political imbalance, perhaps at the heart of a performative debate on the nature of authenticity as far as ethnic groups are concerned. Pearlstein (personal communication 2014) writes:

I worked on a huge repatriation of Zuni wargods; consensus among museums was to document everything—wood, pigments, dimensions, etc. while returning the items for outside exposure. Not published, information held in sealed museum files. Tribes and individuals vary a lot in their attitudes about what is authentic, which depends on how traditional the individual is and their own upbringing. Similarly varied are viewpoints about appropriate conservation interventions. Ask five people and you will likely receive five different responses, which are not to be faulted—much is learned. This may support individual concepts of authenticity.

The ethnographic contrast with the scientific rationalist view is well illustrated by the following dichotomies discussed by Clavir (2002). In each paragraph, the scientific view is stated first, followed by the ethnographic view:

(1) Objects themselves are important to preserve. The cultural life of objects—not the objects themselves—is important. If the cultural significance of an object demands that it be reburied and it totally rots away, that process embodies the ethnographic authenticity of the object in its cycle of existence in virtue of the impermanence of its existence.

(2) Preservation requires that objects not be used and that conservation guidelines be followed. Culture is preserved through the use of objects, through participating in traditions. There is no liminal step between these

two belief systems: there is a diametric opposition. An object cannot be conserved for future use if the authentic function of that object is to be used in participatory rituals in which it is worn or danced. In such cases, preservation of the conceptual authenticity of the original may take the form of a museum surrogate of the original object, which must be returned to its traditional function.

(3) Controlling access to collections mitigates further loss; access to collections mitigates loss. This is a view Heidegger would have endorsed, since the “loss” of denying access to collections or strictly controlling their accessibility interferes with the “work-being” of an object and objectifies it as a falsely static entity. To provide some measure of control over the natural degradation of works of art or artifacts, access to collections is overseen by the conservator, who monitors temperature, relative humidity, light levels, and pollutants to preserve and extend the life of the object (the object-being) as long as possible. This is the traditional functionality of conservation, which new ethnographic prerogatives may subvert.

(4) Relationships with collections are usually associated with professional satisfaction and aesthetic. The relationship with collections is personal. The relationship with the personal perspective of a collection may be mutually beneficial. There is an implicit assumption that there *is* a collection and a personal history of involvement with the collection. In terms of the “thick description” of Geertz (1973), discussed below, the conjoint labeling of the collection in terms of its materiality and cultural or personal instantiation would be an evolution beyond the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century museum descriptions that, according to Sjogren et al. (2004), still characterize many museum exhibits.

(5) Objects are sources of information. People, then objects, are sources of information. The “respiritualization” of exhibited material as aesthetic objects (Stocking 1985:6), together with the materiality of the objects, their mode of construction, and their chemical composition, takes precedence over people, but indigenous people may regard an object as subservient to their own cultural needs. Therefore its integration into a museum-based aesthetic may be irrelevant.

(6) Objects are validated even if decontextualized. Objects are most validated in connection to their original context. Part of the validation of the decontextualized objects is their transfiguration into works of art. This situation is not unique to the problems of the ethnographic. It afflicts many different artworks in museum collections.

(7) Reclaiming heritage is synonymous with reclaiming objects. Reclaiming heritage is synonymous with reclaiming traditions. This statement is open to interpretation. One reading is that some reclaimed objects are inherited with traditions that need to be resuscitated by the tribe or culture concerned, and their return allows native heritage to be completed and the tradition to be actualized. The statement could also be read as implying that the object itself is not important in the continuation of a native heritage but that the revitalization of traditions is of paramount importance.

(8) General principles apply to all objects in deciding preservation questions. Specifics of nation, clan, family, and type of object are important. This dichotomy is in contradiction to most conservation principles, which state that the highest standard of care should be provided for all objects being treated by a conservator and that arbitrary decisions that result in treating one object to lavish care

and attention and the next to hardly any are opposed to the scientific rationalism of conservation. On the other hand, some objects cannot be treated in certain ways if the method of conservation employed is offensive to the indigenous group. In some cases, this will mean the certain loss of specific types of artifacts, while others may be preserved in a museum context. Similar problems are found in contemporary art where the artist’s intention may be in conflict with the desired aims of museum preservation. The museum may wish to preserve the artwork, while the artist intended it to decay and be disposed of.

Yu (2008) provides a useful review of the relationship between cultural relics, intellectual property, and intangible heritage, particularly from a legalistic standpoint. Yu (2008:445) points out that there may be no straightforward separation between what is considered intangible and tangible. He quotes a passage from Richard Kurin, then acting undersecretary for history, art, and culture at the Smithsonian Institution:

For many peoples, separating the tangible and intangible seems quite artificial and makes little sense. For example, among many local and indigenous communities, particular land, mountains, volcanoes, caves and other tangible physical features are endowed with intangible meanings that are thought to be inherently tied to their physicality. Similarly, it is hard to think of the intangible cultural heritage of Muslims on the hajj, Jews praying at the western wall of Jerusalem’s temple, or Hindus assembling for the kumbh mela as somehow divorced and distinct from the physical instantiation of spirituality [Yu 2008:445].

## Disputed Authenticity

Yu (2008:444) thinks that extending protection to intangible cultural heritage, which the 2003 UNESCO Convention enshrines, raises serious boundary issues concerning the scope of protection and raises problems with tangible cultural heritage that can also be protected as intangible cultural heritage. It is also possible for intangible cultural heritage to be manifested in tangible forms. An example given by Yu (2008:445) is that of musical instrument makers whose knowledge and skills are manifested in their products: the instruments they make.

### Disputed Authenticity

Clearly there are many examples in which views of what constitutes the authentic nature of ethnographic materials, or the ways in which they are to be conserved, are at odds with each other. An original eighteenth-century ceremonial headdress may be badly damaged if used or worn by a participant in native dances or rituals. This may be of no concern to the tribe, as a replacement may be made to take the place of the original. But for the scientist interested in the plant dyes used to color certain design elements on the headdress, the loss of the original may be problematic; a replacement may be viewed as inauthentic. The primary stakeholders in this case will be the tribal members, and if the use of the headdress invokes the reclaiming of their cultural heritage, then that is its authentic function and has to take precedence over the desire to investigate the original coloring matter, the material authenticity of the artifact, or the way it degraded over time.

Some ethnographic artifacts have become highly contentious because, like medieval artifacts, they utilize parts of the human body for the veneration of deceased

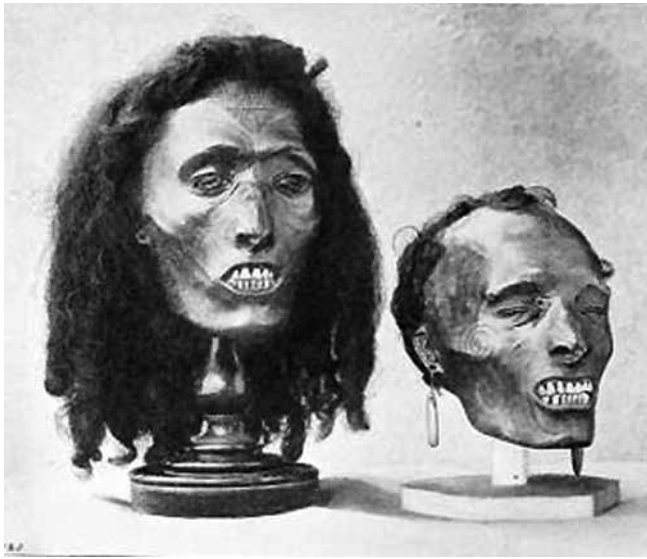
relatives, cultural exchange with enemy tribes, valorization of deeds of courageous warfare, or artistic admiration of the body part itself. Maori heads from New Zealand are an example (Botur 2014). The heads, called *mokomokai*, were elaborately tattooed in life. People developed methods for preserving the heads to allow them to be displayed and collected.

The desire for authentic tattooed heads from New Zealand flourished between 1814 and 1830. The idea was much later taken up commercially in the case of voodoo shrunken heads from Haiti, which inspired plastic versions of shrunken heads, popular items to hang from automobile mirrors or windshields in the 1970s.

Of course, the demand for authentic preserved Maori heads had the inevitable effect of the creation of fake heads for the steady supply of tourists who wanted to buy one. Major General Horatio Robley (1840–1930) formed one of the largest collections of preserved heads. His collection of *mokomokai* was turned down by the British Museum and was eventually bought by the New York Historical Society in 1908. Botur (2014) writes:

Some of these heads were not authentic but prepared by the Maori for the tourist trade, some from slaves whose heads were tattooed for the purpose, before they were killed to enable their head to be sold. Europeans were keen to buy something incredibly exotic and the Maori were keen to sell something which was disturbingly easy to obtain. This is hardly a joke: the heads being sold to the oblivious Pakeha were not always the genuine article and the shrewder Maori know how to bamboozle the tourists.

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic



**Figure 6.2.** Preserved Maori *mokomokai* in the collection of Baron von Hugel, Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. (Image from Robley 1896:figure 172)

Maori slaves were typically not tattooed by the tribes who held them captive, but some unscrupulous chiefs had the heads of their slaves specially tattooed and then cut off, dried, and sold as genuine works of art. One chief, Te Hiko, paraded his living heads before an assembly of dealers, who picked the heads that were most desirable. Captain Cook's naturalist, Joseph Banks (1743–1820), examined four heads brought on board the *Endeavour* in 1770 and recognized that three of them were not authentic. He purchased the genuine head in exchange for his own underwear.

Many societies have created cults of human heads, and heads from New Zealand and Haiti have been prominently displayed in the collections of many Western museums of both natural history and ethnography. According to Newell and King (2012), the last time a *mokomokai* was offered for sale was May 1988, at an auction at Bonham's in London. The head was withdrawn due to public outrage. This is part of the problem with artifacts of this kind: Are they classed as human heads or as works

of Maori art? What was seen as an authentic and interesting art object to collect in the nineteenth century, and to display in the twentieth century, has become a human artifact of embarrassment in the twenty-first. Many heads have been returned to New Zealand—in the case of the British Museum in 2013 and in the case of the Louvre, which foolishly tried to reclassify heads as “art objects,” in 2010 (Davies 2010). These were relatively late dates for this kind of repatriation from major national institutions, indicative of their reluctance to let “artworks” out of their possession.

Lowenthal (2005) has yet more criticisms of the demands of indigenous societies for repatriated artifacts. One of his concerns is the renewed interest in the essentialism of ethnic purity, echoing concerns of Lindholm (2002) that foreign elements are rejected from ethnic groups in the name of an imaginary but dangerous cultural purity. As seen from the early twenty-first century, these ethnic and societal divisions represent one of the tragedies of our time, exacerbated by the chauvinism of native societies as they undergo a resurgence

## Disputed Authenticity



**Figure 6.3.** A *mokomokai* in the collections of the British Museum. Robley recognized that the original *moko* done during life had been nearly covered up with postmortem work of a different design, compromising the authenticity of the head. The head was repatriated to New Zealand in 2013. (Image from Robley 1896:figure 164)

of interest and desire to reinvent their past. Lowenthal (2008) states that essentialism is a stubbornly persistent delusion; that tribal values, unchanged from times past, represent a historically fake creation. Lowenthal (2008:8) writes of the present attraction of tribal membership to Western peoples:

With ever fewer folk left on ancestral turf, hundreds of millions of emigrants and their offspring crave legacies. . . . So do mounting numbers of wannabe Maoris, Aborigines, and Native Americans, attracted by the spirituality, ecological nous, exotic chic, or lucrative spin-offs of minority status. Such is the urge to become Indian that tribes have reinstated blood-quantum criteria, telling applicants that having been Native American in a former incarnation does not entitle them to tribal membership.

No tribe is without foreign influences over time, and no group is the same as it was hundreds of years ago. This is the crux of the

essentialist belief. Sioux Indians may claim to be the same tribe in the past, present, and future in the same way that Slobodan Milosevic united Serbs with the claim that present-day Serbs would never again have to bear the defeat they suffered in 1389 at the Battle of Kosovo, even though modern Serbs bear little resemblance to their fourteenth-century ancestors (Cox 2002).

If indigenous groups want the conceptual and intangible authenticity of their culture to be recognized and accepted, they cannot simultaneously have recourse to scientifically determined blood types, a chemically tangible criteria for tribal membership. One philosophical position states that if the aspiring tribal applicant can document evidence for his or her beliefs regarding incarnation in a former life, then the tribe needs to evaluate the intangible evidence in the same way values are ascribed to intangible associations with artifacts. Lowenthal (2008) reminds us that to gain permission to use Apache blood samples, geneticists studying disease resistance had to agree to refrain from any

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

research that might contradict traditional views of the tribe's history. Here the intangible authenticity of what is assumed to be historically true is of greater value than what might be scientifically determined to be true. Native Americans cannot have it both ways, however much their present plight may generate sympathy. Part of the problem of Lowenthal's complaints against UNESCO, conservators, tribes, and anthropologists is that these issues are not debated and taken at face value without a rational dialogue.

The spiritual and cultural connotations of Native American artifacts may forbid them from being handled by women. The artifacts may be in need of immediate reburial in the earth or are not to be observed by the uninitiated at all. Therefore they are removed from museum displays; kept in special shrines in museum storerooms, where they can be viewed only by novitiates; or allowed to undergo natural degradation, with no conservation allowed (Teeter, personal communication 2014).

The word *indigenous* may seem to some as potentially problematic as the word *ethnography* when referring to cultural collections and their preservation. However, in many papers published in recent academic literature, the term *ethnography* is still considered an appropriate description of what is being undertaken, despite obvious problems with its past associations. Clifford (1988:222) writes: "If ethnography is situated between systems of meaning and we are a part of constructing meaning through sharing the stories we hear and are told, then the authentic moment is simply when what we are told resonates in us, moves us."

One website (Lindberg 2013) even sets out to instruct the reader how to undertake *authentic ethnography* by enumerating its

supposed 10 principles: prescreening in quads or triads; the rule of two; direct immersion; only observing during times of natural behavior; limiting typical in-depth interviewing; a committed client team; team reinforcement in the field; continual ideation; digital photography and videography; and attention to synchronicity and serendipity.

### Philosophical Ethnography

Feinberg (2006:7) proposes the fusion of ethnography into a philosophical dialectic that he terms *philosophical ethnography*, described as:

a philosophy of the everyday and ethnography in the context of intercultural discourse about coordinating meaning, evaluation, norms and action. Philosophical ethnography takes its cue from practice in the post-modern world where intermingling of traditions, fragility of identities, a surplus of critiques and a loss of confidence characterize that world in foundational rationality and traditional liberal institutions. It offers to these traditions and identities a sense of exploration and a possibility for expansion and development.

In the present, it is certainly true that there is an intermingling of traditions and an increasing fragility of identities, although one could argue that this has always been the case and that the view of a timeless ethnographic past in which African art in particular came to be seen as embedded is clearly a fiction of the Western art market, concerned to promote a static concept of what constitutes authentic African art.

Clearly, several authors do not have a pejorative view of the concepts embodied in ethnography in the sense in which



the word has become culturally disturbing for many in the conservation profession. Conservators and curators work with historical ethnographic collections of artifacts, gathered in huge numbers, which have been greedily accumulated, frequently with little regard to the cultural values and background the artifacts possessed for the original owners or tribal groups concerned (Clavir 1998; 2002). In many cases, interest in these collections has waned over the years as the enthusiasm for investigating and amassing the material culture of foreign peoples has drifted in and out of fashion with the demise of colonialism, the superseded precepts of scientific rationalism or cultural determinism, and the increasing attention paid to modern and contemporary art. This is especially true of many European countries where large ethnographic collections were formed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and whose conservation resources are now increasingly devoted to Renaissance paintings and the burgeoning problems of conserving or restoring the ever-expanding field of modern and contemporary art.

Lindholm (2002) reminds us that the Romantic historian and philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) was one of the first to argue that primitive societies constituted organic entities, each possessing its own authentic aura or genius. Herder thought the material artifacts of such “folk” cultures could be appreciated as a reflection of their organic unity and authentic essence. The view of primitive man in a state of grace, unsullied by Western civilization, which J. J. Rousseau (1712–1778) had already promoted by the time Herder was writing (Rousseau 1978), was widely inspirational in the Romantic period that followed.

### Historical Contexts

Indigenous art, folk art, ethnic art, tribal art, and tourist art are all interconnected in the collective rights of native societies, however these rights are defined. A handwoven fiber mat for sale in a folk art gift shop in Jordan, for example, acquires an added authenticity by being made and formerly used by Palestinian refugees living in Jordan, lifting the mat in the Western consciousness from an example of tourist art to an ethnic artifact. For a broad spectrum of artifacts, “ethnographic art” and authenticity have become especially complex and contentious issues to unravel because of different cultural values that pertain to the products of indigenous makers, users, or owners; ritual and societal connotations of objects; and how ethnographic arts have come to be regarded by fakers, copyists, tourists, collectors, curators, conservators, and art historians.

To avoid the negative ethnocentrism of relegating these arts to the status of craft, writes Mellor (2007), many scholars embrace the positive ethnocentrism of offering these arts the supposed compliment of integration into the globalized idea of “fine art.”

What is conceptually interesting here is that carvings not intended to be art in our sense of the word but made primarily as functional objects are considered authentic, while carvings intended to be art in our Western sense are called fakes and are reduced in status to commercial craft. It is not clear that Western conceptions of forgery and fakery apply to these artworks. Anthropologists have stated that the carvers simply see themselves as in the business of carving traditional forms on demand: there is no Sartrean “bad faith.”

A matter-of-fact approach to the issue of originality pervades these productions. Indeed, some anthropologists have asked for

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

masks to be made to take away with them, creating art that was never a part of ritual use. Shelly Errington (1994), somewhat dubiously, makes a distinction between *art by appropriation* and *art by intention*—the latter created in contexts where the Western paradigm would be an analogy to Italian Renaissance art, and the former a diverse collection of objects that became viewed as art with the founding of public fine art museums toward the end of the eighteenth century. Whether the *art by intention* category can itself be viewed as a self-referential paradigm, rather than something intrinsic to societies where ritual use and religious practices may not accord artifacts the status of art, is open to debate.

Many African artifacts are composite pieces consisting of wood, bark cloth, palm leaf, flowers, plant stems, and so on. Wooden sculptures were often “cleaned” by art dealers in the 1920s to remove these elaborate but ephemeral components to create an artificially clean and often polished aesthetic, more in keeping with Western norms of what art should look like than with the authentic appearance of the African originals (Rubin 1984).

The *inherent vice* of the perishable, organic components of artifacts is an essential element that conservators struggle to stabilize or restore. The same applies to what used to be termed *ethnographic dirt*. This term was used to distinguish between authentic applied dirt, which had societal significance, and museum or collector’s dirt, which had none. Surfaces may have been covered with earth, blood, excrement, oils, and unguents. Their preservation is an essential part of the authenticity of the artifact. Conservators now recognize the need to treat objects in a manner that does not disturb the “dirty” components of the surface. But in some cases, these components fell off in storage as they naturally degraded or were

removed by conservators in an earlier period, often under direct orders of a curator who was unable to see beyond Western preferences for a museum display of pristine surfaces and cleaned artifacts made of highly polished and oiled wood. Greene (2006) draws attention to cultural preferences concerning the removal or retention of museum dirt in the North American context: The Hopi and Zuni do not make a distinction between museum-created



**Figure 6.4.** Mask from the Punu tribal region of the Gabon. Wood covered with pigments and kaolin. Such masks were originally covered with offerings and were not pristinely clean. They were cleaned in the Western conservation sense, disturbing their conceptual and material authenticity (Collections of Musée du quai Branly. Photograph by Ji-Elle)

## Historical Contexts

dirt and ethnographic dirt. To these tribes, no boundary separates the authentic state of a work as either post-curation or pre-curation within a museum context. The dirt is part of the totality of events the artwork has undergone, and such dirt should not be removed. Native Americans of the Northwest Coast are more concerned with the pristine appearance of a work and the removal of all accretions.

Since the 1970s, there has been a tremendous shift in the availability of “authentic ethnic art.” As Errington (1994:210) states:

Finely crafted objects and textiles that have been made available to the market in the last couple of decades due to changes in “third world” nation-state policy toward foreign investments and internal minorities. . . . At galleries and boutiques and from private dealers, one can now see old silks and purses and caps and elaborately worked boxes from parts of China . . . ayurvedic medicine apparatuses and chests from Sri Lanka; or huge quantities of old silver jewellery from Morocco, Ethiopia, and other northerly areas of Africa. Often these objects are not labelled as primitive in any context. . . . The word ethnic, rather, signifies that they are non-Western.

Maria Montoya’s pots, made in the US Southwest, began to be sought by Western collectors (Peterson 1977). But production was a group activity, which created problems for the supposed authenticity of Montoya’s work. Some of her coworkers began to sign their pots, but art dealers stopped this practice altogether and insisted they all be signed “Maria Montoya.” Some writers take the view that the Western assumption of authenticity

is based first on a false view of the nature of authenticity as a tradition; second on a myth of an unspoiled precontact “primitive” or “traditional” culture; and third on the art/craft distinction and its notions of the spirituality of the artistic vocation and the integrity of stylistic traditions.

African carvers today who incorporate stylistic features from various African groups or even from European art traditions are carrying on with the process of cultural change that they always had in the past. Photographic records of the native past may themselves be inauthentic; the famous photographs of American Indians by Edward Curtis were often falsifications of the present in the name of a more authentic past. Curtis traveled with costumes and wigs in his trunk and scratched out any telegraph poles or cars that strayed onto his negatives (Egan 2012).

Even enlightened museum displays rarely show natives beside objects on display wearing Nike shoes, talking on smartphones, or using tablets or other modern computer devices. This omission of the present is starting to change; some museum exhibits now contrast modern African indigenes, with their digital equipment and Nikes, with earlier forms of African cultural exhibits. Even so, dehistoricized primitive art may be shown adjacent to prehistoric, Egyptian, or pre-Columbian arts, even though nearly everything from Africa and Oceania in American collections originates from the nineteenth and twentieth century. One aspect of this double standard is that Western artists have a primarily spiritual motivation and do not work for the market. Or if they do, that is just an aberration. But what constitutes an enlightened museum display? This question forms part of a semiotic discussion of the authenticity of ethnographic museum displays, a sign of the difficulties of interpretation. As

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

Sturge (2014 [2007]) writes, the fact that ethnographic objects on display are not attributed to any specific maker does nothing to inform the public concerning the real origin of the artifact concerned.

Adapting the demand by Geertz (1973) for “thick description” in terms of museum displays, Appiah (1993) has advocated “thick translation”: a translation that is heavily glossed and annotated to enable engagement with the complexity of the original artifact. This brings to mind the “ethnocritical” approach to archaeology advocated by Zimmerman (2008) in which native voices are an integral partner to archaeological inquiry into their society, culture, and past. Sturge (2014 [2007]:21) writes:

The traditional museum label has been anything but polyphonic, anything but “thick”: in a display like the “A Wider World” section of the Royal Museum of Scotland or the Berlin museum’s South Seas gallery, we read place, “tribe,” material, an approximate date, the donor’s name. Often, too, a short text is added explaining the object’s function in general terms: the words are those of the ethnographer/curator, alone and anonymous. The Horniman Museum in London, in its “African Worlds” gallery, has tried to subvert this type of label by including commentary—commentary as a kind of translation of museum text. The strategy has its own tradition within colonialist ethnography. As Dennis Tedlock has pointed out, the use of “native words” scattered in the text has been used as a token of the writer’s authority, to mystify and impress: to demonstrate the ethnographer’s unique access to the Real Meaning of such items. And when a

simple one-word gloss (“altar, or pe”) is all the Horniman panel provides (especially coming before the original item), it seems that little is gained in terms of referential meaning.

Sturge (2014 [2007]) notes that the Berlin Museum’s African Gallery uses unabashedly Christian language to describe what are for a line or two “gods” but then become just “God” with “commandments” and a “will” being done. This translation strategy generates a unified source text—all African cultures—that is simultaneously posited as fully commensurate with the target culture’s own rituals and ritual language.

This kind of museum display is very familiar. The aesthetic appreciation of “primitive” art is as an admired “other” whose full cultural purposes are shrouded in mystery (Masheck 1982). The “thick translation” or “thick description” desired by ethnographic scholars has not generated much interest among curators in Western art museums. An example is a label from the De Young Museum in San Francisco: “Headdress, early twentieth century, Guinea, Baga People, wood, Gift of the Erle Loran Family Collection.” The label does not make any attempt to introduce the indigenous voices of the makers, which a seminal display in the Horniman Museum in London has attempted to do, with comments by African diaspora inhabitants of London and inhabitants of the cultural area where the artifacts were made, together with a Western approach to artifact information. This layered approach to meaning and context is a much richer way to engage with the artifact on display than conventional museum labels, which often accentuate the generosity of donors rather than emphasizing the culture, function, and authenticity of the artifact on

display. The De Young Museum has radio-carbon-dated some of its wooden Polynesian sculptures and displays the dating information on accompanying labels. This is uncommon in museum displays of European art and is indicative of the sensitivities surrounding the question of what constitutes authentic Polynesian sculpture. Many sculptures of the same kind produced in the twentieth century may be regarded by museums as fakes, even if native artisans do not think of their sculptures in terms of how they are defined by museums.

The reassurance of radiocarbon-dated Polynesian sculpture may privilege the De Young collection as an example of a niche approach to the authenticity question, but it also inherently relegates recently produced indigenous art, which may also be considered authentic, to an inferior status, and the labeling does not presently include any indigenous voices.

Doubts about the authentic nature of African wooden sculptures have spurred the development of supposedly impartial or validated scientific techniques to determine if the wood is very old, without the expense of radio-carbon determination. Advertisements on the Internet promote the services of a company using infrared spectroscopy (Matthaes 1998) to determine if wood is naturally aged—but not to everybody's satisfaction. The website claims that art experts can decide if a piece is authentic or not, aided by empirical scientific evidence. Then the price of the artwork might be altered from a few thousand dollars to five million. The problem here is the contentious nature of the supposed determination of material authenticity: Does that always imply that the object carries with it a conceptual authenticity? A murky realm is being entered here in terms of African art. Hopefully this chapter reveals something of this complexity.

### **Surreal Authenticity**

It was the surrealists who first appreciated ethnographic artifacts on display as powerful aesthetic entities in their own right rather than simply ethnographic specimens. In a shocking dereliction of curatorial duty, the Smithsonian Institution sold some of its superb African sculpture to French surrealists in 1942, although the surrealists made good use of their purchase. In his admiration for this kind of art, Picasso was quickly followed by Derain (1880–1934) and Matisse (1869–1954). However, it was the surrealists, such as André Breton (1896–1966), Francis Picabia (1879–1953), and Max Ernst (1891–1976), who really began to enlighten others to the art of Polynesia, Australia, Africa, and Oceania (Rosemont 1978). A Picasso based on an African sculpture was regarded as an authentic work of art in its own right and was sold for millions of dollars. But if an African carver today produces his own interpretation of an old African sculpture or of a Picasso, it sells for a couple of hundred dollars, relegated by the Western art establishment to an uncollectable status, an example of kitsch art, or, at best, an example of ethnic art. While some modern native sculptors regard their own work as authentic, the Western art world may not and may catalog recent products as “tourist art,” a degraded form of production.

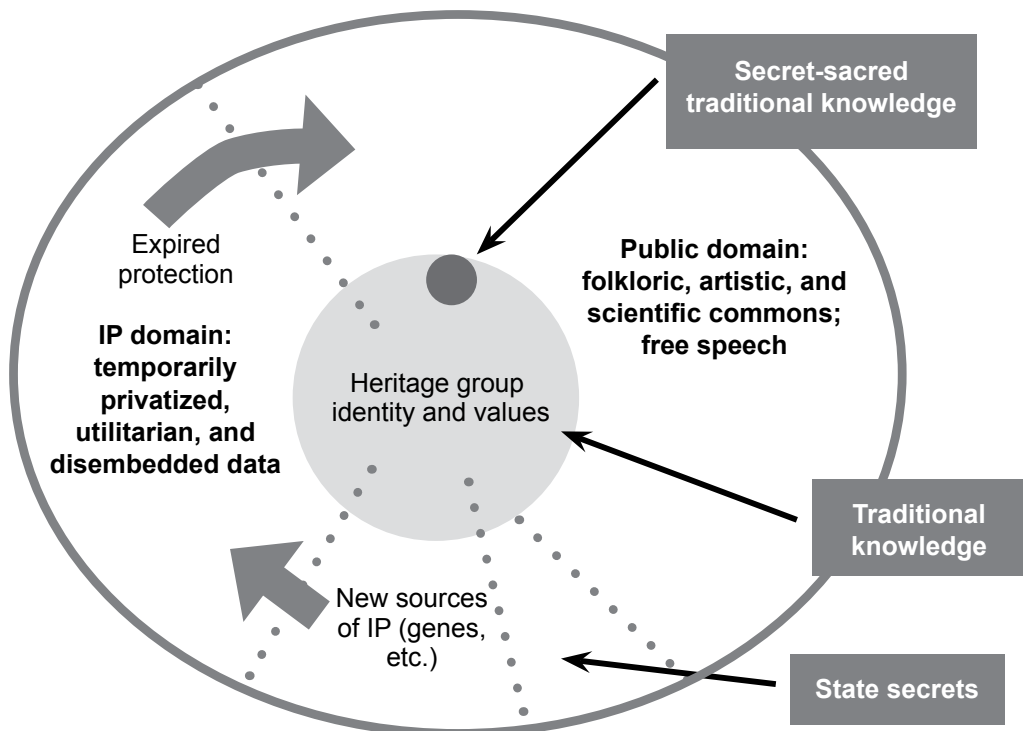
This artificial divide, or the ignoring of the intangible or conceptual authenticity of indigenous art, has begun to break down in the twenty-first century, as shown by a recent exhibition of modern African sculpture at the Tate Gallery in London and by artists such as the British pair Jake and Dinos Chapman, whose work includes a re-creation of the art of Adolf Hitler, a set of Goya's etchings with funny faces added, and a collection of their own African sculpture (Brown 2008). These works are fabricated by the Chapmans, and they sell for considerable sums.

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

The Tate now houses the Museum of Contemporary African Art, the brainchild of Benin artist Meschac Gaba (Tate Gallery 2013), who writes that the museum, regarded as a conceptual space, “is seen as a provocation to the Western Art establishment, not only to attend to contemporary African art but to question why the boundaries existed in the first place.”

In a semiotic sense, the self-referencing of this conceptual museum is itself a sign of the dissolution of former boundaries. But since our historical past is still intimately bound up with the exoticness of the ethnographic other, there is a great deal to discuss in terms of our perception of what authentic ethnographic art means.

Figure 6.5 is taken from the work of Dutfield (2000), which views intangible culture as part of an information ecosystem. The work of heritage professionals has been focused on the intellectual property domain. There is the possible extension of the rights of the IP domain to traditional communities, which ideally would be complemented by more restricted access for private industry. This idea is justified but by no means unproblematic. It is easy to *declare* that intangible cultural property enjoys protections analogous to copyright or patent. It is another matter to determine what qualifies as intangible culture in the first place and then to devise cost-effective mechanisms to protect it. As Brown (2005:244) states:



**Figure 6.5.** Intangible cultural heritage and the information ecosystem. (Diagram after Dutfield 2000)



**Figure 6.6.** *Bulul* guardian figure of the Ifugao people, northern Luzon Island, the Philippines, fifteenth century. Height 48 cm. Louvre Museum, Pavillon des Sessions. Pre-Second World War tourist versions were reappropriated, were rendered authentic in ceremonials, and assumed a new biography as authentic originals, not tourist copies. (Image courtesy of Jastrow 2006. Wikimedia Commons license)

By its nature, the Information Society undermines social norms and institutions, thus magnifying the importance of culture, defined narrowly as a set of values and moral commitments. Cultural identity itself may become, as the anthropologist Simon Harrison has observed, a scarce resource to be defended as another form of property, either personal or collective. Heritage, the retrospective expression of culture, is likewise transformed into a highly politicized commodity. Anthropologists may be making peace with culture but they are also beginning to question the validity and political implications of “the indigenous” as a category of people. In North and South America, indigenosity is easy to define, at least in principle: it refers to the descendants of the New World’s original inhabitants. In regions such as

South Asia and Africa, in contrast, claims of prior occupation may be extremely divisive in political arenas already plagued by violence and instability. The rise of indigenism and the special rights that it typically advances seems destined to create further strife. . . . Debates about indigenous identities seem destined to intensify in the coming years.

The Igorot of northern Luzon, mentioned earlier, repurchased tourist versions of their *bulul* figures and rendered them sacred by performing the appropriate ceremonies, thus re-creating the *bulul* with the intangible authenticity of a sacred relic.

Mellor (2007), among others, draws attention to the problem of undervaluing “tourist art” in favor of the supposedly elevated and authentic art of the “tribal period”: “to cut African . . . masks from their costumes,

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

wrench them out of their living content, and enshrine them in Plexiglas cases for our Sunday contemplation does not strike me as an ‘elevation,’ even if we tardily paste up photographs of someone ‘dancing’ them and a big notice explaining their ‘tribal’ meanings.”

The significance for authenticity here is that artifacts that have purportedly been “danced” are seen as more genuine than those that have not. Displaying these photographs contiguous with the objects themselves may privilege a historical past to which the present artifacts represent an entirely artificial setting, especially as they are often shorn of their costumes, cleaned of ethnographic dirt, reconfigured under Western influence from the original artistic forms (for example, painted skulls covered with deposits of blood instead being made of painted wood), or altered in their present-day meaning for the tribal group concerned. These alterations in meaning are reminiscent of Appadurai’s (1986) social life of things and the changing biographies of objects discussed in chapter 1.

### The Ethnographic Response

An important paper concerning this subject was written by Kasfir in 1992. Kasfir begins by referring to the *Primitivism in Twentieth Century Art* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (Rubin 1984) and the *Magiciens de la Terre* at the Centre Pompidou in 1989. The former exhibition acted as means of referral to the Western art of cubism, expressionism, and surrealism. In the latter, aspects of African art that relate to a Western avant-garde concept of art were examined. Often cited is the landmark 1935 exhibition *African Negro Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (Sweeney 1935). This was not the first time African material was exhibited in the United States, but it was the first time it was

exhibited without context and in a major art museum. From pre-installation photographs and the associated portfolio of 477 individual images created by the photographer Walker Evans (1903–1975), a corpus of objects considered both genuine and significant for the period was identified (Evans 1995). The pedigree of many objects in this exhibition was further substantiated by the fact that several were on loan from the influential European dealers Charles Ratton and Paul Guillaume Rubin. Some objects from the collections of these dealers and from other collections in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s still retain mounts thought to have been produced by a Japanese mount maker named Inagaki. Mellor (2007) notes that Inagaki’s work is undocumented, though his chop mark on the bottom of mounts has been identified by collectors and has been specifically remarked on in auction catalogs. This kind of mount contributes an acknowledged but curiously unsubstantiated authentic pedigree.

The Dogon are undoubtedly the most studied and written about people in Africa (Ezra 1988). Their traditional wood funerary sculptures have historical and anthropological precedent and are familiar to Western audiences; a wood sculpture would be considered to be perfectly authentic. Though similar in form, an ivory sculpture, examined using X-ray radiography, is a cultural anomaly and should be considered a fake, since the radiograph shows that it was made in a number of different pieces. Virtually all African objects made of wood, are monoxylous—that is, made from a single piece of wood.

A Yaka figure appears authentic in form and surface, but X-ray radiography reveals its joined construction. This culturally aberrant technique also implies a fake (Mellor 2007). Materials analysis can be useful, but it



## The Ethnographic Response

is not always conclusive. Associatively, a clear definition of authenticity is elusive due to the functional nature of African art and material culture, the use of diverse and newly acquirable materials, and the pervasive influences of market demand. And of course, a thriving industry based on deliberate deception of the unwary consumer exacerbates the challenge to authenticity.

In 1975 Joseph Cornet, growing alarmed at the proliferation of fakes in Zaire, reflected on the problems of coming to grips with what authenticity meant. He proposed three criteria to aid in decisions regarding authenticity: First, general aesthetic value and the recognition that the object conforms to characteristic style elements known from the tribal area concerned; second, evidence of use, particularly patination and signs of natural degradation; third, production by a traditional artist for a traditional purpose and conforming to traditional norms.

Cornet (1975:52) illustrates four Luluwa wooden figures that are perfect stylistically and exhibit a “beautiful” patina but that are known to be of modern manufacture. He also mentions metal Kongo bracelets made in Germany and a statue of King Bope Mabintshi of the Kubas. The statue was rejected a priori by art historians, as they listed very few authentic royal portraits. However, the rejected sculpture was actually carved by Bope Mabintshi himself, which hardly accords with the art historical view that the sculpture is essentially inauthentic. As Cornet (1975) writes: “The ndop of Bope Mabintshi introduces us to a series of more complex cases in which one passes from authentic objects to fakes by a series of steps which are scarcely discernible in the objects themselves.”

The kings found that the carvings were very popular with important visitors, who

were given carved sculptures to take away with them. Thus the kings ensured that wonderfully carved figures were produced by local artists and were available to be given as gifts when required. The carvings are themselves authentic, which is why Cornet struggled to introduce terms for defining authenticity that excluded these kinds of sculptures that had not been used in authentic rituals, although one could argue that giving a very valuable gift to a visitor might itself qualify as a ritualized event.

Cornet (1975) writes of the largely forgotten period of Afro-Portuguese art of the sixteenth century, when works incorporating Christian motifs, such as crosses and crucifixes, often of ivory, were made by artists in Guinea and the Congo, in a style foreign to their usual artistic canon, for the use of foreign travelers and residents. These works are often viewed as degraded examples of African art and are not often displayed. Cornet takes the view that the crucifixes did not become truly authentic until they had turned into fetishes, expressed in traditional form. He wonders, however, if the now-historical production of these Afro-Portuguese artifacts may result in them becoming viewed as synchronically authentic.

In 1975 Marilyn Houlberg began to point out a number of issues with the definitions proposed by Cornet. She began with the questions: How are decisions made regarding what authentic African art actually is? Is it what we—the art historians, anthropologists, collectors, or museum curators—say is authentic? Or does this decision rightfully belong to the art-producing culture itself? Does the culture automatically validate the authenticity of the object merely through using it? Or are there objective standards of authenticity? Houlberg (1975) does not attempt to answer these questions, which the present chapter grapples with.

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

What Houlberg fails to mention is the application of scientific connoisseurship to the question of what might be considered authentic African art. Scientific connoisseurship in its potential and actual uses in African art is discussed further below, in the hypothetical case advanced by Danto and in the examination of Nok ceramics. Houlberg (1975) asks, in relation to Cornet's criteria: When does innovation become tradition? A Yoruba carver, Yesufu Ejigboye, from the Ljebu-Remo area, carves traditional Yoruba artwork, but he also carves airplanes to be used as rooftop decorations. His house sits directly beneath the flight path from London to Lagos, and he has been carving airplanes since 1950. He has received several commissions for them. Houlberg (1973) asks if this carving is now a traditional art form, a question that might be even more pertinent in 2016, as Yesufu Ejigboye is almost certainly dead by now.

Among the Yoruba, when a twin died, the other twin or the mother carried around a carved wooden *ibeji* figure, infused with the spirit of the dead sibling. It was ritually fed and oiled, as a representative of the dead twin (Chemeche 2006).

Yoruba parents who are Muslim or Christian and who lose one or both twins want to distinguish themselves from believers in traditional Yoruba religious practices, but they also want *ibeji* images. These are then made from a range of materials, including photographs and plastic dolls, and are carried by living siblings as *ibejis* (Houlberg 1973).

The use of photographs instead of wooden *ibejis* seems to have started, according to Houlberg (1973), in the Ibgomina region before 1950. A photograph showing the twins would be faked from images of the living twin, sometimes dressed differently in each picture. Both images would be put together in one, as an *ibeji* photographic pair.



**Figure 6.7.** A Yoruba woman with a traditional wooden *ibeji* figure, which represents a dead sibling or child. In the twenty-first century, *ibeji* figures have largely been supplanted with plastic dolls, also carrying the intangible authenticity of dead children. Would the plastic dolls be welcome additions to Western art museums? (Image courtesy of the African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica/Jamaica Memory Bank)

## A Philosophical Inquiry

These are considered authentic *ibejis*, but plastic dolls seem unlikely to be considered authentic African art in a Western sense and placed on museum display, although in the twenty-first century of post-postmodernism, this is not impossible. The photographs, on the other hand, would be of interest to art historians and curators, because their authentic purpose is culturally intriguing.

### A Philosophical Inquiry

To reprise the philosophical discussions of earlier chapters, especially chapters 1, 2, and 3, the different values proposed by Riegl that works of art could be regarded as possessing could be of use in our discussions of ethnographic art, because there are so many conflicting judgments made regarding authenticity. Indeed, Dutton's question Authentic compared with what? is highly relevant. Mellor (2007:15–16) writes:

From this definition [of Cornet's, discussed above] one can proceed in a seemingly straightforward manner to look for the physical properties of authenticity: Is a Dogon figure modeled with the required reverent pose and iconography, and appropriately patinated indicating use on a shrine or not? A stone figure in the National Museum of African Art collection is reported to be from the site of Great Zimbabwe. It has been determined that the stone is a metamorphic garnet serpentinite which could have formed along the Great Rift Valley in East Africa, but the material is not the same soapstone used to fabricate the famous Great Zimbabwe birds which are of known provenance. Determining the authenticity of African art is a particular challenge because much of the

material is without clear provenance, cultural association, or collection history. In addition, the material can be foreign except to fieldworkers and even then, external influences and the changes in cultural systems that may influence art production may be undocumented. Has a Kongo nkisi been sufficiently angered by the nails driven into his torso or provided with sufficient amulets to enforce a community based oath? Does the wear and multiple repaintings on an Olojo-Foforo mask indicate acceptance and continuous use among the Yoruba people? The allure of a "colonial patination" may alter the appearance of many artifacts. It is not uncommon to see objects from Belgian collections that have been refinished like fine furniture, or objects from French collections that have been waxed and buffed to a high sheen. Some of these objects may have been originally painted, encrusted with indigenous materials, or simply worn in ways that likely offended Western taste, and thus were consequently "improved." Similarly, metal objects are frequently subject to "colonial patination." Benin bronzes present classic examples of objects that have been repatinated, painted, coated with pigmented wax, or treated with motor oil to saturate or even out the surface, or act as a preservative. These surfaces do not necessarily, though they might, expose an outright fraud. However, they do exhibit a shift from complete authenticity and allow these objects to find a location on the continuum from authentic to fake. For Asante carvers imitating a well-known model is considered neither deceptive nor demeaning, rather it is viewed as

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

both economically pragmatic and a way of legitimating the skill of a predecessor. In the past, Africans changed their forms to make what was appealing to the colonial masters, but if done today that is regarded as a fake.

This view of the authentic dominates most standard museum displays and the views of prominent dealers. What is commonly called African art—namely, that which is collected and displayed as African art—is only produced under conditions that should prevent its collection. In a comparative study of the collecting methodologies of two travelers in the Congo, Richard Starr (traveled 1905–1906) and Herbert Lang (traveled between 1908–1915), Schildkrout (1998) arrived at the conclusion that, in different ways, these fieldworkers influenced the production of artifacts and works of art by their partial selectivity. Lang would acknowledge certain pieces as art, while Starr considered objects to be authentic only if they conformed to his preconceived notion of what authentic art should look like (Filitz and Saris 2013b:11). Lang's interest in cultural events, such as social change and innovation, promoted a proto-tourist art in the contact zone of the early colonial period, while Starr's agenda of the primitive favored the production of "fakes," objects made to simulate artifacts that were utilized in "uncontaminated" contexts, free of colonial or outside influence (Filitz and Saris 2013b:11). The proto-tourist scenario is implicit in the paradox of the authentic commodity. Filitz and Saris (2013b:11) write:

In these respects, the authenticity of a commodity is defined by its region of origin, the material used for its production, the process of production, and the

locales involved in it. The blood sausage from Mortagne in Franche-Comté, for instance, is authentic, as it refers to the place or region of origin, is constructed around a whole complex of institutions and is part of the complex of cultural heritage.

When dissected from the point of view of commodities, Warnier (2001) defines three modes of authenticity: domestication, singularization, and certification. Domestication is the process by which the consumer appropriates a commodity into his or her personal life, home, or environment after purchasing it. Singularization is the process in the exchange situation in which traders, marketing agencies, other specialists, and institutions create the authentic quality of the commodity.

Filitz and Saris (2013b:11) write, "According to Bendix (1997), the quest for authenticity can be positioned between modern and anti-modern dimensions. It is oriented toward the recovery of an essence whose loss has been realized only through modernity and whose recovery is feasible only through methods and sentiments created in modernity." However, Filitz and Saris think that the longing for authenticity is more than just an orientation into local history and a premodern process. They suggest:

The idea of authenticity is embedded in the ongoing project of modernity and that this idea is best investigated ethnographically in the sense of descriptively integrating human subjects and the stakes to which they are oriented in local moral worlds. . . . Most critically, authenticity is a fundamental expression of reflexivity. The production of cultural stories for characterizing the authentic

## A Philosophical Inquiry

object, which, like its provenance are often manipulated by traders, consumers, craftsmen and heritage officials, are what Appadurai calls mythologies.

Van der Grijp (2011:128) reviews his own thoughts concerning authenticity in relation to art produced by the Tongans and states that for tribal or exotic art objects, four criteria distinguish their authenticity: first, that the object was actually made by the people to whom it is attributed; second, that it was made in the time period concerned; third, that the material from which it is supposed to be made is indeed that material; and fourth, that the object is of artistic quality. Van der Grijp (2011) gives as an example an eighteenth-century Tongan ivory tiki. It should be made by the Tongans, not by the Chinese. It should be made in the eighteenth century, not last year. The material should be sperm whale ivory and not elephant ivory or plastic. The artistic quality is a matter of cultural refinement of judgment and taste, according to Van der Grijp, who excludes two criteria much vaunted by connoisseurs—namely, that the object had an active ritual function and that the provenance is secure and known.

Van der Grijp's criteria are potentially contentious, not least because of the aesthetic dimension he includes, a trope that could be considered ethnocentric or even Eurocentric. When incorporated into the authentic Tongan artifacts made by members of the expatriate Tongan diaspora, how close must the blood ties be for a piece to be considered an authentic Tongan work? If a Tongan marries a woman from Holland and their son begins to carve Tongan artifacts from his house in Delft, are they authentically Tongan as van der Grijp seems to imply—especially if aesthetically valorized? Van der Grijp excludes the ritual

connotations of artifacts in the view that such associations are untrustworthy and increasingly staged for the benefit of tourists. Provenance is excluded because of the inclusion of the Tongan diaspora in the production of Tongan art which is considered to be authentic.

Ndebele mural paintings are an example of intangible authenticity in an ethnic context (Wilson 1988). These murals are painted by the wife of the house after having her first child, to ensure the coherence of the family and success of her childbearing. The murals are geometric patterns painted in bright colors. Without knowing the tradition behind the mural painting, one cannot comprehend the artist's intended message merely through an artwork's aesthetic representation, another argument in favor of understanding the intention of the artist.

Yu (2008:459) mentions that Aboriginal Australian artists complained that non-Aboriginals were using Aboriginal motifs and themes in their art, often resulting in misinterpretations and negative stereotypes. Protests were made concerning the incorporation of authentic designs in the production of tea towels, wall hangings, carpets, and other tourist products. Similar problems were reported from Peru, where workers produce replicas of golden artifacts symbolizing Inca culture with no connection to the heritage that produced the original artifacts. In translocating a center of production, a Philippine town was named Zuni, so that artifacts could be stamped or labeled "Made in Zuni," subverting African cultural production.

Efforts to return the mode of production to the indigenous community concerned are not straightforward. Yu (2008:460) quotes Finger, who writes: "After Australian tee-shirt companies were sued for infringing the copyright of Aboriginal artists, they began to print

shirts with fake designs. 'Most tourist shops . . . are replete with examples of T-shirt designs which appear to be works of Aboriginal art but are in fact caricatures of Aboriginal art,' [Colin] Golvan writes."

The loss of native control over images natives consider to be authentic to their own cultural groups may represent a grievous blow to the self-identity of a group or culture.

The reconfiguration of an authentic original poses many problems. For example, before the British took over Nigeria, warrior dancers in the Cross River area wore skulls on their heads, decorated with hair and false eyes or rearticulated lower jaws. After the British arrived, the skulls were replaced with carved wooden imitations. But there are no skulls on display, as they are not considered art. Yoruba resist-dyed textiles were collected as ethnic art in the 1960s and seen as authentic, but when cloth was imported from Manchester in the 1970s and many highly colored textiles were made with synthetic dyes, the Yoruba work was considered to be inauthentic. As Mellor (2007:27) writes: "The nameless artist has been explained as a necessary precondition to authenticity, a footnote to the concept of a tribal society. Among some dealers authentic may mean anonymous; one collector said that it gave him great pleasure not to know the artist's name, as once it was known, the object ceased to be primitive art."

Several philosophical problems could benefit from a more considered analysis. Lowenthal's criteria invoking faithfulness to context, faithfulness to original form and substance, and faithfulness to aims or intention could be applied, in addition to *faithfully made or produced by the original artist* (Lowenthal 1998). Let us return to the Yaka figure from the Congo. A distinction can be made between authentic and inauthentic Yaka artwork

based on the joined parts revealed on an X-ray radiograph. Parts joined together are seen as inauthentic and culturally aberrant. In terms of the four criteria above, the artwork could be regarded as faithful to context, faithful to original form and substance, faithful to aims or intention, and faithfully made or produced by the original artist. If the original African artist were to argue that his composite sculpture was suffused with a conceptual authenticity, it would not be possible to deny that he actually made the work, that it is faithful to original form and intention, and that its context is what he determined it to be.

It is only in a Western sense, then, that collectors could regard the work as a fake, but that would deny the artist the conceptual rights to produce what he or she regards as an authentic work of art. Perhaps pieces of wood of the right size were too expensive or were no longer available, so the carver resorted to using a jointed construction employing smaller pieces of wood. Perhaps the carver regards the composite object as just as authentic as older versions made in one piece. Can we still maintain that the recently fabricated artwork is culturally aberrant? We do not know. We cannot answer Dutton's question: Authentic compared to what?

That question becomes an enigma when we discuss the well-known philosophical problem posed by Danto (1981). Danto posits the existence of two tribes whose work is unknown to each other. The first tribe is known as the Pot People, and they produce a range of goods, but the pots are held to represent the original spirit of the world and are therefore regarded not just as pots but as especially important artistic creations imbued with great significance. The Pot People also make baskets, which are thought of as craft objects without special significance. Their neighbors,

## A Philosophical Inquiry

the Basket Folk, hold that the greatest significance and spiritual importance attaches to the baskets they produce. They also make pottery that is physically identical to the pots made by the Pot People, but they are simply craft products. The pots made by the Pot People are regarded as high art and are displayed in a fine art museum, while the identical pots made by the Basket Folk are on display in a natural history museum.

A young girl, our putative philosopher, can see no difference between the pots of the Pot People and the pots of the Basket Folk and questions why they are regarded so differently when they appear to be physically identical. She is told that experts can tell the difference even if she cannot and that the pots of the Pot People are authentic works of art, while those of the Basket Folk are not. This interesting problem is also discussed at some length by Dutton (1993), who points out that, outside of a theoretical philosophical discussion, a tribe that regarded its pottery as of special significance might well introduce technical refinements and take great care with the selection of clay and firing conditions, while the tribe that regarded baskets as paramount would not tend to spend as much time making pots, so that the chances of them being physically indistinguishable is actually slim. This is a common theme in much of Dutton's writings. He maintains that value and significance adhere to those artifacts that are specially produced for a purpose, especially a nonutilitarian purpose, and that these will be distinct from generally made products that are not so highly valued for their conceptual significance.

There might be recourse to two arguments concerning this problem. First, scientific connoisseurship may be applied to study the types of clays the two tribes use, although

it could equally be posited that they get their clays from different sides of the same large riverbank and that there is no difference in chemical composition between them. Second, both kinds are handmade, coiled pots, made waterproof by immersion in a sizzling solution of boiled-down plant juice obtained from sea pods growing along the same river. Trace element analysis, clay type, and technology of manufacture are essentially the same. Scientific connoisseurship in this case cannot make any progress in distinguishing between the two products.

Danto wrote his imaginary philosophic scenario in 1988. What has happened since that time is the resurgence of the intangible as a culturally significant concept and the recognition that for traditional societies, conceptual authenticity may be paramount. From the perspective of 2016, the philosophical problem Danto sets out may be viewed as ethnocentric. It is now the tribes themselves that decide on the cultural significance of artifacts in museum collections. Other stakeholders have been marginalized or, in a politically correct view, should have been.

The problem of material indistinguishability, which has exercised much debate within philosophical circles, still remains, but in terms of twenty-first-century conservation practice, there is an easy solution to the philosophical nature of this problem: The tribes or tribal representatives themselves are asked their opinion. The problem of indistinguishability is then confined to the production of fake pots supposedly originating from the Pot People. Here there are still a number of philosophical issues with how the three different kinds of pots—those faked as copies of Pot People pots, those made by the Pot People themselves, and those made by the Basket Folk—might be perceived.

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

In the case of fake Pot People pots compared with genuine Pot People pots, there is no way to ascertain if intangible authenticity accompanies each pot, so scientific connoisseurship is left as a possible solution. There is a strong possibility that fakers could not use the same clay as the original Pot People craftsmen or the same evaporated sea pods used to waterproof the jars. Therefore it will be possible to distinguish between the originals and the fakes using techniques of scientific analysis.

The original Pot People pots are validated by the intangible authenticity of their creation, which cannot be physically seen or demonstrated. The fake Pot People pots will not demonstrate intangible authenticity but can be differentiated by means of scientific connoisseurship. The Basket Folk pots do not possess intangible authenticity of great significance but could easily be reassigned by unscrupulous art dealers as original Pot People creations.

The precepts of the Nara Document on Authenticity, discussed in chapter 1, are important here regarding justification for the intangible aspects of authenticity. But ideally what is required to affirm the significance of the Pot People pots is outlined in Article 26 of the Burra Charter, which states: “Written statements of cultural significance and policy for the place should be prepared, justified and accompanied by supporting evidence. The statements of significance and policy should be incorporated into a management plan for the place.”

This article, and the Burra Charter in general, is mostly concerned with the cultural significance of places and monuments rather than the significance of artifacts themselves. There are parallels here with the medieval period: Not only might relics function in a miraculous sense, documentary evidence substantiating the miracle might need to

accompany the relic, to provide reassurance of the veracity of the claims made for it.

The same logic can be applied to intangible authenticity. It is not enough for a tribal member to simply state that an artifact possesses an intangibly significant authenticity; the tribe itself should produce an accompanying document, describing, in as much detail as the stakeholders require, evidence of the society’s claims to this authenticity. In terms of historical processes, there are still difficulties in this regard, as what was considered significant for some tribes in 1899 no longer applies in 2016, so the entire concept may be seen, in the worst case scenario, as a moving target. The idea that significance is a static entity per se is a concept that invokes an ethnic essentialism, ignoring shifts in peoples or the needs of a society over time, which may result in a series of reconfigurations of what is considered significant—another aspect of the *sui generis* problem with this kind of dialectical argument.

Some tribes have an almost Platonic sense of an ideal artifact that once existed and whose form can be reproduced with as valid a sense of authenticity as the idealized original, which may have been replaced by a recently made example. One society with this kind of belief system lives in Papua New Guinea in the Sepik River region (Hellmich 2012). For the Kulma, all art objects are copies of mythical earlier originals. A copy, as long as it is well made, possesses all the cultural and aesthetic significance of an original, provided that two cultural criteria of authenticity are adhered to. First, the artifact has to have been fabricated in the correct manner and style. Second, the artifact has to be made by a person or group with the right to undertake the work.

The consequence of these criteria is that a series of copies are regarded as authentic in



James Little Maori Productions

their own right. But the tribe imposes obvious practical restrictions on the production of endless copies of the mythic original, since only certain tribal members are allowed to fabricate them. The use of replacement artifacts for the original is therefore perfectly allowable.

As a contrast, a website advertising art from Papua New Guinea advises readers that there are five categories of art to be aware of: airport art; old/used utilitarian pieces; old and used ceremonial art; and fakes, frauds, and misrepresented works. The selling price of artwork deemed to be both old and used in ceremonial activities is, of course, very high and beyond what most tourists would be prepared to pay, leaving them open to the purchase of fake or misrepresented works within a tourist budget.

The prevalence of fake artifacts in the Western ethnographic art market is so extensive that many scholars will not discuss the matter in any detail. Ivory (2012) describes carved wooden stilt steps from the Marquesas that entered museums before 1850. Many are found on the art market today, and they are nearly always forgeries.

## James Little Maori Productions

While modern fakers of ethnographic art have tended to remain obscure, probably because of the influence of the art market, there are some whose historical creations have become admired in their own right. One such forger was English antiques dealer James Edward Little (1876–1955), from Torquay, Devon, who had great skill as a wood carver. His initial nefarious scheme was to steal a Polynesian sculpture from a local museum, carve a replica, and place the replica in the museum, enabling him to sell the original. Such thefts, which compulsively continued, were disastrous failures, and Little spent three six-month periods in jail for three separate attempts to undertake this scheme. Little then turned his attention to creating copies of Maori art, and in this he was extremely successful. He absorbed the spirit of the work of Maori carvers to such an extent that his forgeries were even purchased by the National Museum of New Zealand in Wellington as examples of authentic Maori art. There is a fine example of his work in the British Museum, which was illustrated in a 1991 book accompanying the exhibition of fakes held at the museum (Jones et al. 1992).



**Figure 6.8.** A carved wooden treasure box, a typical James Little Maori artwork. The hollow rectangular form has an undecorated top. The bottom has four two-headed tiki figures. (Image courtesy of Skinner Inc.)

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

James Little was so successful that he continued to make fakes quite happily for more than 20 years. Collectors at the time cautioned that artwork made by Little appeared to have all the qualities required for an authentic Maori work and that they only knew the works were fake because they had been obtained from Little himself. This is an unusual case: Artwork from the Marquesas and Maori art from New Zealand has rarely been produced by a nonlocal carver, as the skills and understanding of the stylistic requirements are very hard for an outsider to master (Watt 1982). Now that these works are sought after by collectors and authenticated by dealers as genuine James Little productions, they sell for tens of thousands of dollars.

### African Arts and Forgeries

It has been several decades since the journal *African Arts* devoted extensive coverage to a discussion of fakes and forgeries (Shelton 1976). The uneven quality of the papers presented in this compilation reflect the less nuanced perspectives of the 1970s and African art collecting in the 1960s or earlier, which is now almost a historical period in its own right.

For example, Herbert M. Cole (1976) asks, Are there true experts? He purchased two large gold weights in Kumasi in 1967. One authority judged them to be authentic, and another judged them to probably be fake. The lack of clarity in forming judgments regarding authenticity is the principal point of this contribution.

Roy Sieber (1976) attempts to divide the creation of inauthenticity into a number of different categories, depending on who is responsible for alteration or representation of the art concerned. Sieber reminds us that African patination represents

the accumulation of use, storage, soot, wear, damage, sweat, dirt, and sacrificial libations. He distinguishes between several categories. Under the category *innocent problems*, for example, many real Kota masks are unused copies apparently made before the Second World War. Many artifacts in Western collections have been “improved” by removal of all layers of accretions and presented in a polished or waxed condition, as seen in many French and Belgian collections. His second category is *artistic frauds*, where the artist may age or artificially distress the work or fabricate copies of artistic styles from far afield. An example is Zaire-style artworks made in Mali. *Middleman frauds* are made in Africa or Europe, with false patinas created by burying objects near termite mounds or immersing them in mud, battery acid, or milk. In *owner frauds*, an African artist might falsely represent a new artwork as a family heirloom.

George Ellis (1976) writes that a Gelede mask made by the “Master of the Uneven Eyes” in the collections of the Fowler Museum at UCLA, collected prior to 1919, has never been used and is smaller than most masks of this type. Fagg et al. (1982) say that the asymmetry of its face contradicts the established canons of Yoruba art. Also in the Fowler Museum are four ivory combs from Zaire collected prior to 1914 and 1918. They resemble wooden *kete* figures and are otherwise unparalleled, so they may well be forgeries (Ellis 1976).

Knowing what is appropriate, inappropriate, or absent can aid in determining authenticity. The egregious dismantling of wooden objects often occurs, for example, with chairs and staffs, so that small carved figures can be distributed individually, such as examples from the Cote d’Ivoire.

## Authenticity and Falsifications in Chinese Art



**Figure 6.9.** Songye mask from Democratic Republic of the Congo, also made in Zaire, from the second half of the twentieth century; 10.5 x 5 inches. It superficially appears to be much older. According to Hersak (1986:168), such masks, known as *kifwebe*, are used as agents of figures of authority to exercise social and political control through practices of evil magic and witchcraft. (Image courtesy of [www.africanarts.com](http://www.africanarts.com))

The Songye mask shown in Figure 6.9 is a type said to have been developed at the suggestion of a European trader. It has been in the Wellcome Collection since the 1930s. The unpainted surfaces and the lack of wear suggest an article manufactured for Europeans. But in recent times, the Songye have reappropriated the exaggerated style to make new and powerful male masks. Authenticity may depend not on the identity of the maker but

on what purpose the art was made for (Alfert 1972; Mark 1999). *Chi wara* masks are usually made by the Bambara people of Mali for ceremonial use (Wardwell 1989); different examples exist in the British Museum. One has pegs to attach to a cap; another lacks pegs, so it must have been made to sell to tourists. This distinction may imply that the mask with pegs is authentic and the one without is not (Barley 1990). Another mask in the British Museum is from Indonesia and is clearly based on the Mali figures, but such copies now form part of the Toraja art of Indonesia, whose appropriation and reframing are discussed by Adams (2008). Authenticity is guaranteed to the tourist buyer by a label on a mask's base, stating that the design is registered and that any unauthorized copying is a breach of copyright (Barley 1990). In another sense, all are authentic traditional masks, but in the Western sense, only the item with the attachment pegs would be under the spotlights in a museum gallery. The others would be regarded as fakes or reproductions. The inauthentic may be reappropriated as the authentic, the evolution of cultural events with time showing that no culture has a static past.

### Authenticity and Falsifications in Chinese Art

In the suburb of Dafen in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen, artists are currently creating an estimated 60 percent of the world's inexpensive oil paintings, generating a revenue stream of some \$36 million per year (Paetsch 2013). Paintings that achieve a higher level of replication of the original are sought after and sell for higher prices due to their mimetic properties. Chinese forgers and artists have engaged with replication and deception for thousands of years as a legitimated process of artistic dissemination and valorization.

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

At a Chinese archaeological site where a UCLA/Getty Chinese graduate student was working in 2012, an entire wall painting was removed to the conservation laboratory and a perfect replica was created. The mask is now displayed in place of the original at the site. Problems with ancient Chinese bronze mirrors are so severe that several accepted as authentic for decades, even in the most prestigious collections in the world, are actually forgeries. Paintings on silk and paper have been held up to scrutiny as forgeries, while many have been sold as authentic for impressive sums. In 2014 Sotheby's maintained that a disputed scroll it had auctioned for \$8.2 million was authentic. It was obliged to issue a 14-page document defending the authenticity of the work, by Song Dynasty politician and poet Su Shi (1037–1101), which consisted of only nine characters (Rose and Hui 2014).

In 2011 a painting by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century master Qi Baishi (1864–1957) sold for \$65 million, but it has since become entangled in debates regarding its authenticity. Zhong Yinlan and Ling Lizhong, researchers at the Shanghai Museum, argued that the scroll had been traced from an original, while Shan Guolin judged the brushwork to be wrong (Rose and Hui 2014). When disputes arise concerning works that have sold recently for many millions of dollars, the resolution of the issue may be difficult and highly contentious.

Qi Baishi has become so famous that forgeries of his work are common. He is estimated to have produced between 8,000 and 15,000 works, of which some 3,000 are held in museum collections. However, auction houses have attempted to sell more than 18,000 works attributed to Qi Baishi (Barboza et al. 2013), which represents a typical problem in Chinese art connoisseurship: How are

originals to be distinguished from copies being purchased as authentic when there are so many of them?

There are similar problems regarding material authenticity with Chinese jades, terra-cottas, glazed pottery, ivories, semiprecious stones, wooden furniture, and Buddhist sculptures, to such an extent that a huge percentage of the substantial number of Chinese antiquities offered for sale today are forgeries. The difficulties of connoisseurial evaluation of these artifacts or artworks are that many of them may be stylistically extremely convincing but materially suspect (Young 2006). If scientific connoisseurship is unable to evaluate whether an object is acceptable regarding its material authenticity, it may remain as a disputed work.

Yue and Wang (2012) highlight problems with modes of authentication of Chinese art. Chinese auction houses have been discovered selling large numbers of forgeries, whether to be known to the auction house or not. A Han Dynasty jade furniture set sold for ¥220 million (\$34.9 million) in 2011. Later, an Internet post claimed that the jade furniture was made by a craftsman called Zhao in eastern Jiangsu in 2010. When interviewed, Zhao admitted that he had made the furniture, but the expert who had authenticated the artwork denied that it was a forgery. This is a typical example of the difficulties: When Western artworks are sold at auction in the United Kingdom for this kind of sum—millions of dollars—disputes are uncommon, because the pedigree, ownership history, and art connoisseurship brought to bear on such valuable work are essential. Meyers (personal communication 2014) cites the case of Sino-Tibetan bronzes currently being made in monasteries in Nepal and China that carry every association authentic Ming originals would have

possessed, so it is extremely difficult, even for a skilled connoisseur, to tell the difference between the Ming originals and contemporary instances of these artworks. In terms of aesthetic appeal and degree of craftsmanship, the recent productions and the originals cannot be differentiated, another example that negates Goodman's (1968) principle. The modern versions can be differentiated from their Ming predecessors only by virtue of their elemental composition, since trace elements in the copper can be linked to a source in Mumbai responsible for the majority of copper used, for electrical plugs (Meyers, personal communication 2015).

These problems afflict Chinese art to a greater extent than the art of any other ancient cultural region this book has examined. The issue is connected with the materiality of the art itself, the often modular fabrication technologies, and the preservation and mode of presentation or representation of the work. The modularity of Chinese artistic creation was highlighted by the work of Ledderose (2000), who does not accept the traditional connoisseurial distinction between high art and works of craft. Ledderose (2000) refers to this contentious aspect of the Westernized approach to the replication of forms as a modular scheme of fabrication. The problems of definition and perception of the designations "art" and "craft" are addressed in chapter 2. The First Emperor's Terra-Cotta Army, Han Dynasty lacquerware, and medieval Buddhist imagery are three examples discussed by Ledderose (2000). They were all mass-produced using standardized components and were prefabricated in large quantities. Such modular production methods can be traced back to the Chinese Neolithic. This kind of technological innovation is of course a feature of other cultures as well, but it has become especially

problematic in Chinese art, in attempting to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic works, because of the multiples produced over extended periods for a variety of functions and purposes.

In the long history of China's past, the tradition of replicated and mimetic works means that many attributions to dynastic periods are contested. Connoisseurship was based on what a person had read or seen firsthand, and while it trained the eye, as part of the education of the scholar, it was not a profession. Prominent twentieth-century connoisseurs include Huang Binhong (1865–1955), Wu Hufan (1894–1968), and C. C. Wang (1907–2003).

The problem with Chinese connoisseurship is the long historical path of knowledge, which meanders over territories of contested judgments. For example, Huang Binhong examined hundreds of artworks in the imperial collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing (Shambaugh and Shambaugh 2007), one of the most prestigious collections in the world, and called into question the authenticity of 594 paintings and calligraphies, 218 bronze vessels, 101 gilded bronze Buddhas, and a lone jade. In 1937 the courts accepted a judgment against the director of the Palace Museum, Yi Peiji (1880–1937), which alleged that genuine artworks in the museum had been substituted by fakes. The terminology used by Huang Binhong in his examination of these works is noteworthy. He characterized the works as: (1) authentic; (2) forgery; (3) old forgery; (4) appears to be a forgery; (5) traced copy; and (6) copy, together with comments such as "not a Song Dynasty painting, rather the work of an artist of the Ming period." It is not clear if a comprehensive reassessment of the issues of material authenticity resulted from this investigation.

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

While the tendency of Chinese art is to replicate forms from a previous or admired original model, the numerous instantiations that result can create problems for determining exactly when such replication took place. For example, at one famous Chinese Bronze Age tomb, the large bronze cauldrons on display date not from the late Bronze Age but from the thirteenth century C.E. But visitors are oblivious to this fact and accord the thirteenth-century replications the same value as the originals in terms of their auras. Deliberate forgeries made with the intention of deceiving potential buyers are as problematic in the moral and connoisseurial discourses in China as they are in the West, but if forgeries cannot be perceptually distinguished from original works, they remain unproblematic and accepted as authentic until they are exposed, and it is likely that there are now huge numbers of these.

The authenticity of scroll paintings is an intricate question that is dependent on traditional scholarship. Because of the difficulties in determining if something is a replica of an original or not, Fu (1977:1–37) outlines several categorizations. *Lin* means to copy in a freehand manner. *Mo* means to copy by tracing. This category is subdivided into *ying-buang*, meaning “hard and yellow,” employing an early form of tracing paper called *ying-buang*; *hsiang-t’a*, which is tracing by illumination from the back; and *shuang-kou k’uo-t’ien*, which involves tracing and filling in an outline. The next category is *fang*, which means “to imitate.” This may be done freehand in the style of the master. *Tsao* means “to invent.” *K’o-t’ieh* are carved reproductions, rubbings, or ink squeezes taken from stone or wood originals.

Some carved of these techniques involve several replication processes, such as that

described by Ming Dynasty connoisseur Sun K’uang (1543–1613). He delineates five steps: (1) the outlining of the original; (2) the filling in with red pigment; (3) transfer of the red pigment onto wood or stone; (4) making the carving; (5) making the rubbing. As Fu remarks (1977:4):

Although k’o-t’ieh reproductions cannot be mistaken for originals, the problem of authenticity remains. First, the original work chosen for reproduction may have been an attribution or a forgery. Secondly, if with time, a version of a k’o-t’ieh series became rare and a valuable collector’s item, reproductions or “re-carvings” from it could only result in confusion between the reproductive “generations.”

Fu (1977:5–6) discusses the *Hsing-jang t’ieh*, the work of the famous calligrapher Wang Hsi-chih, thought to have lived from about 303 to 361. Scholars generally believe that no authentic works by Wang Hsi-chih survive, and the large corpus of his work includes an unknown number of reproductions and forgeries. Any copy that can be dated to the T’ang Dynasty is regarded as of value. There are early traced copies in Japan. The *Hsing-jang t’ieh* has been reproduced in a variety of forms: in the T’ang period by tracing; in the Ming and Qing by making reproductions of T’ang copies by carving and then taking rubbings. A lithographic reproduction was made of a Ming rubbing after a T’ang copy, and during the late Ming, a forgery of a T’ang tracing was made. At least this is how Fu (1977:6) describes the T’ang version, although whether that is justified in light of the nonexistence of a physical original is doubtful. The various instantiations of the *Hsing-jang t’ieh* could be taken as a series

## The Work of Zhang Daqian

of mimetic events that attempt to re-create a lost work, meaning that these high-quality reproductions are essentially inauthentic but attempt to carry forward the conceptual and historic emulation of the past achievements of Wang Hsi-chih and in that aim, these numerous reproductions achieve, more or less successfully, the desire for valorizing past achievements in Chinese art.

### The Work of Zhang Daqian

The scroll paintings of the twentieth-century master Zhang Daqian (1899–1983) are intimately involved with the problems of emulation and replication of past achievements in Chinese painting—problems with the original expression of the artist himself, judging the artist's intention, or evaluating the reverence accorded to the materiality associated with the use of old materials, original pigments, and re-created Chinese stamps and seals. Scrolls painted on paper or silk are much admired in Chinese art and have been used for training the neophyte, for copying in emulation of a style of brushwork, or for replication of a painting technique, either for the proper training of an artist, for scholarly purposes, or for the production of forgeries. The valorization of copying was already recognized in the early sixth century C.E. by the critic Xe He, one of whose six laws of painting notes the use of copying for the transmission of model forms. McCausland (2012:239) writes, “The theoretical views of the scholar-artist Zhao Menfu (1254–1322), a connoisseur, calligrapher and painter active under Khibilai Khan . . . in the early Yuan dynasty, hold that copying great artworks of the past is what breathes life into tradition and what guarantees tradition's long life as an organic culture.”

Zhang Daqian is the most famous example of a modern master who created a host

of problems regarding the authenticity of Chinese scroll paintings. He is also known as Chang Dai-chien, particularly in connection with the painting *Along the Riverbank*, attributed by the Metropolitan Museum to the tenth-century Chinese painter Dong Yuan (circa 934–circa 962). The controversies surrounding this work, and the oeuvre of Zhang in general, revolve around disputed modes of investigation, diverging conceptions of artistic inquiry, and different methodologies of evaluation. Zhang began painting at age nine and quickly established a reputation as one of the most skilled and versatile traditional Chinese painters (Lai 1975:4). The early training he received in Japan (Andrews and Shen 2012:247) allowed him to act as a skilled forger. Zhang replicated the works of old masters such as Shi Tao (1642–1707), Dong Yuan (934–circa 962), and Ni Zan (1301–1374). Following in the footsteps of other great artists who indulged in deceptive copying, such as Michelangelo, Zhang successfully passed off his own work as that of Shi Tao to his artist colleagues and connoisseurs, an accomplishment that gave him great satisfaction (Lai 1975:19).

In 1968 the University of Michigan Museum of Art organized a conference together with an exhibition of paintings by Shi Tao, which Zhang attended. He pointed out that he had actually painted several of the works on display attributed to Shi Tao (Fu 1991). This is not the only exhibition of Chinese art where Zhang claimed that several of the displayed works by old masters were, in fact, by him. Zhang collected old scroll materials and artificially aged modern silk and paper by the use of smoke, incense, and dust (Fu 1991:20). He employed seal carvers to produce perfect replicas from photographed images of ancient seals; he is thought

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic



**Figure 6.10.** Forgery of Guan Tong's *Drinking and Singing at the Foot of a Precipitous Mountain*, created by Chang Dai-chien (Zhang Daqian, 1899–1983). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. (Image in the public domain)

to have created as many as 970 fake seals (Fu 1991:20). He also experimented with numerous traditional recipes for seal pastes.

Little (personal communication 2016) notes that when Zhang was working in Brazil, he left behind hundreds of forged stamps and seals that were perfect matches to the originals. They were salvaged and are now in a reserve collection at the Freer/Sackler Gallery in Washington. Zhang had taken high-quality photographs of published seal impressions, for which there are several important Chinese reference works (Shu 2006 [1958]; Van Gulik 1981), and then had these etch-printed on zinc blocks. Impressing a zinc block into the cinnabar-paste Chinese ink commonly used for seal impressions (Winter 2008) would reproduce an exact impression of the original.

Zhang's work spanned an immense range, from archaizing works based on the early masters of Chinese art to innovations more in keeping with twentieth-century art. Zhang even exchanged pictures with Picasso. Like all great forgers, he was highly skilled, paying exacting attention to paper, ink, brushes, seals, seal paste, and scroll mountings. When he wrote an inscription on a painting that he attributed to himself, he often included a postscript detailing the type of paper, the age and origin of the ink, and the provenance of the pigments he had used. Zhang's work resides in many of the principal museums of the world, including the British Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

It is therefore difficult to attribute many of these scroll paintings to the correct artist. A typical example is the painting *Dense Forests and Layered Peaks*, formerly attributed to the tenth-century artist Juran but now thought to be by Zhang. Fu, in his 1991 catalog for an exhibition of Zhang's work, writes about



## The Work of Zhang Daqian

the painting *Temples among Streams and Hills*, also attributed to Juran, which is replete with seals of Emperor Huizong; the Siyin half seal, used from 1374 to 1384; seals of the early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911); and seals of the noted collector Wang Shimin (1592–1680). It is in fact by Zhang. Technical studies have shown that the painting *Three Worthies of Wu*, formerly attributed to Shi Tao, is also by Zhang, and there must be hundreds of other misattributed examples. In the *Three Worthies of Wu*, the droppings of spiders have been imitated in black ink and the silk has been torn into square fragments, but microscopic examination has revealed a lack of decay, and the calligraphy appears to be an example of Zhang's work.

The debate concerning some of the works attributed to Zhang led to an entire conference held at the Metropolitan Museum in 1999, where contested notions of authenticity were discussed at length (Smith and Fong 1999). *Along the Riverbank* was supposedly painted by Dong Yuan, a painter of the Southern Tang court, active around 930–960 C.E., but some scholars think the work should be attributed to Zhang. The great Chinese scholar James Cahill (1926–2014), in a very detailed analysis (Cahill 1999), provides evidence on a number of counts that the painting is a forgery. In stylistic terms, there is a dichotomy between semiotic constructs of discerning what constitutes tenth-century painting brushwork and technique, and definitive empiricist statements regarding what is authentic or inauthentic. The problems of art connoisseurship are complicated by the works of notable copyists, of which there are many, such as paintings by the late Ming master Zhao Zuo (circa 1570–after 1633) in imitation of Dong Qichang (1555–1636), for whom he functioned as a ghost painter.

Because of extensive Chinese scholarship related to the historicity of production and the art historical critique of brushwork, style, and mode of execution (Fu 1977; Fu and Shen Fu 1973; Gordon and Hinton 1993), the debate concerning the authenticity of *Along the Riverbank* is inconclusive, with most contributions voicing an opinion contrary to the conclusions of eminent Chinese scholars Cahill (1999), Kohara (1999), and Lee (1999), all of whom regard the work as a forgery by Zhang. Qi (1999) disagrees and regards suggestions that the work is a forgery as ludicrous. Hearn (1999:212) states that all the physical evidence suggests a date of fabrication prior to the thirteenth century, a statement that looks well-argued from a structuralist perspective, compared with an analogous examination of two known forgeries by Zhang whose physical characteristics are completely different. Shih (1999) proposes that the work is indeed authentic and can probably be attributed to Dong Yuan. Fong (1999) holds that Cahill has misinterpreted some of the visual evidence and that *Riverbank* is clearly not a modern forgery. Silbergeld (1999), in an attempt to act as an arbiter between the different viewpoints, leans toward the view that the painting is indeed from the tenth century and not a modern forgery by Zhang.

Connoisseurship in relationship to Chinese art and its various instantiations seems fixated in the volume devoted to *Along the Riverbank* entirely on material authenticity, but not to historical, scientific, or conceptual authenticity. Yet the conceptual and intangible components of authenticity, which are so important to the general appreciation of Chinese art, are not mentioned at all in this connection. If the material authenticity of the work is to be the basis on which decisions regarding authenticity are made, then

connoisseurship has to be considered from both the scientific and art historical perspectives. But only the art historical and physical history of intervention is considered in the *Along the Riverbank* study. Chemical analysis is never or rarely mentioned in connection with the study. Inks, pigments, silks, paper, and adhesives are all susceptible to scientific connoisseurship, such as the virtually nondestructive or completely nondestructive techniques of X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy, Raman spectroscopy, or laser ablation inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry, which would be able to compare traditional inks and pigments used by Zhang Daqian and those used by Dong Yuan. Since it cannot be assumed that only traditional materials were used by Zhang Daqian, it is the trace elemental signature of materials such as inks that could be diagnostic, and in at least one case the terminus post quem date of introduction of one of Zhang's pigments lies in the nineteenth century, although it is possible to argue in certain cases that these are restored areas of the original.

The silk can be dated by radiocarbon determination, which could be useful to confirm attributions made to Dong Yuan. This is the consequence of a fixation on purely material authenticity viewed from an art connoisseurship perspective. If that is what is required in cases of disputes concerning Chinese art, it has to be applied in a combinatorial mode of both art historical and scientific connoisseurship, not just the former. While works of art from Western contexts, such as the Getty Kouros, are of disputed authenticity, the depth of scholarship on both sides of the argument, manifested by the *Along Riverbank* story, is much more a problem of Chinese cultural disputes than not. According to Lee (personal communication 2015), no one in

the Chinese-speaking world now agrees with Cahill that *Along Riverbank* is a forgery by Zhang, which tends to support the arguments for conservation investigation of the materiality of the work as an avenue of insight into the painting that offers promise, rather than the elaborate arguments based solely on connoisseurship advanced by Cahill.

In the paradigm of the perfect fake, discussed in chapter 3, the four criteria necessary for creation are a spurious context of reception, stylistic mimicry, the use of old materials only, and artificial aging. It is worth noting that scrolls were often restored or partially repainted, which can help disguise the true age of a work. In the case of an outstanding artist such as Zhang, it is clear that material authenticity is unlikely to resolve all the problems with his work, but in some cases the application of scientific connoisseurship will make a difference. Forgers such as Zhang cannot be themselves replicated by another person, so despite the intentions of Zhang to pass off some of his works as those by the great old masters, his scroll paintings are valorized in and of themselves. His works currently on display have succeeded in appropriating the auras of the original artists and have correspondingly affected the degree to which the originals can be regarded as originals, or the extent to which copies are copies or heavily restored works are authentic.

### Chinese Bronzes

Chinese bronzes are a contentious area of study as their various instantiations could be assessed from multiple perspectives. There are considerable problems in determining the material authenticity of ancient Chinese bronzes, whether they were cast or decorated in the dynastic period they are supposed to have originated from, or whether they are naturally

patinated or corroded to provide an honest account of themselves during burial in tombs or graves. Thirteenth-century emulations of bronzes from earlier epochs, for example, are already 700 years old, even if they are not originals and cannot be dismissed by a simple delineation between “forgeries” and bronzes considered to be “authentic.” In a sense, the problem was already recognized by Huang Binhong in his distinction between forgery, old forgery, and “appears to be a forgery.” The sheer number of ancient Chinese bronzes, and the subtle but colorful spectrum of material authenticity they encompass, prompts the response to curators disappointed that their bronze is not from the Warring States: “If it gives you pleasure and only a handful of people in the world can tell if it is fake, does it matter?” In terms of material historicity, it does matter that the archaeological record is contaminated, but it does not matter conceptually. It depends on what kind of contamination one wishes to engage with. The author once examined a large collection of Chinese bronzes in a private collection in New Zealand. The collector was interested in which of his pieces were considered authentic in terms of scientific connoisseurship, but he was equally happy to enjoy his collection, knowing that many of the bronzes he had purchased were in fact fake. His aesthetic delight in his collection was not diminished by problems of material authenticity; he regarded the authentic works as an additional bonus rather than the sole survivors of an engagement with an external evaluation.

The assignation of authenticity in terms of the connoisseurship of ancient Chinese bronzes may be dependent on their scientific characteristics, since stylistically, they may be direct copies of standard forms whose appearance is superficially perfectly satisfactory. The nature of this appearance has been the subject

of study by several scholars, and questions pertinent to Chinese bronzes have been addressed by Bagley (1990, 1993), Chase (1983, 1993, 2008), Gettens (1965, 1969), Meyers (1988, 2000), Meyers and Holmes (1983), Rawson (1990), Robbiola et al. (2004), Scott (2002, 2011), and So (1995).

Chinese connoisseurs of the past, as well as collectors and conservation scientists today, remain fascinated by the appearance of excavated Chinese bronzes with their varied colors and surface finishes, the latter initiating several debates as to whether black-surfaced bronzes formed their black patination during burial or whether they represent the artist’s intention to create a black patina. During the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279) and Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) many attempts were made to imitate both the style and patination of these treasured artifacts, which often displayed black, tin-enriched patinas or smooth and subtle light greenish-blue surfaces, incorporating a substantial proportion of tin compounds along with copper and lead corrosion products. Exotic techniques were developed to replicate these finishes. They ranged from the simple adhesion of ground-up malachite with glue binder applied to a thinly patinated surface, often with a cuprite crust only a few micrometers thick, if at all, to highly complex chemical treatments. In fact, Kerr (1990) suggests that the deliberate forging of Chinese bronzes was already prevalent by the time of the Song Dynasty (960–1279), which necessarily invoked these attempts at corrosive mimicry. Several recipes for producing the greens and reds of the patinas, which were much admired as visual signifiers of authenticity, have survived (Scott 2002). Gao Lian, a collector living during the Ming period (1368–1644), records a complex treatment to produce an artificial patina that begins with applying a mixture of

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

sal ammoniac, alum, borax, and sulfuric acid to the surface of a bronze and baking it. Next the object is placed in a pit lined with red-hot charcoal that has been splashed with vinegar. A variety of substances, such as pigment, piles of salt, metal filings, or cinnabar, are added to the surface of the object to encourage salt efflorescence. The treatment ends with burial of the bronze in acidic soil for an extended period. Barnard (1961:214) provides examples of other historical recipes for the alteration of surface appearance, including the following from the *Tung-t'ien ch'ing-lu*, a tenth-century scroll from the Song Dynasty:

The method of faking archaic bronzes is achieved by an application of quicksilver and tin powder—the chemical mixture now used to coat mirrors. This is firstly applied uniformly onto the surface of the new bronze vessel, afterwards a mixture of strong vinegar and fine sand powder is applied evenly by brush; it is left until the surface color is like that of dried tea, then it is immediately immersed into fresh water and fully soaked. It therefore becomes permanently the color of dried tea; if it is left until it turns a lacquer-like color and immediately immersed into fresh water and soaked, it thereby becomes permanently the colour of lacquer. If the soaking is delayed the color will change. If it is not immersed in water it will then turn into a pure kingfisher-green color. In each of these three cases the vessel is rubbed with a new cloth to give it lustre. Its bronze malodour is covered by the quicksilver and never appears; however the sound of old bronze is dainty and clear, whilst the sound of new bronze is turbid and clamorous—this cannot escape the observation of the connoisseur.

Notice here that, even after all this effort, the acute observations of the connoisseur would be able in most cases to distinguish between the simulacrum of corrosive events and the natural corrosive processes that had occurred during burial.

A history of veneration of the past resulted in Shang Dynasty bronzes (1766–1122 B.C.E.) being replicated as long ago as the Western Zhou (1122–771 B.C.E.) period (Rawson 1990:21, 62), while some “later” bronzes were produced in imitation of earlier forms during the Song Dynasty in the eleventh century C.E., at which time archaizing forms were fabricated to satisfy the demands of collectors (Goedhuis 1989).

An example of the problems with Chinese bronzes is that of the much admired and collected bronze mirrors, which span nearly 4,000 years of production. During the Liao Dynasty (907–1125), Tang-period mirrors (618–907) were faithfully being reproduced. But because the base metal used was yellowish in color, since by that time brass or low-tin bronze was often utilized rather than the classic high-tin bronze composition of the genuine artifacts, they can often be identified as later reproductions. Some mirrors from the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127 C.E.) are modeled closely on Tang originals, but in some cases they incorporate features distinctive of Song, so it is not clear that they are all reproductions designed to deceive.

Many Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) TLV mirrors and those from the Tang with lion and grape designs were reproduced during the Ming and Qing (1644–1911) periods for scholarly purposes. The Qing Dynasty of the eighteenth century was a period of strong antiquarian interests, when vessels similar to ancient ritual bronze vessels were made for discerning patrons (Goedhuis 1989). During this time, forgeries of Warring States-period

## Chinese Bronzes



**Figure 6.11.** A perfectly authentic Chinese bronze mirror from the Eastern Han period, showing a plum-colored patina on the reverse side, cast in a bronze alloy of 61 percent copper, 23.9 percent tin, 3.3 percent lead, and 1.2 percent arsenic. The remainder is oxygen content of oxides on the surface of the mirror. From the Cotsen Collection of Bronze Mirrors. (Photograph by the author. Image courtesy of the Lloyd Cotsen Foundation)

mirrors (475–221 B.C.E.) were so well made that, according to Ecke (1994), many remain on display, undetected or unknown. More to the point perhaps is that their origin is not what most scholars assume, which could only be established by scientific connoisseurship.

Mirrors may also have been recently made for the art market with the intention to deceive the buyer. There are therefore a number of different categories of origin for mirrors obtained on the art market that do not have a clearly defined archaeological context or date to give them a solid provenance, a situation that applies to most collections of Chinese bronze mirrors. These categories include:

1. Mirrors that originate from the period they are stated to come from
2. Mirrors that are stated to be very old but that clearly show signs of modern manufacture
3. Mirrors that are old but are copies of “authentic” mirrors originating from an earlier dynastic period
4. Mirrors from a dynastic period that are local copies or poorly made imitations
5. Mirrors that do not pretend to be what they are not and are made as modern reproductions
6. Mirrors that may have been altered or changed since they were made

Every collection contains disputed mirrors. Examples from the Cotsen collection present a typical range of problems of authenticity and inauthenticity. Of some 120 mirrors, which were carefully vetted on an art connoisseurial basis before they were purchased for the collection, some 12 have been shown to be forgeries, including mirrors that had been on public display because of their attractive designs. Whether the display of these forged mirrors can be valorized as emulatory or totally denigrated as entirely deceptive depends on which viewpoint is adopted regarding these artifacts: the aesthetic or the archaeological. The data are discussed further in Scott (2011).

Deciding how to categorize a particular bronze object is dependent on multiple criteria of judgment, which in some cases are contested or disputed. The opinion of an authority in one area may not be substantiated outside of the connoisseurial field in which the operation is situated. Chase (2008) makes an argument for degrees of authenticity in ancient Chinese bronzes rather than absolute criteria based solely on an empiricist ontology of chemical composition, isotopic signatures, and digenetic history of degradation. The proposal of Chase to invoke degrees of authenticity can be seen as part of the response to debates between scholars of Chinese art, which could be viewed as based on the normative evaluation of aesthetic, material, and conceptual authenticity advocated in this book. Several highly prized Chinese bronzes have been extensively restored or altered in appearance at some stage in their lives. Deceptive restorations may become valorized as historical events in the development of taste and cannot be summarily

removed without proper justification and without discussion of the philosophical bases of such decisions.

### Further Developments

The prevalence of Chinese forgeries of various kinds has resulted in edicts being issued by the present Chinese government. Movius (2012) writes that the central government will consider establishing an art database and will take action against what it calls the “three fakes” in the current art market: fake works, fake sales, and fake auctions. Chinese auction houses are shielded from any liability under Article 61 of the Auction Law of the People’s Republic of China as long as they state that they cannot guarantee the authenticity of a work. Gao Fuping, president of the School of Intellectual Property at East China University of Political Science and Law, says that artists in China need greater protection against having their works illegally copied. The publication of an extensive corpus of Chinese fakes is needed to make a wider audience aware of the extent of the problem and to provide a basis for further discussion.

Goh proposes a quantitative approach to evaluation of the authenticity of Chinese works of art. Goh (2013:13) argues that a significant number of Chinese artifacts sold at auction are fake, which is corroborated by recent selling and auction practices in China. Goh proposes a two-phased investigation, beginning with the scientific connoisseurship of thermoluminescent dating for pottery and for the cores of ancient bronzes (if feasible) and a determination if any pigments, glazes, or other components place the terminus post quem date after the supposed period

## Aboriginal Artist Eddie Burrup

of fabrication. In the second phase, the object would be evaluated by the art connoisseur in terms of material, form, design, and shape. This approach utilizes an analytic hierarchical process methodology, employing a scale with values from 1 to 9 to rate the relative importance between two elements. The overall closeness to authenticity is the sum product of the weights of each criterion and the expert's evaluation of the objects. The relative closeness to an ideal is therefore calculated. In conclusion, Goh (2013:16) states, "One has to consider both the subjective and objective criteria to the authentication of Chinese artworks." This two-phase model is somewhat similar to the art historical and scientific connoisseurship approaches advocated in this book, but one of the advantages of the methodology proposed by Goh is to establish a uniform approach to the problems of authenticity in terms of Chinese art. How realistic this two-phase model would be in practice is unknown, as it has not been adopted as far as the author is aware. The field of Chinese art is a very active one, due to much new scholarship and especially because new Chinese buyers are interested in purchasing works of all descriptions, from the contemporary to the prehistoric. It is a field in which many developments will occur in the years to come, especially in relation to authenticity and connoisseurship.

### Aboriginal Artist Eddie Burrup

Numerous admired artworks by the nonexistent Australian Aboriginal painter Eddie Burrup caused consternation in the Australian art market when they were revealed to be the work of an elderly white woman, Elizabeth

Durack. Burrup was ostensibly an old Aboriginal man from the Pilbara region of Western Australia with the status of *maban*, which endowed him with special knowledge and the right to roam over huge territories (Niall 2012).

By 1996 Burrup had exhibited internationally for two years. Doreen Mellor, indigenous curator at the Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, invited him to contribute to an exhibition called *Native Tilted Now* in 1997, at which point it was finally revealed that Eddie Burrup never existed and that all his work had been painted by eighty-two-year-old Elizabeth Durack (1915–2000). Durack was born into a rural family in Australia and went on weeks-long treks with the Aborigines in the 1940s. Her own art was strongly influenced by both the land and the indigenous people who surrounded her. According to Durack, Eddie Burrup was her alter ego and seemed "very alive" to her. When asked if she had invented Burrup, Durack replied, "That's a hard one to answer. Maybe he's a figure of my persona." Durack said that Burrup represented her last creative phase as an artist and that her work was a synthesis of several Aboriginal men she had known, both those who were *gissa-gissa* (arm in arm) and those who "lived apart from change and felt change to be a challenge to their way of life."

Some art critics argued that Durack's creation of her alter ego, Burrup, was an example of cultural appropriation—that the invention of Burrup was a second form of dispossession (Douglas 2015; Farnsworth 1997). Some argued that if members of white elite settlements, masquerading under false names, could produce art that seemed indistinguishable from the real thing, the value of indigenous names as a sign of cultural

## The Ethnographic and the Authentic

authenticity was undermined. Durack said of her journeys with Aborigines in the 1940s: "I was always treated with respect, but being a woman I had to accept all the restraints and taboos. When the women were excluded from sacred sites I would wander with them, picking nuts and fruits."

The alternative self of the artist Burrup was seen as very real by Durack, such that the artist's intention does not invoke a false consciousness on Durack's part but a real presence, an artistic creation of part of her nature as someone deeply affected by Aboriginal art and people. Durack's work will be sought after in years to come, of that history leaves us in no doubt, because what is created from a deep understanding of a form of art and its cultural setting is itself worthy of admiration, even if the works in question are actually painted by a white woman rather than an Australian Aborigine.

That is the achievement of Durack: Her work does not undermine the value of indigenous people as a sign of cultural authenticity or superiority. On the contrary, it pays its own tribute to them and in the process creates a body of new work. It is the Western art market that was temporarily discomfited by the discovery that Eddie Burrup never existed. As time progresses, work by Durack will be as sought after, and as valuable, both in art historical and monetary terms, as the work of James Little.

Forgers of ethnographic materials that incorporate pigments or dyes are faced with insurmountable problems because the traditional dyes are no longer available, or would create so much work in themselves to make that the effort would not repay the monetary reward. It is still possible to buy or make natural pigments such as azurite from Hungary; lapis lazuli from Afghanistan

or Russia; lead white made from lead sheets ripped from the foundations of old churches and corroded in animal dung and vinegar; a re-creation of lead-tin yellow from Kremer Pigmente (a commercial source); verdigris from corroding copper scraps in vinegar; natural umbers and siennas from Italy; and so on—all of which could be used for painting, for example, fake Russian icons on pieces of old wood.

On the other hand, it is very hard to buy natural madder, original cochineal, henna, logwood, saffron, kermes, dragon's blood, and other natural dyestuffs for the preparation of dyed textile yarns for things like Islamic carpets. There is an added problem here: When making copies of Islamic rugs, the weaver would have bought the thread required from a supplier, and the supplier, even in the 1920s, would have been using aniline-based dyed woolen threads for carpet manufacture, so the use of modern dyes is very prevalent, even in high-class faked sixteenth-century Islamic rugs; not so if the forgeries date from 1820. But in the case of textile fakes, the majority of them we know about tend to originate from later than 1900.

The best forger in the world of Islamic rugs was the Romanian weaver Teodor Tuduc (1888–1983), whose work has been tracked with difficulty by only a few experts, such as Romanian scholar Stephano Ionescu (2012). An authority on Ottoman rugs from Transylvania, Ionescu wrote *Handbook of Fakes by Tuduc*. The churches of the Transylvanian region are, astonishingly, rich with Islamic rugs of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, some used as original designs by Tuduc for almost perfect copies, false restorations, or entirely new pastiche designs based on the original rugs.



## Aboriginal Artist Eddie Burrup



**Figure 6.12.** *In the Beginning . . . (Genesis 1) 1997*, attributed to Eddie Burrup. Mixed-media on linen diptych; each panel 190 x 92 cm. Paintings by Burrup, hailed as an outstanding Aboriginal artist, were actually created by white Australian artist Elizabeth Durack. (Image courtesy of the estate of the late Elizabeth Durack)

The fake Ottoman rugs were regarded as authentic by famous collectors, such as J. F. Ballard and Joseph V. McMullan, and by international carpet scholars, such as M. S. Dimand, Kurt Erdmann, Ulrich Schurmann, and Heinrich Jacoby. Tuduc's fakes are found in the National Museum of Art in Bucharest, the Museum for Islamic Art in Berlin, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Textile Museum of Canada in Toronto, and the Kunst und Gewerbe Museum in Hamburg, to name a prominent few.

Ionescu (2012) divides the oeuvre of Teodor Tuduc into the following categories:

authentic rugs and fragments sold or restored by Tuduc; fakes that emerged from his family and entourage; fakes showing great similarities to rugs extant in Transylvania; fakes inspired by rugs published in the literature of the time; and facsimiles of rugs published in Tuduc's own sales catalog. There are several amusing anecdotes connected to Tuduc's work. In one case a prominent German scholar wrote a peer-reviewed journal article in which he exposed some of Tuduc's fakes, and in another article in the same issue, he praised an Ottoman rug that was in fact another unrecognized fake by Tuduc.

### Some Contemporary Manifestations

The categorization of artists' works as either Western, Asian, African, or Polynesian has increasingly crumbled in the twenty-first century. The contemporary artist Yinka Shonibare is a case in point. In an interview with Okwui Enwezor, Shonibare explained that in art school in England, he realized he was expected to create authentic African art even though he had lived in England for most of his life. The fragmentation of his influences led Shonibare to become interested in Dutch wax-print fabric, a patterned and brightly colored cotton textile produced since the colonial era in the Netherlands and intended for the Indonesian market. As a result, Dutch wax-print fabric became very popular in western Africa and became a sign of authentic

Africanness, despite its northern European origins. Shonibare used Dutch wax-print fabric to make Victorian-era clothing for the piece *Headless Mannequins of the Attendees of the Berlin Conference of 1884–85*. This was the conference that divided Africa among its colonizers. The tangled history of Dutch wax-print fabric calls attention to the interrelated development of African and European identities, and its ambiguity allows Shonibare to disrupt the idea of essential ethnic identity, which was part of the justification for the colonization. Shonibare's work cannot be pinned down as authentically African or European because as an expression of his fragmented socially and historically constructed identity, it is both and neither at the same time.

## Chapter 7

# Considerations of Medieval Authenticity

Pious Frauds (*Pia Fraus*)

Sacred Theft (*Furta Sacra*)

Rebirth through Transfer (*Translatio*)

Reliquaries and Relics

Skilled Fakers

*The formal tradition of furta sacra provided an appropriate memory of how and why a particular community came to be graced with the presence of a powerful new patron.*

—Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra*

### Introduction

The culture of the medieval world of saints and their relics and miracles has a history far longer than that of the modern museum world, yet our understanding of how authenticity was regarded during this period is obscure, being colored by the intangible associations, conceptual desires, and spiritual needs that legitimized duplicate or

multiple relics as each possessing an authentic presence. The conceptual authenticity that forms an important part of the medieval approach to the subject of the meaning and instantiation of relics and saints has much in common with the ethnographic and postmodernist worlds, in which subversion of the purely material conception of an artifact or art object, or even of its origins, has

become part and parcel of the cultural setting of the work.

Even in the third century C.E., Christians were prohibited from making idols, and certain images were proscribed from being used, the range being very restricted (Nees 2002), so it is interesting that by the fifth century, shrines of worship had to be provided with holy relics to be seen as imbued with an authentic aura.

Criticisms can always be leveled against our current interpretation of the medieval period, and as far as museum displays are concerned, Pugh and Weisl (2013) write: “Nostalgic visualization implicitly governs contemporary display of Mediaeval art, which more than later works are treated as if they stand on the border—between art and anthropology. . . . Contemporary audiences’ notions of what constitutes authenticity may themselves be inventions created by a combination of modern concerns and the ravages of time.” Their thought here is that a Victorian conception of the medieval is overlaid on our perception today through the way in which the medieval is presented to us in the museum context.

Through the lens of modern consciousness, it is hard to see the world and its works of art in terms of a medieval mind and how authenticity was understood over such a long time period. There is a danger here of oversimplification or distorted judgments that are geographically and culturally distinct, for if the medieval is held to last from 300 to 1300 C.E., then that constitutes a thousand years of historical development and cultural shifts from the early Christian period to the Byzantine and early Gothic, an era that needs an entire book for itself. We will examine only a few major themes that pertain to authenticity, both intangible and tangible.

### Medieval Authenticity

An interesting letter was written by Epiphanius of Salamis (310–403) in the fourth century. He condemns artists who “lie by representing the appearance of saints in different forms according to their whims.” For Epiphanius, images were false when “set down through the stupidity of the painter . . . according to his own inclination,” which is compared by Spear (1989:97), who provides the translations given here, to views expressed a millennium later, in 1411, by the important Greek scholar Manuel Chrysoloras (1355–1415): “In images we are admiring the beauty not of bodies, but of the maker’s mind.”

The thoughts of Epiphanius here are taken by Spear (1989) to mean that copies of images of saints were perfectly acceptable as long as the artist refrained from personal invention. The reference to the mind of the maker—essentially the intentionality of the artist—by Chrysoloras is one of the first such references to the importance of the thoughts and intentions of the artist himself, and it may present a salient change from thoughts expressed by Epiphanius so long before.

Medieval monks and clerics, desiring tax relief and a license to sell indulgences, were accomplished forgers (Boese 2014; Hiatt 2004:29). Crowland Abbey in Lincolnshire was one of many churches to make ecclesiastical forgeries to make a profit from them. An influential forgery was produced by Thomas Elmham, who wrote *Speculum Augustinianum*, a history of Saint Augustine, in 1413. It included forged charters from King Aethelberht of Kent (560–616) and a bull of Saint Augustine of Canterbury (?–604), all designed to obtain exemptions from any royal or papal rule and taxes. The authorities in Canterbury disputed these documents but could make no headway in the matter, as Elmham produced fifteenth-century handwritten papers

## Stealing the Authentic

to prove their authenticity. These documents were also forged (Hiatt 2004).

In the medieval period, forgeries or fakes of authentic objects were often regarded as legitimate and came to be known as pious frauds, *pia fraus*. The extensive theft of relics was called *furta sacra*. The only thing that mattered was the veneration of the forgery or the stolen relic itself: whether it fulfilled the purpose of its divine presence in healing the sick or curing ailments, regardless of what its constituents were or how it had arrived at the place of worship. These sanctified thefts are also referred to as *translatio*, by which a new home for the stolen or relocated relic meant a renewal of its authentic existence. Phillips (1997:17) writes in connection with the *translatio* or *elevatio* of relics that the *modus operandi*

changed with time, but covered the actual transfer of relics from site to site and often from one owner to another, as well as their disinterment if necessary, and later their ritual display to the devoted in a new site. . . . Where this process, as was often the case, involved removal of the relics without the authority of previous guardians, the process was dignified with another solemn term, *furta sacra*, “sacred theft.”

### Stealing the Authentic

Some of these thefts were quite brazen. For example, Bishop Hugh of Lincoln (Hugh of Burgundy, circa 1140–1200) was allowed to touch relics of the arm of Mary Magdalene at Fécamp. He tried to sever a finger with his incisors but had to resort to his molars to bite off the finger, his *furta sacra*, to take back to Lincoln (Greenway 1977). Phillips (1997:18) relates another well-known example, that of Abbott Richard of St. Vanne (970–1046) in

Verdun, who stole the arm of Saint Pantaleon (circa 275–circa 303), which he secured through courageous *furta sacra* in the ruins of Commercy, even as it was being sacked by Odo II of Champagne (983–1037).

In some cases, the loss of sacred relics must have been very disheartening to the congregation or churchgoers where they had formerly been housed, sometimes for hundreds of years, but medieval texts appear rather silent on this issue.

In 401 the Fifth Council of Carthage enacted a decree, stating that all altars should possess a holy relic, a requirement that gradually lapsed. The decree was reenacted by the Carolingians, who passed an *item placuit* stating that relics were necessary in churches, basilicas, and cathedrals. This had the effect of spurring *furta sacra*, and probably *pia fraus* as well, to satisfy demand for a very necessary supply of relics to ensure devotion of a church’s parishioners. Monasteries were always vulnerable to theft and pillage by barons or nobles and their followers, and few had any means of defending themselves. One approach was to shame the thief by invoking different kinds of curses. Those who sought to plunder monasteries could be cursed by incantation, but how effective these curses were is not easy to judge. Patrick Geary (1978:21) writes:

The saint might strike down the noble, but more likely he would retaliate by ceasing to work miracles. . . . These were graphically implied in the practice of humiliating relics. A saint who had been dishonoured would be physically . . . placed on the ground, covered with thorns, and the candles in his church extinguished. There he would remain humiliated and abandoned until his wrong had been righted.

## Considerations of Medieval Authenticity

One can well imagine the societal effect of such actions and the strong possibility that the wrong would be righted, with the noble forced to return to the monastery the stolen goods or precious artifacts to placate the saint and reestablish his or her authentic presence.

The nonmaterial, conceptual authenticity of religious relics naturally resulted in the spurious fabrication of fake relics (Boese 2014). There was a possible conflation of a *pia fraus* with a *furta sacra*, a double conjunction of the conceptual, willingly accepted as authentic on the proviso that miraculous occurrences had been occasioned by the relics themselves. A pious forgery coupled with a pious theft did not undermine veneration of the relic in its new context, since the forgery in many cases remained unknown or unknowable to the parishioners to whom it brought spiritual strength or miraculous cures from ailments. Even if the theft was proved to be a forgery, if testimonial evidence suggested that miracles had been performed by the “relic,” it may still be accorded reverence.

The modes of interaction between relics and a congregation are described by Geary (1986:175):

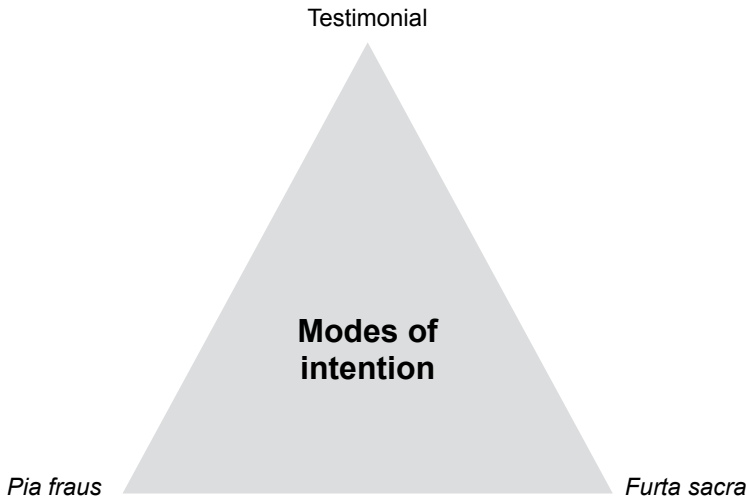
The value attached to the special corpses that would be venerated as relics required the communal acceptance of three interrelated beliefs: first, that an individual had been, during his life and more important after his death, a special friend of God, that is, a saint; second, that the remains of such a saint were to be prized and treated in a certain way; and third, and for our purposes most important, that the particular corpse or portion thereof was indeed the remains of that particular saint.

In the ideal manifestation of these three values, they would all interact with the upper apex of the triangular relationship shown in Figure 7.1. However, because of the conceptual authenticity associated with the belief in the powers of these relics, their actual material existence may be transplanted with other remains, which takes us to the other two poles of this diagram.

Geary (1978), in his book *Furta Sacra*, does not engage with the problem of forgeries in terms of examination of the origins of the sacred theft itself. Even the concept of theft itself in these cases is sometimes seen as more desirable than merely purchasing a relic, as theft is an act of obtaining something authentic—something that is currently worshipped and is therefore more spiritually active than something obtained in a more prosaic manner, such as an honest purchase from a dealer or middleman. Consequently, some monasteries that had purchased a relic actually claimed that it had been obtained by theft, a lie intended to add to the veneration of the relic, which was previously also venerated, giving it an authentic pedigree.

Medieval relics were disseminated increasingly by means of *translatio* and *elevatio* as a result of the lucrative veneration of them—lucrative for both the supplier and the church itself. For example, King Louis IX of France (1214–1270) purchased the Crown of Thorns for 135,000 livres (Brazinski and Fryxell 2013:4). Pilgrims traveling to view relics provided the church with considerable income, with some churches selling more than 100,000 pilgrim badges each year. For the purposes of luring the believer to travel to a relic site, relics could even change their form or identity, thus Glastonbury Cathedral claimed at different times to house the Holy Grail and relics of King Arthur, Saint Joseph

## Stealing the Authentic



**Figure 7.1.** Three important concepts in the authenticity of the medieval: the *pia fraus*, or pious fraud; the *furta sacra*, or sacred theft; and reliance on miracles performed by saints or their relics. Historical precedent or testimonial evidence was often invoked as a definitive statement accompanying miraculous events or thermaturgical knowledge of a relic or saint. The concepts could be conjoined. Hence a *pia fraus* could become a *furta sacra*, and part of a saint could be stolen to become a *furta sacra*. (Diagram by the author)

of Arimathea, Saint Dunstan, and a number of Anglo-Saxon kings. These claims, promoted as real, were in fact a fiction; the psychological state of belief in an immanent reality was what mattered to parishioners.

The conceptual authenticity that resided in every component of a relic resulted in an active trade in body parts, such those of as Saint Andrew (?–60). Three fingers from his right hand as well as the upper bone of an arm, one kneecap, and one of his teeth were reputedly transferred to St. Andrews, Scotland, in the fourth century. The presence of the authentic remains of a saint could even become associated with a city in a very significant sense. Such is the case of Saint Mark (1–68), a *translatio* of 828, stolen at night by Venetian merchants from Alexandria and hidden in a cargo box (Brown 1991:511). He replaced the original saint associated with Venice, the Byzantine warrior Saint Theodore (?–319), of

whom few traces remain in Venice (Brazinski and Fryxell 2013:4). The particular smell associated with Saint Mark was hidden or disguised as pork during the *translatio*. The effluvia from saints were viewed as pleasant odors that emanated when the body was touched, healing the sick or curing ills (Geary 1978:4).

Medieval hagiography does not set out to address the material conception of relics or saints, which is potentially important to us today in terms of evaluation of their existence. Instead it records a historical story of theft in terms of the journey of stolen relics, the joy of parishioners or worshippers on seeing a relic for the first time, and the examination of the relic by an abbot or bishop, who then makes a pronouncement on the authenticity of the object. After being evaluated for authenticity, relics were housed in a grand new receptacle or shrine and were worshipped with devotion. The reliquary that contained a relic was itself

## Considerations of Medieval Authenticity

an object of veneration, being made of expensive materials such as rock crystal, gold, and silver, often inset with precious stones. The additional function of reliquaries was to contain a perfumed fluid or scent, with the desirable smell attesting to the authenticity of the relic by association.

The salient issue for the bishop, monk, or abbot was to establish authenticity of the relic by collection of testimonial evidence of the miracles the relic had performed and to interview those who had local knowledge of it. The physical existence of the relic had to be accompanied by documentary evidence of the miracles it had enacted to convince the skeptical that the relic was indeed authentic. This was the first time in history that certificates of authenticity were required as evidence of the nature of an object examined.

The importance of women in promoting, ensuring, or facilitating the movement of relics across Europe and the Near East has clearly been underestimated, as recent work by Geary (2012) and others reveals. Even in the legendary sense of achievements mythologized through a tradition that had no basis in fact, the intangible authenticity of the procurements or the relics was regarded as real or functioned as authentic, especially if their efficacy was periodically renewed through ceremonial tributes. Geary (2012:242) writes:

Because of her fame as the discoverer of the true cross in Jerusalem, Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, is often seen as the first woman who not only venerated but actively acquired relics, and women in search of relics are often seen as imitators Helenae. However, Helena's reputation as the discoverer of the true cross was a legend, probably invented by the Latin historian Rufinus

(between 340 AD and 345-410 AD), elaborating on Eusebius's account of her travel to Jerusalem in 328 AD.

The authenticity of such accounts became real in virtue of their spiritual power.

### **The *Translatio* of Authenticity**

A tag of authenticity accompanied many purchased relics. There is an example in the British Museum: a relic tag with an accompanying relic textile bundle (BM 1902,0625.1.ab). Such tags have proved useful in research into the origins of certain relics within luxury trade relationships across Europe (McCormick 2001), of which relic trade, theft, or translation was an important component. The reliquary was also a means of providing evidence of authenticity, based on the belief that if a reliquary was decorated with incorruptible precious stones and metals, they were worthy of holding the incorruptible and often scented relic contained within. The *translatio* and *elevatio* were so integral to the implication of rebirth through transfer of the object, writes Phillips (1997:18), that they were often invented for relics whose provenance did not include them. A disparate part of the body of a saint, such as the finger of the supposed body of Mary Magdalene, was imbued with the same intangible essence as the rest of the body, and was therefore just as authentic just as venerated.

Lenain's (2011) important work on art forgery has direct relevance to our discussion of the nature of authenticity in the medieval period. Lenain makes a distinction between *primary* or *real* relics, which involved an ascription of authenticity derived from the identity of the saint the relics were attributed to, and *secondary* or *representative* relics, such



## Reliquaries, Relics, and Their Treatment

as dust, pebbles, moss, or water gathered by pilgrims near a saint's grave or body. This latter form of doubly intangible authenticity, in a conservation sense, represents a kind of miraculous impregnation, but it is no more esoteric, one might argue, than present-day African sanctified originals that are materially identical to nonsanctified tourist copies. The latter remain inauthentic versions that can be sold to tourists, while the identical versions are ritually incorporated into cultural practices that are or become authentic, although there is no material difference between the two artworks at all.

Lenain (2011) reveals that evaluating the ability of a relic to enact miraculous occurrences was a complex matter. This probing into the medieval consciousness in relation to the authenticity of art and relics draws attention to an aspect of the concept of authenticity that has been largely overlooked. Verbal oaths, often uttered by autochthonous inhabitants within a local tradition of knowledge, might be regarded as authoritative statements of historical fact, forming indispensable testimony to the veracity of accomplished miracles. Recorded interviews with elders were believed to be sound testimonials that often legitimized a traditional belief about the past, seen as authentically real in the present, further validating the three-coordinate model proposed in Figure 7.1.

### Reliquaries, Relics, and Their Treatment

Not only could relics be imbued with an intangible authenticity, but the caskets and containers made for them, often out of extremely expensive materials, such as rock crystal, gold, silver, amber, bronze, ivory, marble, and semiprecious stones, could be corporeal reflections of what the reliquaries contained.

Medieval authenticity sometimes demanded written proof of the miracles the relic had accomplished or a statement concerning the veracity of the relic itself. An early example of a written statement of authenticity is the case of Saint Basil (Basil of Caesarea, circa 329–379), who sent Saint Ambrose (Aurelius Ambrosius, archbishop of Milan, circa 340–397) a piece of the corpse of Saint Dionysius of Milan (died circa 360) in the 370s, together with the necessary accompanying documentation. Medieval documents, writes Lenain (2011), may bear apocryphal signatures, forged seals, or artificial signs of age, but in some cases these were meant to materialize the truth of tradition as a perfectly legitimate way to assert a right rather than as a way to usurp power or property, although one can imagine the latter scenario being a spur to the creation of an entirely inauthentic history.

Medieval relics could therefore be subjected to a dual test of their powers, both through the miracle itself and through documentation produced to substantiate the miracle. The anthropological significance of the artifact itself and the certificate that needed to be issued established the Middle Ages, as suggested above, as the first period in history that necessitated production of such certificates as part of the process of determining whether an attribution was correct or not. Lenain (2011:95) makes clear that the most salient aspect of these procedures of authentication was their overall complexity:

The establishment of the original link between the relic as an object and the saint to whom it is supposed to belong (or, to be more accurate between the objective and subjective sides of the relic) involves a great variety of arguments of different levels and natures, ranging

## Considerations of Medieval Authenticity

from the direct and inherent, to the indirect and external. According to the circumstances these arguments draw on evidence brought in on the supernatural mode by the saints themselves or, on a natural mode, by ordinary clerics in charge of strictly rational, humane operations—or both.

The vagaries of these interrelationships are involved. Reliquaries as containers for objects of the saint, or parts of the body, were used not only for display and to signify the nature of the objects inside; reliquaries also signified themselves as authentic receptacles, existentially self-justifying, which meant that it was especially important for a relic to remain within its contained space, whether a casket, coffin, box, or container, the latter often provided with transparent windows of rock crystal. Lenain (2011) arrives at the justifiable conclusion that the medieval cult of the relic laid the basis for modern Western anxiety regarding the problems of authenticity in deciding on the truth of claims made about a relic, even if the nature of that truth would not be regarded as having any validity for most of us outside the Catholic tradition. Of course, there are external logical contradictions within the ecumenical determination of authenticity, which Lenain (2011) skillfully explores.

Olfactory authenticity is an important component here, as the association of particular smells with certain saints or their relics would be a powerful stimulant to belief, which is hard to forge. Further research is clearly needed on this interesting aspect of relics, since not only would incense such as frankincense, myrrh, oils, resins, and other plant and animal products provide a pleasantly scented experience to accompany the

viewing of the relic, but they might have performed a preservative function in their own right, helping prevent the putrefaction of fingers, limbs, foreskins, heads, and other body parts.

Condensation of water or libations of scented waters and oils may have been the reason spigots were added to Saint William's (?–1154) cult site at York Minster for decanting sacred fluid into ampullae or *unguentaria* for pilgrims to take home with them. Reliquary sarcophagi at a cult site could be filled with scented water or oils for healing and veneration. Fluids were regularly collected and taken back in small ampoules by devotees, until the practice ceased due to the revision of beliefs introduced by the Reformation (Brazinski and Fryxell 2013:9). Presumably, at this time it was declared that these practices were not authentically Christian but were something else. Perhaps they were regarded as un-Christian in an era when rational thought began to assume greater prominence over the dictates of faith.

The duplication of relics or their multiple physical existences, each imbued with an intangible authenticity, is not discussed by either Geary (1978) or Wood (2008), yet that is one of the more intriguing aspects of the cult of relics as seen from a modern perspective. A typical exemplar is that several different churches claimed to possess the authentic head of John the Baptist: Part of the head is kept in the Catholic Church of Amiens, mounted within a gold plate. Another part is kept in the Church of San Sivestro, Rome, stolen from Constantinople in 1206, after the city was sacked during the Fourth Crusade. The Grand Mosque of Damascus, Syria, keeps another complete head of John in a small chapel inside the mosque. A fourth claim to the head is made

## Reliquaries, Relics, and Their Treatment

by a museum in Munich in the Residenze, a castle belonging to the old Catholic kings of Bavaria. Each of these heads, not to mention various arms (Ivarfjeld 2014), is regarded as authentic because of the accompanying testimonial evidence. Some of these multiple existences were legitimated in medieval legend, which recounted how sacred images had miraculously duplicated themselves (Lenain 2013), providing an explanation for the authentic existence of duplicate images.

One of the more elaborate fakes involves fragments of the True Cross, which has a long and involved hagiography (Madden 2005). The revered pieces were often placed in reliquaries, stolen, retrieved, and then stolen again—multiple instances of *pia fraus*. At the end of the Middle Ages, Calvin is said to have remarked that there were enough pieces of the True Cross to fill a ship. This was disputed by Fleury (1870), who compiled a catalog of all the pieces revered as relics and came to

the conclusion that they are so insignificant in size that they could easily have come from a much smaller volume of material.

There is a Kreuzpartikel (piece of the Cross) in the Schatzkammer in Vienna and other fragments are in Brussels; Venice; Ghent; Santa Croce, Rome; Notre Dame, Paris; the Pisa Cathedral; the Florence Cathedral; the Monastery of Koutloumousiou on Mount Athos; Santo Toribio de Liébana, Spain; the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; and the Monasterio de Tarlac in the Philippines (Madden 2005). Four fragments with preserved documentary provenance from the Byzantine emperors were examined microscopically and shown to be made of olive wood (Madden 2005). Of course, the True Cross could not have survived for centuries. The fragments are material forgeries, probably created by traveling merchants in the Middle Ages to satisfy the insatiable demand for relics of the True Cross.



**Figure 7.2.** *Procession of Fragments of the True Cross*, Gentile Bellini (1429–1507), circa 1496. Tempera and oil on canvas; 347 x 770 cm. Collection of the Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice. The painting shows the procession of fragments of the True Cross in St. Mark's Square, Venice. Veneration of the wooden cross on which Christ was crucified resulted in many widely dispersed fragments, some of which are of olive wood and are *pia fraus* for the faithful. (Image courtesy of Web Gallery of Art; in the public domain)

## Considerations of Medieval Authenticity

In the early fifteenth century, Bernardine of Siena OFM (Order of Friars Minor) (1380–1444) complained that 100 cows could not have produced all the milk the Virgin Mary had bequeathed as relics. Upon his death, numerous miracles began to be attributed to Bernardine, entering him into the fold of the miraculous himself, which Bernardine would surely have deprecated (Butler 1864). There was therefore, even at this time, tension between the beliefs of ordinary parishioners regarding a venerated icon or relic, and the empirical or more rational view of the highly educated elite, such as Bernardine, who said that some or all of the Virgin's milk might not be authentic, regardless of the miracles attributed to each relic containing the milk.

The incorruptibility of the sacred is another important theme, exemplified by the mummified body of Saint Zita, the patron saint of office workers, dating from 1272 (Farmer 1997). The clothed body of the reclining saint is displayed in Lucca and is still venerated today, in the Basilica of San Frediano, where her incorruptible body lies dressed in repose.

Authenticity and the materiality of relics and reliquaries is an interesting and presently understudied field that lacks an overall synthesis. Barbara Boehn (1997:11) notes that in 1963, the late Thomas Hoving (who became director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York) examined the bust reliquary of Saint Juliana at the Cloisters using X-ray radiography. Later in the 1960s, the disassembly of the reliquary of Saint Yrieix at the same location showed that the interior was wrapped in silver sheathing, which was removed. No trace of a relic was found within the reliquary. As Boehn (1997:11) writes,

In fact, careful comparative examination of the examples in Paris and New York based on the existence of photographs from the *Monuments Historiques* would have shown conclusively that the New York example was the original, even though the relic itself had been transferred to the copy in France in 1907. Since the 1960s the wooden core and silver revetment of the reliquary head



**Figure 7.3.** The mummified body of Saint Zita from 1272, contained in a reliquary in the Basilica of San Frediano in Lucca, Italy. The incorruptibility of some saints' bodies is seen as part of the authenticity of their continued existence. (Photograph by Myrabella; image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

## Reliquaries, Relics, and Their Treatment

of Saint Yrieix have been exhibited side by side, the prevailing opinion being that the core, a masterly piece of Gothic wood carving is too beautiful to cover.

This interesting account does not address some of the intangible aspects of the investigation. Is it permissible to disassemble such an important work knowing that in fact it is the original? Is it still an “original” work if the relic it formerly held has been removed and placed inside a copy? Is it permissible to display the interior, formerly concealed wooden core contiguous with the exterior form of the reliquary itself? The authenticity of the reliquary could now be disputed on the conceptual plane, since the relic it once held is no longer physically present. Clearly, the action taken in 1907 was to divest the New York example of its intangible authenticity and to confer that status on the copy. Whether it is permissible to place aesthetic criteria over religious criteria in displaying the reliquary and its wooden interior side by side, in virtue of the prevailing opinion, is a question that might have to be explained to the museum visitor in some detail, rather than just presenting the visitor with the two parts of the work.

Ethical dilemmas facing the conservation and investigation of relics of this kind have been addressed by McGowan and LaRoche (1996), who discuss issues in the care of human skeletal remains and mortuary objects, and the serious considerations that must be addressed by the ethical codes conservators are supposed to adhere to in their work. McGowan and LaRoche (1996:119), write: “Ideally, the code of ethics should be responsive to the multivariant concerns by recognizing human remains as a discrete material requiring unique considerations that are

separate and apart from any other materials we treat.” The sensitivity that has resulted from these concerns has prompted the display of reliquaries with and often without the relics they are supposed to contain. For example, on a recent visit to the Pitti Palace in Florence in 2015, the author observed several reliquaries that still contained the relics they were supposed to valorize. At the same time, reliquaries at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London were displayed completely cleaned, with no trace of any relic whatever.

That the relics themselves were indeed important is shown by inquiries into their authenticity by the conducting of holy autopsies. These are known from the early fourteenth century (Park 2010), and the aim of the studies was: “inspecting the internal organs of a holy person shortly after death for corporeal signs of sanctity” (Park 2010:64). The use of modern autopsies (Charlier et al. 2014) to investigate the medical condition of relics has recently gained renewed interest, having first achieved prominence in the Egyptological study of mummies more than 100 years ago.

Charlier et al. (2014) undertook a biomedical study of the miraculously preserved heart of Anne-Madeleine Remuzat (1696–1730), showing that the heart had not been preserved by miraculous intervention but by embalming using myrtle, honey, and lime. The reliquary was opened on December 15, 2011, the heart extracted, and then presumably returned to its reliquary container.

Some important reliquaries contain bodily fluids, such as blood. The impressive reliquary shown in Figure 7.4 in procession in Brugge contains the blood of Christ, collected by Joseph of Arimathea and brought to Brugge from the Holy Land by Thiery of Alsace, Count of Flanders (circa 1099–1148). No further investigations are known in this case, but

the restoration of relics and reliquaries is currently receiving more attention. For example, Palla et al. (2015) report on their examination of two polychrome wooden reliquaries, one of Saint Devorino (?–287) and the other of Saint Cosmo (?–287), the former containing a piece of bone and the latter a tooth. The organic relics were suffering from biodeterioration, and the wooden busts required restoration, for which *selezione cromatica* was used, an interesting example of the application of this technique of restoration. The treatment of the relics themselves could be viewed as either interference in the biological lives of authentic relics, rendering their materiality compromised, or as a valedictory action that seeks to both preserve and restore the relics and wooden busts of the saints.

Christopher Wood (2008:109) offers a nuanced interpretation of the medieval approach to the concept of forgery in grappling with the problem of retrospective tombs and the documents purported to confirm their authenticity: “Within the substitution model, all times were always present. The structures of prophecy and forgery were intertwined. The invention of the past was also a form of prophecy and the modern production of artifacts and images was a form of historiography.” Wood (2008:113) notes that documents created by medieval clerics and clerks were viewed as authentic statements of fact. It is estimated that 50 percent of all Merovingian documents, 15 percent of the documents of the first four Carolingian rulers, and 10 percent of the documents of early Saxon rulers are all forgeries of the later Middle Ages.

Figure 7.5 illustrates a hand reliquary that no longer contains the venerated hand. The authentic purpose and function of the reliquary are lost, and it becomes no more than a decorative art object. The personage whose



**Figure 7.4.** Reliquary containing the relic blood of Christ in procession in Brugge; made from pure gold and precious stones. (Image courtesy of Carolus; Creative Commons Attribution 3.0)

hand it held remains unknown. It could have been a victim of *furta sacra*, and many such objects would have been of doubtful origin in an empiricist sense. Wood (2008:114) writes:

The study of mediaeval document forgery has revolved around the question of the historical relativity of rationalist criteria of authenticity. Some scholars have argued that concepts of the authenticity or spuriousness of a document, of right or wrong practice, are historically relative. . . . The other, nonrelativist camp argues that medieval scholars and jurists were quite capable of applying rationalist criteria in assessing evidence, and that

## Reliquaries, Relics, and Their Treatment

to maintain a distinction within modern scholarship between licit and illicit commerce with documents is not an anachronistic imposition on the period.

There is probably no one answer to these types of disputes in the historical discourse. Documents could illustrate reliquaries and relics themselves, as if the depiction of the image of the relic was itself a venerated artifact or souvenir of a visit to a shrine or chapel. Woodcuts allowed replication of these printed images. One of the first such images showed an assemblage of imperial relics and

the Holy Lance from the second quarter of the fifteenth century from Nuremberg (Wood 2008:figure 42). An impressive array of depictions of relics of Saint Ulrich (890–973) and Saint Afra (?–304) of 1494, including brief descriptions, was issued by a monastery in Munich (Wood 2008:figure 66). Retrospective tombs were commonly employed to backdate or forge monuments or tombs to link them with founders, a practice that continued into the sixteenth century. For example, the tomb of Bishop Konrad of Hildesheim (?–1249) at Kloster Schönau is made of sandstone, with a fifteenth-century inscription dated 1248; while at the Benedictine Abbey of Murrhardt, the cenotaph of the ninth-century founders was fabricated in the late fifteenth century (Wood 2008:118). These retrospective tombs served a variety of functions and ranged from spurious forgeries to replacement qua restoration and everything in between. The authenticity of the retrospective tomb could either be intangible or validated in virtue of the miracles the tomb had accomplished. The cultural assimilation of falsified tombs or images is even referred to in the Roman context by Pliny the Elder (Book XXXV, 2.9):

We must not pass over a novelty that has also been invented, in that likenesses made, if not of gold or silver, yet at all events of bronze, are set up in the libraries in honour of those whose immortal spirits speak to us in the same places, nay more, even imaginary likenesses are modelled, and our affection gives birth to countenances that have not been handed down to us, as occurs in the case of Homer [Rackham 1995].

The conceptual authenticity of representations of this kind is therefore not a medieval



**Figure 7.5.** Hand reliquary without the hand, from Belgium, circa 1250–1300. Silver gilt inset with mica and a stone; height 22.6 cm, width 11.1 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. (Photograph by Lesley Ann Moorcroft)

phenomenon, but it reached an extensive level of creation in the medieval period.

### Admired Fakers

Apart from the world of primary and secondary relics and those saints or fragments of them that have been reified as authentic in the three senses discussed here, there is also a considerable problem with artistic frauds that have been accepted as dating to the medieval period but that are of modern manufacture, typically fabricated in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, in addition to the large numbers of forged relics created in the medieval period itself.

The fakers of the medieval period are essentially unknown, but later artists present interesting cases in the forging of medieval art. One of the most intriguing is the Italian faker Alceo Dossena, who was born in 1878 into a family of artists and craftsmen (Waldron 1983:105), although Sox (1987) is a more reliable source here, and the statement by Waldron is somewhat misleading; his father was actually a railway porter. For many years he worked as a restorer of old and damaged sculptures. His first fake was made in 1916, during the ravages of World War I, when he created a relief *Madonna and Child*, which he aged by leaving it in an army urinal. Dossena seemed to acquire, quite effortlessly, miraculous skills in aging and patination of his later fake creations in marble, wood, and terra-cotta.

He hoped to sell his *Madonna and Child* to raise enough money to buy Christmas presents for his family and offered it to a café owner, who was not interested, but alerted a fashionable jeweler, Alberto Fasoli. He decided that Dossena had probably stolen the piece from a church and bought it for the tiny sum of 100 lire. Fasoli later realized that it was not old but was extremely well carved,

so Dossena was contacted again. Fasoli and Romano Palesi set up a studio for Dossena in Rome and paid him \$200 a month (Sox 1987). Having come from a working-class family, Dossena was accustomed to working long hours for meager wages, and he never realized what prices his masterful fakes sold for as forgeries of the medieval and Renaissance periods. Experienced art experts were to authenticate many of Dossena's creations over many years. Like scores of the best fakers, Dossena never directly copied but created artworks in the styles of the originals. He worked in marble, bronze, terra-cotta, and wood. The range of his subjects was enormous, extending from ancient Greek and Egyptian to seventeenth-century European sculpture (Arnau 1959).

His impressive marble sculpture *Angel of the Annunciation*, although dismissed by the very astute judgment of Otto Kurtz (1908–1975) as lacking in refinement (Kurtz 1967) and attributed to Simone Martini (1284–1344), was purchased after careful art historical advice by Helen Clay Frick (1888–1984) of New York and Pittsburgh. The sculpture now resides in the University Art Gallery at the University of Pittsburgh. Dossena's sculpture is based on the angel depicted in Simone Martini's (1284–1344) painting *The Annunciation*, and his marble and wooden sculpture in medieval style has been much admired. The Metropolitan Museum bought a Greek maiden; the Cleveland Museum of Art, a marble statue of Athena and a wooden sculpture of the Madonna and Child; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, an entire tomb, originally attributed to Mino da Fiesole (1429–1484).

Dossena's work was so skilled that a marble relief of the Virgin and Child he had fabricated was attributed to Donatello (1386–1466). By 1927 Dossena had become aware



## Admired Fakers



**Figure 7.6.** Impressive marble tomb purchased by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1924 for \$100,135. It was made by Alceo Dossena but attributed to Mino da Fiesole when purchased. (Image courtesy of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts)

of the deceitful practices of Fasoli and Palesi. While he was still poor, he realized that they had made a fortune from his work (Sox 1987).

A scandal erupted when he brought a lawsuit against them in 1929, informing the world of the misrepresentations and revealing that he had received only \$35,000 over a 10-year period; most of this money had been spent on living expenses and materials. Dossena himself was cleared of any charges when he insisted that he was innocent of the dealer's practices and had not benefited monetarily from the sale of his work. Misrepresented fakers like Dossena create an enigma for the problems of authenticity,

discussed in chapters 2 and 3. The artist's intent and the aesthetic authenticity of Dossena's sculptures are matters of dispute. If Dossena was carefully soaking off small pieces of fourteenth-century gilding from an old, badly damaged wooden sculpture to reuse the detached pieces in one of his own carvings, was the intent to deceive the buyer or just to create something that had the right appearance for the fourteenth century, not necessarily for monetary gain by passing off the work as created in the fourteenth century but to pay homage to that century? The answer is hard to establish. Certainly from the external point of view, some of Dossena's



**Figure 7.7.** *Angel of the Annunciation.* Thought to be an authentic work of the fourteenth century, the marble sculpture was in fact carved by Alceo Dossena in the early twentieth century. It was purchased by Helen Clay Frick around 1920 for \$225,000, equivalent to about \$3 million 2014. Dossena received only a tiny fraction of the money. In 1928 Dossena revealed that he had made a large number of sculptures in a variety of media, including this impressive work, based on an angel in the tempera painting *The Annunciation* (1333) by Simone Martini, now in the Uffizi. (Image courtesy of Isabelle Lucie Catherine Chartier, University Art Gallery, and the Trustees of the University of Pittsburgh)

manipulations of the artworks he created could be seen as being deliberately deceptive rather than innocent striving for the aesthetic reality of the ancient that he so wished to emulate in every aspect.

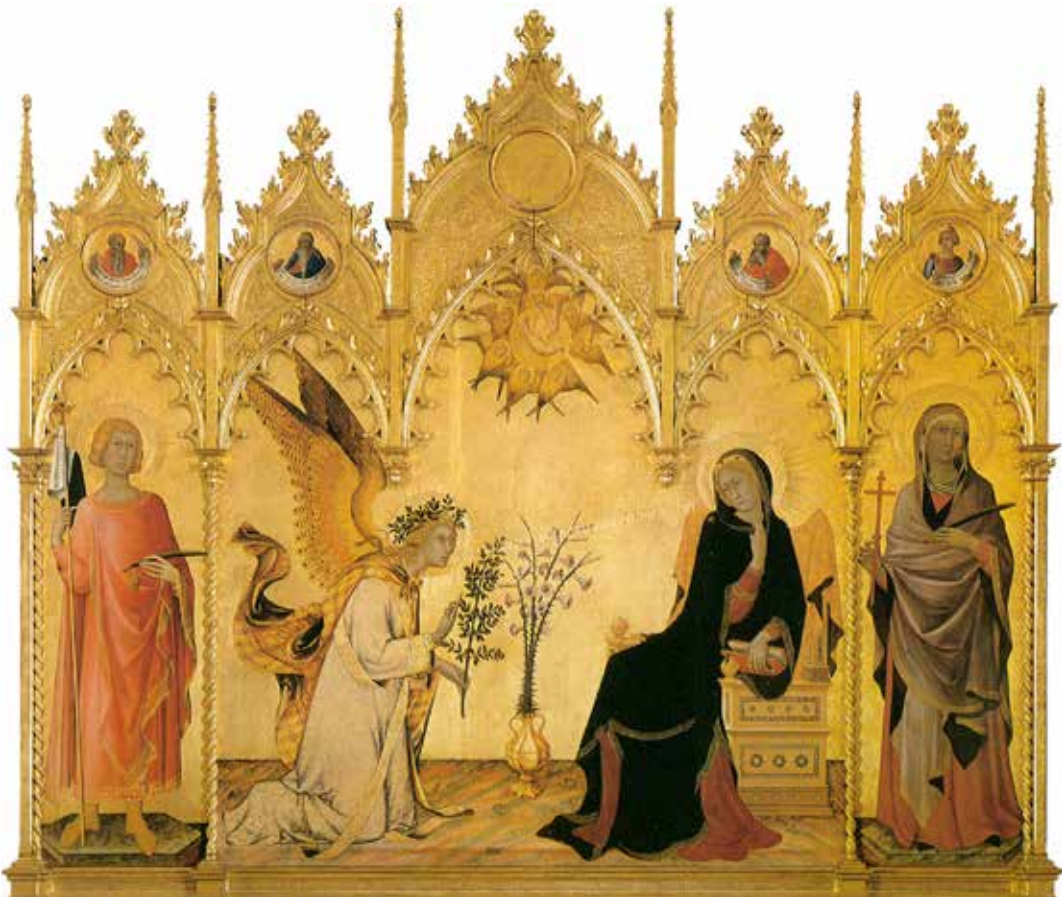
For example, in the case of an Archaic marble statue of Athena, which was purchased by the Cleveland Museum of Art, Dossena used a hammer to break the finished sculpture into a number of pieces. He lowered the fragments into an acid bath and soaked them as many as 40 times, with periodic heating with a torch to create a surface craquelure consistent with age. He applied other chemicals intermittently to create chalky deposits (Keats 2011; Sox 1987). Lenain (2011), a scholar of the medieval period, writes that some of Dossena's work is the most authentic-looking fake art he has ever seen in terms of style and execution.

Can these sculptures still be considered fakes although they ended up being sold by the dealers as fourteenth-century originals? Unlike Nicholas Lochoff (1872–1948), who made expert duplications (or replicas) of works that were sold as such, Dossena created sculptures using the medieval artist's conventions but without copying any particular artist.

### Medieval Restorations

The reuse of Greek and Roman marbles, spolia, and building material continued through the medieval period. Adaptive reuse was the prevalent *modus operandi*. Conti (2007:3) mentions a head of Livia reused in the ninth century for the Herimankreuz in Cologne. In its new context, the head assumes the meaning of the head of the Redeemer.

The startling alteration of a female bust of Empress Livia Drusilla (58 B.C.E.–29 C.E.) into a head of Christ must have surely held symbolic meaning as the possible triumph of



**Figure 7.8.** *The Annunciation* by Simone Martini, 1333, Uffizi, Florence. Tempera on panel. The kneeling angel was used as the model by Alceo Dossena for his fake marble version, now in the collections of the art museum at the University of Pittsburgh and illustrated in Figure 7.7. Notice how Mary recoils somewhat from the news delivered by the angel, as one indeed might on this extraordinary presentation. (Image courtesy of [http://allart.biz/photos/read/SimoneMartini\\_4\\_Annunciation.html](http://allart.biz/photos/read/SimoneMartini_4_Annunciation.html))

Christianity over the pagan beliefs of ancient Rome. To twenty-first century tastes it seems entirely inappropriate to reuse an authentic Roman sculpture as a head for a revered figure of the opposite sex. Conti (2007:3) mentions the head of Tiberius (42 B.C.E.–37 C. E.) appropriated in 1581 to sit on an ornate gilded mount fabricated by Antonio da Faenza (circa 1480–1534) and housed in the Museo degli Argenti in Florence. The reuse of heads known to be ancient conferred enhanced spiritual authority on the church,

whose power could even extend to the legitimating use of admired Roman figures in a Christian context.

The reworking of altarpieces in the Middle Ages has been extensively revealed by X-ray radiography, which has shown that many thirteenth-century panels were heavily repainted at a date quite close to their origination, resulting in numerous art historical errors of interpretation. Conti (2007:3) gives as an example a work by Coppo di Marcovaldo (circa 1225–1276), a Madonna with repainted



**Figure 7.9.** Marble *Madonna and Child* by Dossena, 1930, in the collections of the San Diego Museum of Art. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)



**Figure 7.10.** The great forger of Renaissance art Alceo Dossena. (Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of <http://muzaart.ru/obman-vekov-ili-vozhzhdenie-vo-vremeni/>)

heads from the end of the thirteenth century, in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Orvieto. Conti (2007:3) also recounts that during a restoration of the painting at the Istituto Centrale del Restauro, it was found that the heads had been completely repainted, possibly because of earlier fire damage. Conti suggests that this restoration was carried out at the end of the thirteenth century by a painter who had seen the work of Cimabue (1240–1302), although opinions vary on this interpretation.

Coppo di Marcovaldo is significant for our story because many re-creations by the early twentieth-century master forgers Jef van der Veken in Belgium and Icilio Frederico Joni in Siena were based on artists whose style was

very much akin to Coppo di Marcovaldo, credited to be a stylistic fusion of Byzantine painting and Italian Florentine. Some of his works were painted in *tecnica a velatura*—that is, pure colors were covered with tinted varnishes or glazes to produce the desired chromaticity.

The painting in tempera on panel shown in Figure 7.13 was authenticated by art historians in the 1930s but was later shown to be a fake by scientific connoisseurship. An X-ray radiograph revealed that an old worm-tunneled wooden panel had been reused for the painting. But the wormholes were filled with gesso, showing that an original panel had probably been scoured down; the worms

## Medieval Restorations



**Figure 7.11.** Cross made for Archbishop Herimann of Cologne, circa 1050. Cast bronze; engraved and gilded; 41 x 28 cm. The crucifix shows an effigy of Christ with the head of Empress Livia (Livia Drusilla, wife of Augustus, 58 B.C.E.–29 C.E.) in blue stone. The head was presumably incorporated into the crucifix at the request of Herimann, who is portrayed on the reverse side. It is an interesting example of adaptive reuse of a female Roman head in a male Christian effigy. Erzbischöfliches Diözesanmuseum, Cologne. (Image courtesy of Web Gallery of Art and Emil Kren and Daniel Marx)



**Figure 7.12.** *Madonna and Child* by Coppo di Marcovaldo, circa 1265, in Santa Martino dei Servi, Orvieto. Tempera on panel. The heads had already been completely repainted by the end of the thirteenth century. (Image courtesy of Creative Commons Share Alike)

## Medieval Restorations



**Figure 7.13.** *Madonna and Child* in the style of Coppo di Marcovaldo, authenticated in the 1930s but later determined to be completely painted by the Belgium restorer and art forger Jef van der Veken in the 1920s. (Image courtesy of Valerie Ann Scott)

## Considerations of Medieval Authenticity

should come after the ground layer has been laid down, not before. The painting was also found to have retained some of the original gesso preparation in patches, and several modern wooden inserts had been painted in the same pigment as the original layers, which during an aesthetic restoration would have been deliberately deceptive. All lines of evidence suggest that the panel was the work of Jef van der Veken (1872–1964), a very late follower of Coppo di Marcovaldo.

Many panels have been reresetored several times. These include *Saint Dominic* in the Fogg Museum, a fragment of a Sienee painting produced not long after his canonization in 1233. Conti (2007:3) states that the earliest restoration occurred shortly after 1260, while the third restoration took place about 20 years after that and is attributed to the workshop of

Guido da Siena (1230–1290). The hands had been painted over at least once and the tunic too, while the punched halo decoration in the gilding dates from the fourteenth century. Conti (2007:5) writes:

It should also be borne in mind that copies and falsifications of thirteenth century paintings of a satisfactory standard are a very recent twentieth century phenomenon (for instance the Volpi Madonna exhibited in 1937 in the Giotto Exhibition). The Madonna dell'Impruneta painted in 1758 by Ignazio Hugford [1703–1778] in imitation of the no longer visible image, is a good example of eighteenth century artists struggling with the style of the Early Masters, despite having a passionate devotion to their art.



## Chapter 8

# The European Renaissance and Beyond

The *Mona Lisa*

Copies and the Emulation of the Past

The Ludovisi Ares

The Laocoön

The Farnese Herakles

Sistine Chapel Frescoes

The Restoration of *The Last Supper*

Restoration and Identity

Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*

The Forgeries of Joni and Giunti

*Here, as earlier, we must be careful not to confuse genuineness with aesthetic merit. That the distinction between original and forgery is aesthetically important does not . . . imply that the original is superior to the forgery.*

—Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*

### Introduction

Basic changes in assumptions and ideals took place during the Renaissance, although it may be more accurate historically to think not of one Renaissance but of an entire family of renaissances, stretching from the Saite period of ancient Egypt to the Carolingian Renaissance and the Chinese Renaissance. The latter took

place during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, some 500 years before the European Renaissance, which is the basis of this chapter (Cronin 1992; Ruggiero 2015). The rediscovery of the ancient world and the increasing autonomy of action of the individual are two key aspects of the Italian Renaissance. There was little interest in the artistic achievements

of ancient Greece or Rome in the medieval period, when the philosophical mode of thought was directed to the worship of God, although, as was revealed in the previous chapter, fragments or entire works of ancient art could be (re)appropriated, reused, or incorporated into works of art in the medieval period to serve new cultural or religious purposes. Secular works of art existed during the medieval period, but these have not survived well. Before the Renaissance, there was less interest in the preservation of cultural materials, which tended to be reused or discarded as of no relevance to cultural or societal needs.

The principal period of the European Renaissance lasted from the fourteenth century, when it began in Florence (Cronin 1992), to the seventeenth century (Paoletti and Radke 2011; Ruggiero 2015). The rediscovery, or at least the revaluing, of antiquity was one of the major achievements of the Renaissance, responsible for passing down to us such vestiges of the ancient world that still existed.

Earlier empirical Greek science came as a revelation to the Renaissance mind. For example, the determination of the diameter of the earth and its degree of tilt on its axis by Eratosthenes (circa 276 B.C.E.–circa 195/194 B.C.E.) was certainly an original and impressively innovative work of empirical research (Fischer 1975); it was not repeated in Europe until 1,250 years later. The confines of Christian faith excluded empirical experimentation and promulgated belief rather than inquiry. Despite the fact that some people came to believe from their own observations that the earth was a sphere rather than a flat plane, they chose not to inquire into the matter any further, because faith alone was sufficient for the purposes of life. Scientific inquiry of the kind exemplified by Eratosthenes had no place.

Plenty of material from the Renaissance concerns emulation, copying, restoration, forgery, and the resulting controversies that restoration brings forth. This chapter discusses prominent examples: the Laocoön, *The Last Supper*, and the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. In the case of the Laocoön, some think the entire work is a forgery by Michelangelo, not the restoration of an ancient work. The restorations of marble sculpture during this period, as well as eighteenth-century adaptations, are discussed here in detail, based on several examples from the Getty Museum collections as well as other important works.

Forgery of ancient works in the Renaissance did indeed involve artists as elevated as Michelangelo. Even though the consensus view is that he did not create the Laocoön, he was not afraid to create works of art purporting to be ancient. They came to be admired in their own right rather than viewed as forgeries to be discarded or unappreciated. Some restorations carried out during the Renaissance repurposed works to suit norms of the period rather than to preserve what was truly ancient. Once again, Michelangelo is an interesting case. He so admired the Belvedere Torso that the fragment qua fragment was truly inspirational for him. He had no thought of a completion with modern additions. What was authentically ancient remained unaltered.

### **Authenticity in the Renaissance**

Authenticity in the Renaissance represents part of the quest to find meaning, values, and motives attached to the actions, creations, and investigations of the individual, whether a scientist, artist, or scholar. However, the attainment of individual recognition for artistic achievement was presaged in ancient Greece and Rome by named and admired artists such as Lysippus. Pliny the Elder mentions by name

several artists who were famous in his own time or in the Roman past. Aspects of these historical antecedents have been discussed previously.

It is not just a matter of presaging; it is a matter of recognition. Several scholars write as if the Renaissance hailed the inception of individual artistic achievement and as if art as such and associated ideas such as attribution were of no concern in earlier times. A few quotations from Pliny the Elder from his volume on stone (Book XXXVI.iv.17–20) are relevant to this dispute. He writes, “It is reported that Pheidias himself carved in marble the exceptionally beautiful Venus in Octavius’s buildings at Rome.” In assessing the quality of Pheidias’s work, he discusses just one example of his genius, the shield of the statue of Minerva at Athens:

On the convex border of which he engraved a Battle of the Amazons, and on the hollow side, Combats of Gods and Giants, and her sandals, on which he depicted Combats of Lapiths and Centaurs. . . . Although the figure of Victory is especially remarkable, connoisseurs admire also the snake, as well as the bronze Sphinx that crouches just beneath her spear. . . . They make us realize that the grandeur of his notions was maintained even in small details.

Pliny (Book XXXVI.iv.20–22) also mentions that the Athenian Alcámenes, Pheidias’s pupil, made several famous works, including the celebrated statue of Venus known in Greek as *Aphrodite of the Gardens*, which Pheidias is said to have finished for his pupil to pass off as his own. Another pupil, Agoracritus of Paros, one of his favorites, sold several works as made by himself when they were actually made by Pheidias. It was said that Praxiteles’s

marble Venus in Cnidus was so beautiful that a man hid in the temple by night to make love to the statue and that a stain on the Venus betrayed his lustful act.

There are a number of salient points to note here: first, the recognition of named artists whose works were judged to be superior to others; second, appreciation of the special beauty of some of the works described; third, the finishing of a sculpture by the master himself when it was principally carved by a pupil; and fourth, sculptures created by the master himself that were purported to be by his pupil Agoracritus and were sold as work of the latter. None of these instantiations are any different from concerns expressed in the Renaissance, or later, regarding the mode of artistic production.

The connoisseurship of artistic detail, often stated to be a Renaissance phenomenon, is clearly not: Pliny and other aesthetes would have been able to differentiate between the quality, skill, and artistic execution of work by Praxiteles, in his carving of the detail of the snake and sphinx, and that of work by an imitator. Artifacts could be seen as so beautiful that men fantasized about copulating with them. The work of the master was so admired that favored pupils were able to sell the master’s work as their own, because of its superior quality. The recognition of aesthetic and material authenticity evidenced by these quotations is quite contrary to assertions of scholars of the Renaissance that only in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did the cult of the individual artist become recognized as a singular achievement. The restoration of works of art is also described by Pliny, and chapter 1 in this volume discusses the actions of King Nabonidus in 530 B.C.E., when he carefully restored buildings and artworks, some of which dated to 2500 B.C.E.

To characterize the Renaissance broadly then, the concerns that start to become important, compared with the medieval, are the value of creativity in terms of individual expression, the production of admired copies and replicas—not only of art of the past but of works of artists then living—and the desire to attribute works of art to particular schools, studios, epochs, or individuals. The intangible or conceptual authenticity that was so important during the medieval period assumes a lesser status, as the aesthetic, historical, and material authenticity of works of art become valorized.

In terms of copies of works of Renaissance masters by other contemporaries, there are several famous anecdotes. For example, according to Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574), Michelangelo (1475–1564) was able to copy drawings so well that he kept the originals and returned his copies, which he smoked to make them appear old. Depositing fine carbonaceous particles from smoke or soot mimics the surface degradation of age, a technique that has been much used by art forgers over the centuries. Vasari (1912–1915) defended the aesthetic power of copies because of the desire of “modern artists” such as Michelangelo to equal the attainments of the ancients. Vasari writes: “Modern works, if they be excellent, are as good as the ancient. What greater vanity is there than that those who concern themselves more with the name than the fact?”

During the half year he spent in Florence, Michelangelo worked on two small statues, a child Saint John the Baptist and a sleeping Cupid. According to Ascanio Condivi (1524–1574), Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici (1449–1492), for whom Michelangelo had sculpted Saint John the Baptist, asked that Michelangelo “fix it so that it looked as if it had been buried” so that he could “send it to

Rome . . . pass [it off as] an ancient work and . . . sell it much better.”

This passage betrays sentiments that had already taken hold in the early sixteenth century—that a modern sculpture by Michelangelo would fetch greater monetary reward if it could be made to appear that it dated from the time of ancient Rome. Another common theme emerges: Both Lorenzo and Michelangelo were unwittingly cheated out of the real value of the sculpture by a middleman. Cardinal Raffaele Riario (1461–1521), to whom Lorenzo had sold it, discovered that it was a fraud, but he was so impressed by the quality of the sculpture that he invited the artist to Rome. There are slight variants of this story.

There were many imitations and copies of artists’ work by others. Carlo Cesare Malvasia (1616–1693) mentions imitations of drawings by Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (Raphael, 1483–1520) made by Denis Calvaert (1540–1619), who smoked them (Jones and Penny 1987) and sold them as originals to Cardinal d’Este (1509–1572). Luca Giordano (1634–1705) produced copies of works by Tintoretto (1518–1594) and was well-known as a painter with many styles of imitation (De Los Cobos 2010). Carlo Maratta (1625–1713) painted copies of works by Andrea Sacchi (1625–1713) (Harris 1978), and Pierre Mignard (Le Romain, 1612–1695) (Boyer 2008) produced imitations of Guido Reni (1575–1642) (Salvy 2001).

Spear (1989) mentions Shearman’s (1965) study of Andrea del Sarto’s (1486–1530) workshop organization and his conclusion that no single, primary autographic version of each painting existed but only a series of multiple “originals.” The same problems are found with Paolo Veronese’s (1528–1588) *bottega*, where wanting “a Veronese” and an “original” might not have been the same

## The *Mona Lisa* and Her Instantiations

thing because of the nature of the workshop practices of Veronese.

A well-known case of copying that descended into forgery concerned Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), who became furious at inauthentic copies of woodcut prints bearing his famous monogram, which had also been forged. Twice he went to court over this copying, once in Nuremberg and once in Venice. The Venetian case was brought against Marcantonio Raimondi (1480–circa 1534), who had copied Dürer’s woodcut series *The Life of the Virgin*, including his famous “AD” monogram (Pon 2004). The Venice court ruled that Raimondi could continue to copy the woodcuts but was forbidden to add the monogram. Legal protection was therefore accorded to the monogram, the signature of the artist, but not to the act of copying the art produced by Dürer per se. The woodcuts would have enabled multiple copies to be printed from each block, and the signature of the artist was usually added in the block itself, so that it was integral to the printed edition. It is this that Raimondi would have been instructed not to add. In this connection, Lisa Pon’s discussion of the differentiation between conferred privileges and the modern notion of copyright is of interest (see Pon 2004:39–41, 43). Any signatures added after the event, unless signed in the block on the printed version, were usually regarded as unreliable or inauthentic and in modern terms might render the print of no value whatsoever.

Although the Renaissance brought to the fore the concept of the artistic genius whose work was original to himself or herself and, ideally, was executed solely by the artist, this period was also one in which a copy was not necessarily regarded as a denigration of art per se, continuing the theme of the ancient

past. The view that aesthetic appreciation is the only means of judging the value of identical copies has been called “radical aestheticism” by Lenain (2013:22), since it relies on the assimilation of artistic value into aesthetic quality, independent of any other qualities of the work of art.

The various arguments pertaining to copies and replicas continue to haunt us today. Was Raimondi attempting to sell his copies of Dürer woodcut prints as the work of Dürer himself? Or did he declare that he had copied them so well and here they were for purchase, judge for yourself? Were they examples of appropriation art in the manner of Sherry Levine? Were they produced with the intention to pay homage to Dürer? The circumstances of the copying cannot be divorced from the authenticity of the final product, and the intention of the copyist in these determinations of authenticity cannot be divorced from the way in which they have come to be regarded.

## The *Mona Lisa* and Her Instantiations

The subject of copies forms a good introduction to the exemplar of the *Mona Lisa*, one of the most contested, performative, interpreted, and copied works of art in the world (Sassoon 2001). According to Vasari (1912–1915), Leonardo da Vinci started painting the work in 1503 and finished it in 1507. The original is in the Louvre. Stolen in 1911, it was smuggled into Italy and hidden in a broom cupboard. It was placed on display in a small gallery at the Uffizi in Florence in 1913, before its return to the Louvre that year. The foreign sojourn was an opportunity for critics to claim that the authenticity of the 1913 returned version was suspect and that the authorities had been duped by a fake *Mona Lisa* (Volle et al. 2006). Not many people now

regard these claims as viable, although they continued into the 1930s. Technical studies of the Louvre original version have shown that Leonardo employed his sfumato technique in very thin layers, built up gradually to complete the image. The 30 layers he applied were cumulatively only 40 microns thick, or about half the thickness of a human hair (de Viguierie 2009).

Applied varnishes had apparently caused the painting to darken by the sixteenth century (Mohen et al. 2006). An aggressive restoration was carried out in 1809. It involved cleaning and revarnishing the painting and might have removed the eyelashes and most of the eyebrows. Removed from its original frame and cut down in size, the poplar wood on which the oil paint was applied warped, and a crack appeared in the painting. It was infilled and retouched. In 1906 more retouchings, using watercolor, were made. After the theft of 1911, during which further damage to the masterpiece occurred, more watercolor restorations were made to the recovered work. In 1951 two walnut butterfly braces were inserted in the painting's back. In 1952 the varnish in the background was evened out in yet another restoration campaign, and in 1956, after an insane Bolivian man threw a stone at the painting, damage to the left elbow was retouched with watercolor (McMullen 1975; Sassoon 2001). In 1970, cross braces were added to keep the poplar from warping further. Today, the painting can be observed through bulletproof glass.

In 2006 a series of scientific investigations were carried out on the Louvre version. An infrared reflectography image showed that the fingers of the left hand were originally painted in a slightly different position than in the final work, the result of drapery held in the hand. Pascal Cotte (CNN News 2007) is

quoted as saying, "It was really the first time that we have this kind of position of the arm and after Leonardo, thousands of painters have made a copy of this position but without understanding why we have this position. The real justification of the position of the wrist is to hold the blanket on her stomach." Joanna Woods-Marsden (personal communication 2014) points out that the word *blanket* in this context is not correct and that it should be *drapery*. Cotte, the founder of Lumiere Technology, has been able to re-create the appearance of prior versions of the painting by means of multispectral imaging. Lumiere Technology states (2006) that "touchless multispectral imaging makes possible the virtual removal of the varnish."

After this study, the physical condition of the painting was the same as it was before. The important detail of what her left hand is holding cannot be seen visually but was revealed by multispectral imaging. This feature of the painting could probably be seen by the unaided eye if the *Mona Lisa* underwent the usual chemical cleaning processes used in modern conservation, which could drastically alter the visual appearance of the work by removing layers of discolored varnish, which probably obscure the drapery held in her hand.

Apart from the innumerable sixteenth- to eighteenth-century copies of the *Mona Lisa* (Wikipedia 2012), have any required further study to determine whether they are directly connected to Leonardo da Vinci? There are two: the prosaically named Isleworth *Mona Lisa* and the Prado *Mona Lisa* (Asmus 1989; Bailey 2012; Brooks 2013; Syson 2011; Woods-Marsden 2014).

The Isleworth *Mona Lisa* is named for the location of the collection formed by Hugh Blaker, who discovered the painting in 1913 (a significant year for *Mona Lisas* given what

## The *Mona Lisa* and Her Instantiations



**Figure 8.1.** The *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci, 1503–1506. Oil on poplar; 77 x 53 cm (possibly cut down slightly and remarkably similar to the dimensions of the *Mona Lisa* in Figure 8.2). Louvre Museum. (Image in the public domain)

happened to the Louvre original). This version ended up in a Swiss bank vault, kept under wraps for 40 years. The brushwork was studied by American scientist John Asmus (1989) and found to be the same as that on the Louvre version. Alfonso Rubino, an Italian expert on Leonardo's geometric style, states that the work conforms to the basic line structure used by the artist (Brooks 2013).

These conclusions have not been generally accepted, and Martin Kemp, a prominent Leonardo scholar, has denounced the work as having "so much wrong with it" (Brooks 2013). Woods-Marsden (personal communication 2014) states that it hardly merits consideration in the same terms as the Prado version, as it is so obviously not the work of Leonardo. Undeterred, the Swiss-based Art Foundation has recently undertaken a radiocarbon dating of the canvas, which shows that it dates from 1410 to 1455, apparently refuting the claim that it is a sixteenth-century copy (Brooks 2013). However, if art connoisseurs cannot accept the quality of the work as being by Leonardo, it remains an inauthentic copy, perhaps a later version on a reused fifteenth-century canvas, which would help explain the radiocarbon date. So scientific connoisseurship of the pigments, binding media, underdrawing, and technique would be required to advance the argument any further to match the art historical connoisseurship.

On the other hand, the version in the Prado, shown in Figure 8.2, was always known as a copy made at a time quite close to that of the original work. Comparisons of the hairstyles in the two versions have been made to clear up the assertion that *Mona Lisa* was wearing a kind of bonnet or had her hair partially secured in a bun, with only a few strands falling around her face (Mohen et al. 2006), an argument described by Woods-Marsden

(personal communication 2014) as quite erroneous, as the Prado version reveals nothing of the kind. Recent restoration work on the Prado copy, which formerly had a very dark background, has shown that this is all over-paint. It had been assumed that the Prado copy was a sixteenth-century version on oak, but a reevaluation shows the panel to be walnut, a wood lauded by Leonardo for its superior properties.

A study by infrared reflectography interestingly revealed an underdrawing very similar to that of the version in the Louvre, showing that the two works must have originated from Leonardo's studio and that the Prado version is not a sixteenth-century copy as was formerly believed. Ana Gonzalez Mozo, from the Prado Conservation Department, described it as a "high-quality work" (Bailey 2012) and presented additional evidence that it was undertaken in Leonardo's studio between 1503 and 1506. Mohen et al. (2006) propose that the painting was produced by one of two pupils of Leonardo—either Andrea Salai (1480–1524) or Franseco Melzi (1491–1570).

The Prado version, like the multispectral re-creations by Pascal Cotte, shows that the sky and background were not green, as currently seen in the Louvre version, but were originally blue. What is it that our authentic *Mona Lisa* should deliver? To be seen as she appears now, under layers of discolored varnish? With her original blue background, now altered by degradation to a green-blue restored? With her eyelashes? Apparently not holding anything? There are four principal issues here: the processes of degradation that the original materials used by Leonardo have undergone; the corresponding inability of cleaning to return the painting to its "original state"; alterations that have taken



## The *Mona Lisa* and Her Instantiations



**Figure 8.2.** The Prado *Mona Lisa* after cleaning and digital remastering. Oil on panel; 76.3 x 57 cm. Prior to the restoration, the background was almost black. The cleaning revealed a version much closer to Leonardo da Vinci's, with very similar underdrawing. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons and Escarlati)

place as a result of ill-advised cleaning in 1809; and the problem of differentiation between the grimy yellowed varnish and original degraded materials underneath.

The weather-beaten authentic appearance is what is left to us today. This is not what the painting looked like when it was made by Leonardo, and since it cannot be cleaned without occasioning an international controversy, the work has to be left in the discolored and obscured condition it presently manifests.

Because public furor would result if the visual condition of the *Mona Lisa* was interfered with in any way to render the work more “authentic” to the aims of the original artist, it is simply left as is, with dirty and obscuring varnish layers. The painting is additionally obscured by its veil of bulletproof glass.

However, for the purposes of display, a very high-quality digital copy could be exhibited adjacent to the present painting. The original would remain in its present condition, but with the aid of new multispectral imaging technologies, a virtually cleaned *Mona Lisa* could be exhibited, showing a blue sky, not a green one, and with the dirty varnish coating removed, so that viewers can see what her left hand is holding. Since very little of the present-day *Mona Lisa* can actually be discerned through her glass encasement, this approach would offer a version of the remnant material authenticity of the work—of what it looked like closer to the time of creation, even if total recall of such an existence cannot be made.

### **The Renaissance: Copies and the Emulation of the Past**

Part of the essential artistic inquiry of the Renaissance was the nature of the antique and how the invigoration of modern art of its time could be inspired by the ideals and artistic

creations that survived into the Renaissance from ancient Greek, Roman, or medieval antecedents. Artistic practice in the Renaissance often sought to combine medieval motifs with revived antiquities, with the medieval sometimes already a pastiche of ancient and medieval components, variously interpreted by collectors and their restorers to produce a new artwork. Princes and rulers erected halls of fame to the 12 Caesars, described in the writings of Suetonius (Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, circa 69–circa 122 C.E.), which were copies and replicas from casts. Seymour Howard (1991:201) writes:

Among the early Renaissance documents, the inventory of Guglielmo Della Porta’s studio-galleries is especially informative for its contents of ancient and modern works, including casts, to be used for study and emulations by artists, as well as for purchase by collectors. Inexpensive casts helped to disseminate the taste for antiquities, including portrait busts. As we know, the great model collections of dynastic rulers of church and state were succeeded by national and ecclesiastical museums for the public.

The desire for the antique was so pervasive that casts and copies had to be made to supply the greatly increased demand, which outstripped the availability of original works. This gave rise to two archetypal attitudes, common to our own time as well as the Renaissance, the latter reviewed by Muller (1989), especially as regards the concept of authenticity as formulated in the early literature of Renaissance connoisseurship. One attitude sought to isolate the qualities that separated originals from copies and dismissed the latter as inferior or inauthentic works, valorizing the originals.

The other recognized the value of copies and attempted to differentiate the instantiations of them in terms of type, quality, and production, defending the usefulness of their function in spreading the appreciation of art and the antique among a wider public. Echoes of concerns for endless copies pervade the postmodern as well (Krauss 1985).

Muller (1989) contends that the demand for authenticity is obvious from at least the sixteenth century, when Vasari was writing his famous accounts of the lives and paintings of the artists of his time (Lenain 2011). One of the theses of this book is that concerns for authenticity stretch back very much further than the Renaissance, that Muller's view is a very parochial one that ignores thousands of years of human history. It is true, however, that the increased desire for understanding of material authenticity led to a rise in concerns over attribution and hence to art connoisseurship, although one could argue that attribution issues and comparative assessments of artistic quality go back at least to the work of Pliny.

In terms of the Renaissance era, on January 5, 1532, Marcantonio Michiel visited the house of Antonio Pasqualino in Venice. Here he observed a picture by Giorgio da Castelfranco (Giorgione, 1470–1510) that had been obtained from Messer Giovanni Ram, who possessed a copy of the same work, thinking it was the original (Klein and Zerner 1990). One of these two versions may now be housed in the collections of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna; which one is unclear.

Muller (1989) mentions Enea Vico's *Discorsi* of 1555 on coins, which contains an entire chapter devoted to forgeries and copies. Vico writes that a skillful modern copy presents difficult problems in terms of authenticity and illustrates a supposedly ancient Roman sesterces with a head of Nero,

warning that if a copy were struck with a die and covered with a false patina, only the eye of the connoisseur would be capable of determining the quality of the coin and arriving at the truth. In fact, Vico discerns that notable differences between artists are most visible in details “in the master's style and in the execution of hair, ears, hands, and folds of drapery and similar things” (Muller 1989). These themes were taken up by connoisseurs, from Morelli to Berenson, in centuries to come.

Felipe de Guevara (circa 1560) discussed originals and imitations of Hieronymus Bosch (1450–1516) in his *Comentarios de la pintura* and advised the reader to beware of the countless forgeries, a matter that is still causing trouble: Marijnissen (1985) mentions three different types of underdrawings in works attributed to Bosch, which is unusual since an artist normally has a distinctive style as evidenced by the underdrawing. Giulio Mancini (1558–1630), a noted physician and writer on art, was among the first to discuss the problem of literal copies in his *Considerazioni* of about 1620, in which he cautions buyers to determine if a painting is an original or merely a copy (Radnóti 1999). Mancini sought material signs of the authenticity of the paintings in his own collection and mentions as worthy of examination hairs, beards, ringlets of hair, and the spirited and scattered highlights that a master renders with one stroke of the brush. Mancini's work was available in manuscript copies for centuries but not in published form until 1956.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the correspondence between freedom of touch and authenticity was becoming widely recognized. Lenain (2013) writes that Abraham Bosse (1604–1676), an engraver and theoretician, was the first to challenge the view that a copy could equal the original and be

mistaken for it. Filippo Baldicinni, in his letter on painting of 1681, describes “the universal rule of more or less boldness in handling” by which one can differentiate originals from copies. This is what great forgers such as Eric Hebborn (1991) tried to emulate: bold and spontaneous lines in the style of the master rather than fussy attempts to create exactly the same lines as the original, concepts that had already been enunciated by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the early decades B.C.E.

Mancini’s work honors him as the intellectual ancestor of Giovanni Morelli (1816–1891), who is much better known. He examined the ways artists represented hands, fingers, hair, beards, and eyes and stated that a painting boldly and spontaneously painted could not be effectively copied. Nevertheless, Mancini allows for a copy of a work to be made so well that it cannot readily be distinguished from the original (Radnóti 1999).

Roman versions of original Greek sculpture might not be viewed pejoratively in the ancient world, whereas an ersatz version of such an original produced today might very well be viewed as something inauthentic. The validation of ancient artworks and their copies essentially continues right through the Renaissance and beyond, without condemnation of the imitations or reproductions as being examples of forgery, a viewpoint very different from the late modern, so that even the very notion of forgery in earlier centuries might be a misleading concept. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (2008) highlights the cultural milieu in which such copies existed in his work *Rome’s Cultural Revolution*. Despite the title, the volume does not really engage in a discussion of numerous copies of Greek works by the Romans and how these might elaborate the story of the revolution of Roman achievement. In connection with the

Boethus Herm of Dionysus, a bronze herm found in the Mahdia shipwreck (circa 80 B.C.E.), Wallace-Hadrill (2008:364) writes:

Far from seeking individuality and originality in taking distance from the tools of copying, the Greek artist stamps his mark in the variation on a theme. The fact that the Boethus Herm had already been used before shipping overseas suggests that it was not simply the Roman market that stimulated the practice of multiple copying, but that this was a feature of the Hellenistic artistic landscape they could exploit.

Of course, this had always been true of indirectly cast bronze sculptures, as opposed to those directly cast, since an original model in wood or clay would not have been damaged in the process of reproduction. Hence these can be seen as legitimate copies from a master model. Wallace-Hadrill (2008:364) continues: “We thus move away from a picture of Romans ignorantly plundering and then debasing an innocent world of Greek pure aesthetics to a more complex picture of Romans participating in a Hellenistic context in which art in multiples already serves a world of luxury.” This may be true, but it tends to gloss over the numerous forgeries produced in ancient Rome that would have been sold to less wealthy or less discriminating buyers, while at the same time outstanding reproductions in marble were produced from admired Greek bronze original versions for the cognoscenti. That trend continued. Radnóti (1999) draws attention to the outstanding achievement of Bernard de Montfauçon, whose collection of 40,000 antique reproductions was published in 10 volumes between 1719 and 1724.

Francesco Primaticcio (1504–1570) and

the young Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola (1507–1573) were both commissioned to make plaster copies for Francis I of France (1494–1547). David Teniers the Younger (1610–1690) was in the service of Archduke Leopold William of Austria (1614–1662) as a copier of the work of other artists (Radnóti 1999). Some works, such as the *Spinario*, were copied extensively for centuries. Radnóti (1999:79) writes:

The famous *Spinario*, the earliest plastic and miniature variations of which are dated back to the eleventh–twelfth century, initially the terracotta copies from the provinces formed the model, rather than the prototype for the Capitoleum. In the Medieval period it was the symbol of March (March the month when people started to walk barefoot) then it became a favorite subject for small plastics in the Renaissance, and survived all the way into the 18th–19th century, when it had some variants such as erotic female thorn-pullers.

Artist Jonathan Richardson the Elder (1667–1745), in his discourses on the whole art of criticism (Harloe 2013) as it relates to painting, showed how to judge “of the Goodness of a picture; II Of the Hand of the Master; and III Whether ’tis an Original or a Copy.” Richardson says that copies are different from originals for three reasons. First, they are one step removed from nature—the echo of an echo. Second, copyists will be unfamiliar with, and at pains to imitate convincingly, the customary styles of original artists. Third, copies are made under the constraint of their models, whereas originals are executed with license.

One of the effects of the discussion of copies was to affirm the value of them as works of

art or as appreciatory emissaries of the originals. Marco Boschini (1613–1678) wrote in 1674 that if copies are truly deceptive, then they are laudable deceptions and worthy of envy. As an example he points to Giovanni Battista Zampezzzi (circa 1620–1700), who “when it comes to transforming himself into Bassano, surpasses all others, so that his copies appear to be twins of the originals, and this is the most difficult style to imitate because it is executed with so bold a touch” (Sohm 1991). Freedom of handling, which had been perceived as the most reliable mark of authenticity, was now a sign of the copyist’s virtuosity. Muller (1989) does not agree with Benjamin’s assumption that degrees of authenticity were primarily graded in response to the introduction of reproductive printing processes, which Benjamin thought struck at the root of the quality of authenticity by placing in doubt the uniqueness of the original. Muller (1989) thinks that the workshop production of replicas and the flood of good copies in the Renaissance raised the problem already, independently of prints. Following that line of argument, it could then be claimed that the problems had already become evident by the time the Romans began to produce numerous copies of original Greek works of art.

### Renaissance Restoration

The impact of restoration on ancient marble sculptures and how their identities or changing contexts affect their authenticity has already been discussed. During the Renaissance, starting in the sixteenth century, some of the earliest restorations of major works of art from ancient Rome took place. One could almost say that in differentiating the Renaissance from earlier European paradigm shifts, the act of restoration of ancient artifacts in their own right was one of

the period's defining characteristics. Reuse, reappropriation, and spolia of architectural fragments occurred in previous epochs and works of art were given new identities, but restoration of a work of art qua admired art was uncommon.

In the Renaissance, restoration of sculpture was a means to complete the work of art to improve its aesthetic appeal—a process that involved an interpretation of the positioning of added fragments or the reassembly and possible recarving or recasting of missing elements rather than a faithful reproduction of whatever was actually broken (Conti and Longhi 1973:33). The original material authenticity of the artwork was therefore often compromised. Invariably, the missing parts were completely invented by the restorer, who was usually a sculptor or artist, more or less famous, to increase the value of the original sculpture and improve its already existing beauty or “grace” (Conti and Longhi 1973:33).

The same approach pertained to paintings, many of which were retouched, overpainted, or altered to suite the taste of the times. But few paintings survived from the ancient past into the Renaissance, which is why the restoration practices discussed here are principally concerned with marble sculpture.

The attitude of the restorer was “a mix of self-confidence, hubris and leadership, along with feelings of admiration camaraderie, fraternity and equality, in his ambitious creative improvisation” Howard (1990:19). The most famous exception involved Michelangelo himself and the story of the Belvedere Torso, a broken fragment of a nude male, signed on the front of the base “Apollonios, son of Nestor, Athenian.” Now in the Museo Pio-Clementino of the Vatican Museums, it probably dates from the first century B.C.E. and

represents either Hercules or Polyphemus. Legend has it that Pope Julius II (1443–1513) requested that Michelangelo complete the fragmentary statue with new arms, legs, and head. He respectfully declined, stating that it was too beautiful to be altered, and instead he used it as inspiration for several of his figures in the Sistine Chapel, including the sibyls and prophets bordering the ceiling. The Belvedere Torso remained one of the few ancient sculptural fragments admired throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and through the Mannerist and Baroque periods (Howard 1991:210). The fragment was regarded as expressing a sense of grace and power “not despite, but because of its fragmented state” (Barkan 1990:189), although this idea was usually reversed and employed against the fragment as an argument for completion of an image of the whole.

More commonly, sixteenth-century restoration sought to create an aesthetic unity from an assembly of old fragmentary remnants and newly carved components, with subsequent patination of the surfaces to disguise the work of the restorer. The original marble was often chiseled and polished for better adherence with the new additions, which were usually fabricated from marble of different geological origins. The finished work was patinated with a variety of methods to impart “the ancient color” (Conti and Longhi 1973:37).

The creative restorations of great masters such as Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti (1475–1564) and Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) represented the concept of authenticity of their time, one could almost say examples of adaptive reuse for the cultural norms then prevalent. The additions they made, even if proportionally correct, were invariably completely foreign to the original meaning and iconography of the ancient

## The Ludovisi Ares

sculptures. The apparent necessity to give a title to a work of art, directly related to the necessity of its completeness, led to the creation of something completely new, a pastiche of modern art and ancient fragment, a creation of the contemporary master that, as creator and *Homo ludens*, “imposes its own condition,” revealing “his notion of beauty, what he finds worthwhile and life-giving.” With restoration he “subjectively reviewed the work of art” (Howard 1990:17). This can be seen as a different intention than the supposed anonymity that the famous eighteenth-century sculptor Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (1716–1799), responsible for the extensive restoration of many sculptures (Podany 1994a; 2003), stated as his aim. Supposedly, this typified the more modern approach to restoration practices (Howard 1990:24), where the intention of the restorer is not to assume the same creative power of the original artist.

### The Ludovisi Ares

An example of the issues surrounding the authentic appearance of sculpture is the Ludovisi Ares, a marble copy from the Antonine period of an original Greek work, associated with well-known artists such as Skopas and Lysippos (Haskell and Penny 1981; Marvin 2003) and now displayed at the Altemps Palace, part of the National Roman Museum in Rome. It was acquired by the Ludovisi family in 1622.

In the same year, the sculpture was restored by Bernini, who added, among other things, a hilt and a Cupid, which accorded with the Baroque taste of that period (Haskell and Penny 1981:260). The sculpture was originally recognized as an Adonis in the restoration document in 1622. Subsequently its identity changed to a seated gladiator and later a seated Mars; the added Cupid seemed



**Figure 8.3.** The Ludovisi Ares, a Roman copy after a lost Greek original from circa 320 B.C.E., restored with Cupid and sword in Carrara marble by Gianlorenzo Bernini in 1622. Pentelic marble; height 1.56 m. The completed composition is a fiction by Bernini, sometimes shown in later reproductions without the Cupid and sword and sometimes with. (Image courtesy of Marie-Lan Nguyen. Licensed by Wikimedia Commons)

appropriate in every case as it symbolized the submission to love (Haskell and Penny 1981). There is no documentation or other evidence that could justify its presence in the group. Public reactions regarding the restorations were varied. In the bronze copy made by Giovanni Francesco Susini (1587–1653) in the seventeenth century (Haskell and Penny 1981:260), as well as in the print collection of engravings *Raccolta di statue antiche e modern*,

published in 1704 by Paolo Alessandro Maffei (1653–1716), the restorations do not appear, which could be viewed as a new hermeneutic approach to past restorations and the nature of their authenticity.

On the other hand, the restorations led to many theories regarding the identity of the statue, which helped spread its fame (Giometti 2012:228; Haskell and Penny 1981:159). In three portraits of rich English Lords painted by Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787) in the late eighteenth century—*Portrait of John Talbot*, *Portrait of John Staples*, and *Portrait of Anthony Ashley-Cooper*—the statue is represented as complete, with the hilt and Cupid, meaning that appreciation for the sculpture was not diminished by the inauthentic seventeenth-century restorations. The additions are still maintained today and will probably not be removed, even though they cannot be distinguished from the original. They represent a part of the history of the sculpture and the beliefs of European culture of past centuries. The ethics of revealing the original in terms of conservation theory or practice and the desire for the authenticity of the fragment have been overruled by the historical regard for the past and the altered biography of the sculpture. Here conceptual and aesthetic authenticity are considered more important than the material authenticity of the original.

### The Laocoön

The Laocoön is a good example of authenticity problems in terms of its contested, fragmented, and performative states, as the account below reveals. The Laocoön is displayed in the Belvedere Courtyard at the Vatican Museums and represents the Trojan priest Laocoön and his children, who were strangled to death by snakes as a divine punishment for having tried to warn the Trojans

about the wooden horse sent by the Greeks (Beard 2013). This sculpture, one of the most famous and controversial works of art with regard to its authenticity, provenance, and restoration, owes some of its fame to the circumstances of its discovery. It was found in a fragmentary state in 1506 near Santa Maria Maggiore during excavations in the vineyard of Felice de Fredis (Haskell and Penny 1981; Volpe and Parisi 2013). The sculpture immediately drew the attention of the most famous sculptors of the time. Pope Julius II sent Giuliano da Sangallo (circa 1445–1516) to look at the sculpture (Barkan 1990; Brilliant 2000; Haskell and Penny 1981:243; Settis 1999). He recognized it as *il Laocoonte di cui fa menzione Plinio*. In a passage often quoted by Renaissance scholars, Pliny specifically mentions that an ancient and much-admired marble sculpture, the Laocoön, had been created by three related artists (Book XXXVI. iv. 37):

Such is the case with the Laocoön, for example, in the palace of the Emperor Titus, a work that may be looked upon as preferable to any other production of the art of painting or of [bronze] statuary. It is sculptured from a single block, both the main figure as well as the children, and the serpents with their marvellous folds. This group was made in concert by three most eminent artists, Agesander, Polydorus, and Athenodorus, natives of Rhodes.

As is common with debates concerning the nature of an “original” work of art, it may be that the “original” illustrated in Figure 8.4 is in fact a marble copy of a lost earlier bronze original or of a marble version that was already altered in antiquity, but that will never be known for certain. When the sculpture was discovered, as shown by early



## The Laocoön

representations, it was missing the right arm of the father, the right arm and lower leg of the eldest child, and the fingers of the youngest child (Bober et al. 2010:153). The greatest problem for the restorers was in the rendering of the arm of the father, understood since its discovery as a bent arm, as demonstrated by a wax version fabricated by Bartolommeo Bandinelli (1493–1560) between 1520 and 1525 (Conti and Longhi 1973:33; Haskell and Penny 1981:246). The wax arm of Bandinelli was substituted with a terra-cotta version by Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli (1493–1560), and representations since 1540 depict the Laocoön with the new arm diagonally stretched upward, which became the canonical image until the nineteenth century.

The restoration was so regarded that when Agostino Cornacchini (1686–1754) replaced the terra-cotta arm with one in marble in 1725–1727, he fabricated an identical copy to that used in the old restoration. In 1906 Ludwig Pollack (1868–1943) found the missing original marble arm, unearthed in the same place as the Laocoön, in the shop of a Roman stonecutter. This arm was regarded as a forgery and thought by art historians to be a copy made by Pollack himself. It was not until 1950 that it was recognized as the authentic original by museum authorities, at which point the sculpture was de-restored and then reres-tored with the original arm by the restorer Filippo Magi, who also modified the position of the elder son, now moved farther from the father (Haskell and Penny 1981:246).

There were even suggestions, as late as 2005, that the entire sculpture, far from being an ancient Roman original, was in fact a forgery created by Michelangelo to accumulate yet more wealth (Catterson 2005). This startling claim is based on a number of circumstantial evidential factors, carefully

researched by Catterson. The carving *Apostle Matthew*, which Michelangelo began shortly after the discovery of the Laocoön, is held by Catterson (2005) to have been started before the Laocoön and is therefore a conceptual link to the creation of the forged Laocoön rather than a work inspired by the Laocoön itself. Catterson (2005) also produces evidence to show that Michelangelo had ordered more marble blocks than the known sculptures that could have been carved from them, that there was no shortage of Greek marble available in Rome, that receipts for monies due were in excess of amounts that could reasonably be accounted for, and that this Laocoön was not the first to be found: In 1488 Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–1492) received a letter from agents in Rome telling him about their efforts to acquire “three beautiful little fauns on a marble base, all three encircled by a great snake,” without the male figure, which Michelangelo could have used for a model for the forgery.

Although Michelangelo was certainly capable of forging drawings (which he passed off as originals) as well as marbles, there is considerable doubt about the veracity of Catterson's thesis, which is not accepted by many other Renaissance scholars, despite the suspicions she raises concerning the sequence of events in Michelangelo's life at the time. The authenticity of the Laocoön cannot be solved by an art-historical debate. Once something has been condemned as a forgery, it is often difficult to resuscitate its unsullied reputation. In the case of the Laocoön, it may be possible, through scientific connoisseurship, to show beyond reasonable doubt that the sculpture is not a forgery by Michelangelo but an ancient masterpiece, although there seems to be no current impetus to undertake this study.



**Figure 8.4.** The derestored version of the Laocoön with the right forearm and earlier restorations of the arms of the boys removed, and with adjustments to the positions of the figures. The original work was described as a masterpiece by Pliny. The marble version may be a copy after a Hellenistic original, or from an earlier bronze original. Thought to date from about 200 BC, in the collection of the Pio-Clementino Museum at the Vatican in Rome (Inv 1059-1064-1067). Height 2.4 m. (Photograph courtesy of Marie-Lan Nguyen, 2009, licensed by Wikimedia Commons)

The statement of Giuliano da Sangallo, the correspondence of the place of the excavation with that mentioned by Pliny, and the existence of such an important historical reference “allowed the conversion of marble pieces into an artwork . . . and bestowed on the reconstituted Laocoön the status of a

masterpiece” (Brilliant 2000:30). Thanks to the expressive power of the carved bodies and the variety and intensity of emotion expressed by the composition of the figures, the sculpture soon became an emblem of pain and suffering, an *exemplum doloris*, that was able to inspire an empathetic, corporal-emotional

## The Laocoön



**Figure 8.5.** A restored version of the Laocoön as it appeared prior to 1950. The discovery in 1906 by Ludwig Pollak of the ‘missing’ arm of the father (which had been separated from the sculpture) was dismissed as a copy made by Pollak himself, until the authorities realized it was ancient. Which sculpture is more authentic to the aims of the original artist? The version without restorations, or the restored one? (Image courtesy of euratlas.com)

response (Brilliant 2000:33). Wide appreciation of the work led to the creation of numerous copies, drawings, and poems.

The production of so many copies manifests the desire for appropriation of the conceptual authenticity of the work as well as engenders competition with the ancient

masterpiece. Michelangelo, who was present at the moment of its identification, was probably involved in the initial restoration, as many references to the marble group exist in his work. In effect, he established “a kind of ownership of the image” and “his own personal vision will in a short time make it

impossible for his contemporaries (and us) to look at the Laocoön except as always having been a work by Michelangelo. . . . The great sculptural forms that he created out of this inspiration, are not imitation but responses to a set of qualities in the Laocoön that he has himself defined,” thus “his status canonizes the vision while rendering it almost inimitable” (Barkan 1990:14). In view of the contention by Catterson that the entire work is a forgery by Michelangelo, Barkan’s statement that Michelangelo assumed a kind of ownership has ironic overtones.

The appropriation of the sculpture’s image by Michelangelo as an expressive vehicle and his authority as an inventor of expressive body imagery transformed the Laocoön into “the mainstream of Renaissance and baroque art and led to the creation of the ‘Laocoönic’ motif, or ‘Laocoönism,’ which means an emphasis on the mature, male body under stress whether incomplete (as in the case of the Belvedere Torso) or restored” (Brilliant 2000:38). Bandinelli, who also carried out restoration on the sculpture, was commissioned to make a life-size marble copy for the king of France, Francis I, who had demanded that the pope give the original to him or at least “one so like that there shall be no difference” (Barkan 1990:10). Bandinelli boasted that he could make one that was not merely equal to but even surpassing the perfection of the original.

The Laocoön was considered “exchangeable for diplomatic goods and services and also interchangeable with other Laocoöns” (Barkan 1990:34). The political symbolism of ownership was not lost on European sensibility. In the eighteenth century, the statue was ripped away from its Belvedere Courtyard as part of the Napoleonic looting of Italian masterpieces and was removed to France. It was returned thanks to hard work on the part of

Antonio Canova (1757–1822), who lobbied for its restitution (Haskell and Penny 1981:114).

Bandinelli’s replica, which was often itself copied and distributed in the form of small bronzes, is in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, the pope having decided that it was too good to send to Francis I as originally intended. Instead Francis I was sent a bronze casting, made at Fontainebleau, from a mold taken from the original under the supervision of Primaticcio, which is now in the Musée du Louvre. Many copies are still extant; a well-known one is in the Grand Palace of the Knights of Saint John in Rhodes. Some still show the earlier version of the restoration (Brilliant 2000).

The facts concerning the arm and its belated discovery seem opposed to the view by Catterson (2005) that the entire sculpture should be regarded as a forgery. It makes little sense that Michelangelo would have carved the entire sculpture and broken off parts, such as the arm found in 1906, leaving parts lying about the area as additional original work by himself. The more reasonable conclusion is that the late discovery of the missing arm is additional confirmation of the authenticity of the sculpture as an ancient work. In fact, the reresoration of the Laocoön took place about the same time as the discovery of four fragmentary ancient marble sculptures unearthed from the seaside grotto of Sperlonga (Brilliant 2000:10), a coastal town between Rome and Naples, which had formed part of a lavish villa belonging to the Emperor Tiberius (42 B.C.E.–37 C.E.). These sculptures included Scylla’s Attack on His Ship and the Blinding of Polyphemus, which in their dramatic style bear a strong relationship to the style of the Laocoön (Brilliant 2000:11). Remarkably, Pliny’s statement, given above, that the Laocoön had been carved by three eminent craftsmen of Rhodes was confirmed

## The Laocoön

by the discovery at Sperlonga of text on part of Odysseus's ship in the Scylla group, which read: "Athenadorus, son of Hagesandros, Hagesandros, son of Paionios and Polydoros, son of Polydoros, the Rhodians made it.

The new reresoration of the Laocoön had a substantial impact on perception of the sculpture and its context, as well as its dating. The result was a "heightened drama and . . . implicit narrativity" (Brilliant 2000:10) and the loss of its previous relief-like composition, typical of High Renaissance restoration in which "the scene is not primarily a physical struggle . . . but an exposition on the classic theme of tragedy: the hubris of the individual, man, punished by uncompromising authority, the gods . . . showing . . . from left to right . . . a scene of inevitable destruction" (Howard 1959:368).

The authentic relationship of the figures is still in contention: Howard proposes a re-reresoration to correct mistakes made in the last restorations (Brilliant 1990:64; Howard 1959:365). In this proposal, the eldest son is hidden from the scene, thanks to a rotation of 90 degrees, causing the axis from which the group should be observed to shift by 45 degrees. This means a change in the traditional point of view of the observer, who is now forced to turn the sculpture around to fully appreciate the work instead of looking at it from a single viewpoint. This fact, related to discovery of the sculpture of the Sperlonga grotto, suggests that the Laocoön was made at the same atelier for Tiberius and could "have been part of a complex decorative program, similar to the one at Sperlonga, perhaps standing with other sculptures linked to the story of Troy" (Volpe and Parisi 2013).

These discoveries and renewed interpretations did not solve the problem of authenticity and dating but instead led to more debates

concerning the original context or the possibility of the existence of a hypothetical original prototype, which cast doubt on the meaning of the sculpture (Brilliant 2000:64–68).

There are two versions of the Laocoön on exhibition in the Belvedere Courtyard. One is a cast of the restoration made before 1950, and the other is the version with reresorations made after 1950. Yet another plaster version, with the younger son moved farther away, is kept in storage in the Vatican. People's perception of the reresoration is clear from the confusion most visitors experience in front of the two Laocoöns. The cast represents the canonical Laocoön of past centuries; many tourists recognize this old, "still authoritative and authentic" version as the original because of its familiar image in older textbooks and reproductions, descriptions of "authorities" such as Winckelmann, and the rich literature concerning the topic. The new restoration is less appreciated and less recognizable than the traditional Laocoön (Beard 2013; Brilliant 2000).

The contested nature of the authenticity of the sculpture has led Brilliant (2000:18) to list the many instantiations of the work. The (modified) list includes: (1) A posited bronze version of the sculpture may have represented the Greek original; (2) A marble copy may have been produced by Rhodian sculptors; (3) The work was excavated in 1506 in a damaged state and was restored, becoming absorbed into Michelangelo's oeuvre; (4) The sculpture was praised and recontextualized by Winckelmann and later art historians as part of a new inquiry into the hermeneutics of art; (5) The sculpture was restored in the 1950s and is now considered to be more authentic in virtue of closer resemblance to instantiation 2, an intertextuality of interpretation that continues the discourse surrounding the work into the twenty-first century.

The different authenticities of the Laocoön weave an interesting commentary on the three principal authenticities enumerated in chapter 2: the material, the historical/aesthetic, and the conceptual, as well as problems of the contested, performative, and fragmented nature of our inquiries into authenticity. Even the authenticity of instantiation 2 has been contested by several scholars, from Howard (1959) to Catterson (2005). The performative aspects of the Laocoön are seen in its iconic relationships both to Michelangelo and to Winckelmann's powerful description of the emotive force of the sculpture. The concept of Laocoönism has an independent existence qua the Laocoön itself. The material authenticity of the sculpture is contested not only because of arguments as to its original period of fabrication but also because of alterations of the sculpture as a consequence of creative restorations, derestorations, and rorestorations. The decision of the Vatican to display the Laocoön in its material states 3 and 5 is laudatory, allowing the viewer to contemplate the different physical morphologies of the sculpture, which have in turn evoked a number of responses in the canon of Western art.

The many representations and appropriations of the image in modern times gives the iconic work a whole range of meanings. For Karl Marx (1818–1883) it was a symbol of capitalism (Marx 2008 [1887]). For cartoonists it is a symbol of political trouble. Charles Dickens (1812–1870) compared it to Scrooge struggling with his stockings. Brilliant writes that one of these different Laocoöns constitutes

a visible idea, not always labelled, but whose much tested imagery is sufficiently conventionalized to retain the requisite effect, when applied, while the other . . . presents itself only in the work, a

damaged survivor of antiquity, an antiquity like the Vatican Laocoön, less and less familiar to the modern public. This “second” Laocoön has to be seen and seen again in order to avoid that ignorance, indifference . . . aesthetic distance and lack of “adequate references” diminish its aesthetical value, its prestige and [its] authority, so that it can retrieve its status of masterpiece (Brilliant 2000:106).

In terms of the authenticity of display, Phillips (1997) would surely have approved of the duality of the publicly exhibited versions as an honest referent to how different states of authenticity pertain to a work of art that has been diachronically reinterpreted and its intertextuality. To reveal how restoration has interacted with the remains of the originally fragmented work, a further series of illustrated pictures, analogous to those provided for Leda and the Swan in the Getty Museum (discussed in chapter 4), should be provided.

### The Farnese Herakles

A final example of sculpture, the Farnese Herakles, shares similar issues with the Laocoön, such as the existence of a hypothetical original and problems with substitutions and restorations. The Farnese Herakles, a huge sculpture representing a weary Herakles resting after one of his many labors (Brilliant 2005:19), was found in the Baths of Caracalla by Alessandro Farnese (1520–1589) in 1546. It became a valuable artwork in the collection of the wealthy Farnese family. It is now in Naples, where it is displayed at the National Archaeological Museum (Haskell and Penny 1981:229).

The sculpture, according to Aldrovandi (1522–1605), was missing both legs and

## The Farnese Herakles

both arms at the time of its discovery, and these were created as new restorations by Guglielmo Dalla Porta (circa 1500–1577) on the recommendation of Michelangelo. Dalla Porta also added an apple of the Hesperides to enhance the meaning of the subject and the pose adopted, which is possibly why Winckelmann described Herakles as resting after fetching the apples (Howard 1990:63).

When the original legs were discovered in 1560, the restored legs fabricated by Dalla Porta were surprisingly not removed, both because they were probably much appreciated by contemporaries and because of the influence of Michelangelo, who suggested

that the legs made by Dalla Porta be kept “to show that works of modern sculpture can stand comparison with those of the ancient” (Haskell and Penny 1981:230). Thus they could be “a testament to the restorer’s ability” (Howard 1990:65). As had occurred with the Laocoön, the opinions of authorities and masters such as Michelangelo had considerable influence in how restoration was undertaken. The fact that the work of Dalla Porta was considered equal in skillfulness to that of the original artist underlines an important aspect of the approach to authenticity typical of Renaissance restorations. The intention was not the faithful restitution of



**Figure 8.6.** The Farnese Herakles in the National Archaeological Museum, Naples. The sculpture shows the hero, having performed one of his last labors, getting the golden apples of the Hesperides. It is now displayed with its original legs, which turned up later, rather than with the legs carved by Guglielmo Dalla Porta around 1550, which have been lost. (Image courtesy of [www.morrissmithtravels.com](http://www.morrissmithtravels.com))

the sculpture but the aesthetic improvement achievable with the newly completed work, often finished with imaginative additions. The sixteenth-century restorer, with his ability and his status as an artist, was able to modify the work without diminishing the values and meanings associated with it.

Eighteenth-century attitudes did not accord with this view. In 1787 the legs carved by Dalla Porta were removed (Haskell and Penny 1981:230), and the original ones were restored in place by Carlo Albacini (circa 1737–1807). During the eighteenth century, interest had shifted toward a historically and stylistically authentic integration of fragmentary works based on documentary information, an attitude inspired by the philological work of Winckelmann in dating Greco-Roman sculpture. Interestingly, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) commented on this restoration: “One cannot understand why, for years and years, people found the substitute one of Dalla Porta so good” (Haskell and Penny 1981:230). These comments reflect the negative opinion that now prevails regarding the sixteenth-century additions. The Dalla Porta legs actually were lost soon after the restoration, as they were considered “an addition in an outmoded taste” (Howard 1991:210).

There are familiar difficulties with a hypothetical Greek original prototype, whose presumed presence, especially evident in the past, decreases the value of a sculpture, even if the original has been lost or its existence is not proven by any document or other source (Brilliant 2005:21). In the case of the Farnese Herakles, which bore the signature of Glykon, a copyist active in Rome in the early third century C.E., the name of the original author and thus its status as an authentic work of art was overshadowed by the fact that the sculpture

could have been a copy of a “lost original” made by the great Greek sculptor Lysippos, active in the mid-fourth century B.C.E.

There are no surviving works of Lysippos. Thus the existence, the original condition, and the fame over the past century of this alleged prototype was determined only on the phenomenological association of other copies with a coherent iconography. As Brilliant (2005:21) writes: “It would seem that Lysippos’s Herakles has triumphed over Glykon’s Hercules in the agonistic confrontation between a hypothetical Greek original and a Roman copy, as if the true touchstone of aesthetic value were determined by the greater ‘authenticity’ of the alleged original as marking the first entrance of the work and its imagery into the antique sculptural tradition.” The historical importance of replicas is also represented by the fact that they not only instantiate unique remnants of a once rich culture of artistic production but also record the predilections of Roman taste. Thus “the very process of replication, of reproduction, inevitably bore the signs of contemporary fashion, of the requirements of site-specific display and patronage” (Brilliant 2005:21). The new sculpture, recognized as Greek thanks to the fame of the familiar image, became a completely different work of art, not only because it was removed from the original conditions, contexts, and authorship of its first appearance but also because, in the passage from bronze to marble, “new formal solutions were needed, including leg side-props, often in the shape of tree trunks, and supportive arm struts, not required in the original transforming the copy to something aesthetically different as well, since it was no longer governed by the same principles of design that determined the reception of the original” (Brilliant 2005:22).



### Restoration and the Renaissance: The Sistine Chapel Frescoes

One of the most famous controversies concerning the authentic appearance of a work of art concerns Michelangelo's frescoes on the Sistine Chapel, which generated heated arguments concerning the *secco* additions to the *buon fresco* of the ceiling, the layers of glue additions, and whether these had been added by Michelangelo as part of the artist's intention (Beck and Daley 1996; Colalucci 1987, 1997; Colalucci and Mancinelli 1983; Mancinelli 1986). The removal of the animal glue and other obscuring layers revealed a completely different Michelangelo than that judged as authentic by many art historians prior to the cleaning. The restoration sought to create a more authentic appearance for the frescoes without adding the falsifications of historical-period taste so common in the past, such as naked bottoms and genitals painted over by more prudish generations or, as parts of Leonardo's *Last Supper* had suffered in the seventeenth century, being completely repainted to accord with the style of the time.

As Brandi says, the restorer must refrain from assuming that he can insert himself into the creative process of the artist, an all-too-common approach to restoration in the past. Once again this involves a dichotomy between the modern conservation philosophy of Salvador Muñoz-Viñas (2009a) and traditional truth-reliant conservation practices. If the stakeholders decided that a Michelangelo needed to be partially covered over with new paint, the postmodern view is that they are perfectly entitled to proceed with this action, since the art object is only viewed by those in the present as a semiotic process; it is authentic because that is what is required of it and that is the condition in which the work of art currently exists, as a repainted Michelangelo.

On the other hand, it might be argued that what Michelangelo actually painted himself is the authentic condition of the painting, not what is now discernible, and in that case all the repaint would be removed in the name of revealing the authentic work of art.

Paul Eggert (2009) discusses in detail the conservation effort undertaken at the Sistine Chapel as representative of the work of a generation of restorers who displayed an "arrogance of its new knowledge of materials-science systematically destroying what it professes to preserve." He endorses Beck's view (Beck and Daley 1996) that the newly restored ceiling is a "chemical deceit" (Eggert 2009:93–94). These are serious allegations that deserve further debate here.

The relativism of postmodernist philosophies regarding conservation actions is in danger of creating a new divide between the scientific and humanistic approaches to conservation, à la C. P. Snow's two cultures. It is intellectually very fashionable to denigrate science and promote arguments based on a partisan reading of what conservators do, for few conservators have the time to undertake debate in the murky waters of postmodern thought, just as few humanities scholars have any clear conception of the range of activities that modern conservation encompasses.

The Sistine Chapel conservation work is just one example of many in which the cleaning of a work of art alters the viewer's perception of the nature of the original painted surface, creating a cause célèbre and resulting in yet more criticism of the actions of conservators.

The story of the cleaning of the ceiling is long and complex, (Colalucci 1987, 1997; Colalucci and Mancinelli 1983; Mancinelli 1987, 1996), but essentially the accretion of candle soot, dust, and grime, combined with old ill-considered attempts to improve the

## The European Renaissance and Beyond

surface appearance with glue coatings, created very darkened surfaces, seen on a smaller scale in scores of old panel paintings in Italian churches that were recoated with varnish, subsequently yellowed and darkened, and were recoated again to bring them back to life. These may await future conservation. In the meantime, they are often very hard to discern in the dimly lit interiors of many small

Italian churches, as one of the paintings in the collections of the Brancacci Chapel, shown in Figure 8.7 and Figure 8.8, illustrates.

That is perfectly fine: They can await their turn for conservation in the future. Keeping them in this obscured state often does them no harm, but it hardly accords with what the artist painted as much of it cannot be seen clearly, as Figure 8.8 reveals.



**Figure 8.7.** Painting in the collections of the Brancacci Chapel, adjacent to Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence. Artist undetermined. Oil on canvas. (Photograph by the author)



**Figure 8.8.** Detail of the painting from the Brancacci Chapel shown in Figure 8.7. Extensive craquelure and layers of discolored varnish have so reduced the visibility of the work that the figures are hard to discern. It is a work suitable for the restorer's attentions. (Photograph by the author)

Plenty of actions will be available to skilled conservators in the future, when the profession has made further advances in terms of the careful cleaning of surfaces. Eggert argues (2009) is that alterations or additions made in *secco* by Michelangelo would have been removed during cleaning because conservators would have been unaware of them, expecting only *buon fresco*. This is not the case, however, especially after skilled restorers spent more than a decade of close observation of the fresco from scaffolding specially erected for the task. Italian conservators have revealed original pentimenti by Michelangelo as well as, for example, the fact that Christ's sword was painted in *secco*. There is no particular reason why

the cleaning techniques would have resulted in the wholesale removal of any *secco* work. One published painting cross-section reveals a thin layer of dirt above the *buon fresco* and below subsequent glue layers. The use of such cross-sections is an invaluable scientific aid in determining the stratigraphy of paint layers and the relationships between varnish and dirt, pigment and ground.

Beck (Beck and Daley 1996) argued that the *chiaroscuro* technique of Michelangelo meant that that artist covered his entire ceiling with a layer of glue after the painting was completed to darken the surfaces in accordance with this art historical interpretation of the authentic appearance of the original. Not only is this quite improbable, but the task would have extraordinarily prolonged the time it took Michelangelo to complete the work on the ceiling. According to Beck, the question is: Did Michelangelo modify and embellish his frescoes after the application of the *buon fresco* layer with traditional *secco* media such as size or glue-based painting? Beck claims that supporters of the restoration have overturned centuries of observation in asserting that the darkening of the ceiling is the product of dust and soot.

Beck claims that *The Creation of Adam*, painted from 1508 to 1512, was in satisfactory condition without cleaning, yet Figure 8.9 and Figure 8.10 raise doubts in terms of its overall appearance.

God's delicately transparent garment is now heavier, and the highlights have been displaced. Ronald Feldman, a prominent art historian from New York, decided to submit a petition to the Vatican to temporarily stop the cleaning. Feldman persuaded 14 prominent US artists to sign the petition, arguing that restorers were destroying the frescoes by removing layers of *chiaroscuro* applied by



**Figure 8.9.** Detail from the garden from the Sistine Chapel frescoes by Michelangelo, showing the difference between a cleaned (right) and uncleaned (left) area. The fresco has suffered 500 years of smoke, dust, grime, and restorations, which have created a kind of patina and a problem of preservation. The most recent cleaning campaign took place from 1985 to 1996. (Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons; in the public domain)

Michelangelo (Glueck 1987). His premise was based on detailed photographs before and after the restoration. Concentrating on one particular figure, Feldman compared the musculature and dimensionality of the figure in both photographs and pointed out that there was dramatically less depth and musculature in the restored image than in the pre-restored image (Glueck 1987). Feldman also argued that the brightness that was revealed was not what Michelangelo had intended and that other works by Michelangelo showed that he preferred dark, somber colors. However, the figures in *The Creation of Adam* before cleaning appear fuzzy. There is an odd patch of darker color across the top of God and Adam, and the smaller figures surrounding God are very difficult to see. Has this particular image been ruined by conservation treatment? It is hard to accept the premise that it has been ruined, especially after reading the detailed account provided by Colalucci (1997).

Beck proposed that some of the glue varnish found on the ceiling frescoes was applied by Michelangelo himself to achieve a sculptural effect. Art historians on the Vatican team disagreed, however, and removed all layers of glue found on the ceiling. Another art historian, Alexander Elliot, agreed with Beck and further proposed that the glue applied by Michelangelo was intended as a toning layer, although how one could distinguish between later layers of glue and an original not seen for hundreds of years is difficult to comprehend. Beck argued that the chiaroscuro much admired over the centuries was not due to oil and glue restorations but was part of Michelangelo's original art.

Others argued that the glue layers obscured the fresco, and so the argument went around in its circular course. Art historian Nicholas Penny of the National Gallery, London, wrote in 1991 of the emergence of the new Michelangelo as one of the great revelations of our time. The transformation, he



**Figure 8.10.** The creation of the sun and moon scene on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, painted from 1508 to 1512 by Michelangelo, before conservation in 1990. The fuzzy detail on the left is due to the obscuring layers of dirt, grime, glue, and candle soot, not to any coating subsequently applied by Michelangelo. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; in the public domain)

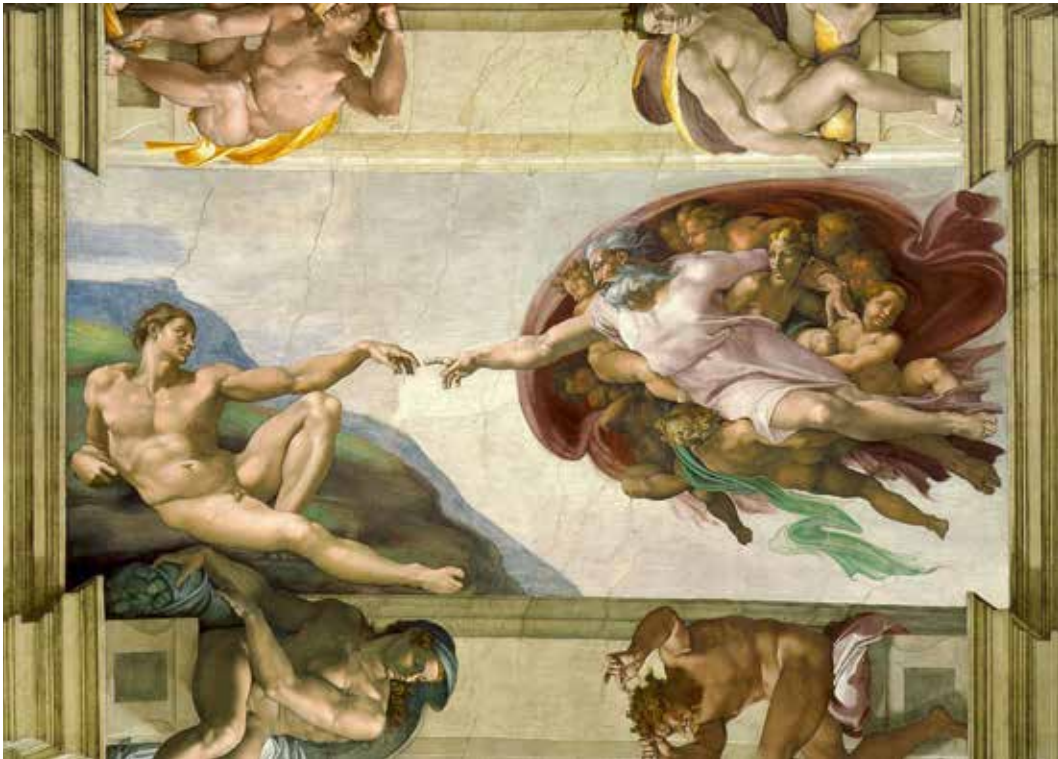
claimed, was so absolutely amazing that it was bound to give people a shock.

Absent from Beck's argument is the problem of the accretion of numerous prior restorations, dirt, grime, and soot over the centuries since the art was painted. He seems to ignore this aspect and is instead fixated on the origin of the glue layers. In general glue is not used in fresco work, especially on a ceiling, unless brushed over an original to hide defects, which would not have been necessary in this case.

Here some of our arguments can be invoked from the scientific examination of the paint cross-sections referred to above, which shows a thin layer of dirt under the glue layer. This dirt layer must have accumulated over time before it became necessary to brighten the appearance using a thin wash of glue over the surfaces. Another cross-section shows the original fresco covered with restoration work of the 1560s and 1570s, and this stratigraphy does not reveal a glue layer between the original fresco and the restoration, showing that

glue was not applied at the time Michelangelo painted the work (Caple 2000:102). Crucially, this scientific evidence shows that the authentic appearance of the ceiling is not that of a darkened glue-encrusted surface but a brightly colored one, very similar in tonality to the panel painting by Michelangelo in the Uffizi. The evidence also suggests that the glue layer was applied after the restorations carried out in the sixteenth century. Indeed, one of the essential jobs of scientific examination is to analyze the microstratigraphy of the layers of ground and paint, by which means the technique, intentions, or modifications of the artist can be interrogated as an essential component of the work's biography.

Thin washes of color were applied in fresco by Michelangelo, utilizing the *sfumato* technique advocated by Leonard da Vinci, with the brush held fanwise, which has helped the survival of the ceiling, since thick applications of pigment may well have resulted in still greater delamination of the surface



**Figure 8.11.** The creation scene on the Sistine Chapel ceiling after conservation in 1990. The brighter colors have not been well received by some art historians. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; in the public domain)

because thick applications of paint tend to block the pores in lime plaster, rendering the transfer of moisture between interior and exterior surfaces much more difficult and therefore encouraging delamination over time.

Instead of repeating the application of further coatings of glue and vinegar, conservators chose to fully document the existing ceiling, to make sure that all concerned stakeholders were included in discussions as to which procedures to follow, and to conduct the cleaning of the dirt and grime with the least interference to any remaining pigment surfaces.

In discussion of the National Gallery cleaning controversy of the 1960s, even Ernst Gombrich, a critic of the National Gallery

restoration policy at that time, noted, “Of course, when a varnish goes blind it has to be removed.” This is a common theme running through the conservation treatment of the great majority of Old Master works of art; they have been varnished, relined, cleaned, badly restored, varnished, and re-varnished again and are now often illegible. Eggert (2009:122) castigates the restorers as “destroying what they profess to preserve.” Here lies the condemnation of the modern approach to the conservation of paintings in general, because materials science has presumably blinded restorers with an arrogance that allows them to ride roughshod over every ethical argument concerned with the practice of their craft. Eggert’s statement that

## Restoration and the Renaissance: The Sistine Chapel Frescoes

Michelangelo's work is being destroyed by restorers who profess to be helping preserve what Michelangelo created is completely unsubstantiated.

In describing the restoration as a chemical deceit, Beck suggests that the restorers have created an inauthentic state by means of their chemical interactions with Michelangelo's work. The term *chemical deceit* suggests a deliberate intent to deceive us with chemical reagents to produce an inauthentic appearance.

How has deceit been part of the chemical activity undertaken during the cleaning of Michelangelo's frescoes? The deceit could be examined from various perspectives. Were the conservators deceitful about the chemicals used? The effect of the chemicals on the surface? How much local consolidation of the surface was required? Eggert puts forward no evidence to explain what is meant by a chemical deceit, but let us go through the possibilities one by one. The nature of the chemical substances used by the conservators was fully described, and the chemicals were made according to tested formulas used previously in Italy for the cleaning of frescoes in various locations. The aim of this cleaning was to remove as much grime and dirt as possible with the least possible effect on the painted surfaces. Cleaning per se is not an exact science. It is a matter of judgment and training. The best that conservators can do is to make choices about what to employ, evaluate the results of different cleaning operations, and decide which chemicals are safest to use on the artwork concerned. The scientific method as a guide to what cleaning agents to use represents an advance over the entirely subjective approach to cleaning a century ago, when conservation was just a craft activity.

In this case, the knowledge and skill of the restorers had been honed by years

of training. Even the wash water from the cleaning process was saved and analyzed to see if any pigment had been removed along with the dirt, but none was found. The effects of the chemical cleaning agent on the surfaces of the fresco were fully recorded by a Japanese television team and by numerous photographs and field notes as part of the conservation documentation, which is now an essential act of conservation in its own right. Parts of the fresco required reattachment to the ceiling using adhesives that allow for retreatment of the affected areas at a later time should this become necessary. There is no deceit in following this practice.

One of the philosophical strengths of the scientific method, which is emphasized by Popper (1971), is that it acts to correct the mistakes or assumptions made by practitioners in the past but using new hypotheses, new cleaning methods, and new ways to evaluate the consequences. The materials science approach, which is now part of the essential training of painting conservators, reformulates methods and techniques based on a reassessment of what was used in the past and what effect it had on the work of art under treatment, moving forward with further refinements or alterations of how chemical or mechanical cleaning may be performed in the future.

This is the fundamental strength of the scientific method. Numerous scientific advances have been made in the aid of art historical research into how artists made their work and the attribution of those works. The artwork is not just what an observer can see but what can be determined from a thorough investigation of the materials of the work of art; how they age, degrade, alter in color, interact with binders, and retain patches of original glazes; and why paint delaminates.

One could argue that this is a semiotic process in itself, a mediated interaction between patina, pigment, degradation, the current appearance of an artwork and the ways in which these influence the conservator's evaluation of its condition. The problem with postmodern concepts of the mediated nature of knowledge is their deleterious impact on the empirical desire to know and understand the materials that constitute the materiality of art objects. Postmodern theory regards this desire as a fundamentally mistaken concept, because the Kantian separation of object and subject cannot be sustained in postmodernist critical theories of art. However, the nature of the materials of art has been a central concern of conservation and restoration for centuries. Objectivity concerning what can be known about the physical and chemical structure of an artwork becomes enmeshed in modern doubts about the separation of object and subject and the effect that observation of the art object has on the way the subject may come to regard the art, so that the interaction can never be dissociated. Even if that is the case, the underlying substructure of the work of art and its technical investigation cannot be ignored and dismissed philosophically as a simplistic event, which is the impression given by writers such as Eggert, who provide no technical analysis of semiotic events of this kind.

The large umbrella under which conservation operates may be an area of doubt, debate, and contextual problems in relation to how to approach the treatment of a complex object. But if the consequences of conservation investigation and what they mean in a particular case are examined, crucial information concerning an artwork can be provided or made manifest. The fact that blue wings of angels, painted in azurite in a trecento Renaissance painting on panel, have degraded

to a greenish black over hundreds of years will affect the art historical interpretation of the purpose and character of the angels themselves. The art historian may develop fundamentally and empirically wrong theories resulting from the mediated interaction between observer and painting because the diachronic material degradation of the artwork has created an appearance entirely misleading to critical interpretation.

The authenticity of the interaction with the artwork is now negated by the chemical change from blue to black unless one has an epistemological understanding of the chemical alterations that have occurred. Here the chemical interactions of the artwork itself have deceived us regarding the original intention of the artist. In this case, the black wings will not be repainted as blue. Nor will there be an attempt to reverse the black back to the azurite blue color. The conservation documentation of what the appearance once was is enough to establish the authentic color. Repainting the wings of the angels cannot be justified, as this would again place the restorer in the same location as a surrogate for the original artist.

Just a year before he began work on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, Michelangelo painted, in tempera and oil, his *Tondo Doni* of 1506–1507, which is in the Uffizi in Florence. It is a holy family scene in which strong and bright whites, blues, greens, and yellows are seen. They are now remarkably similar in hue to the colors seen on the cleaned ceiling. Although the panel painting is in a different medium, namely tempera compared with fresco, there is really no great difference between painting in tempera and in the secco used on the ceiling and some other places. In tempera, paint is also applied to a set surface. The fact that the colors here are so similar in tonality and



hue suggests that the conservators did not create a chemical deceit; they revealed more of Michelangelo's visual intention than had been seen for hundreds of years.

Further evidence of the original appearance of the fresco is revealed in comments by Woods-Marsden (personal communication 2014), who writes: "The reason why it was impossible to take Beck et al seriously lies in the subsequent history of art, and the enormous influence that Michelangelo's colors there and elsewhere had on the work of the next generation, Pontormo and Rosso, which would have been impossible had Michelangelo covered his bright hues with dark glazes, which is not the way you paint a fresco anyway."

If the conservator is defined as undertaking an action that is "authentic to aims and materials," then the current state of the Sistine Chapel is more authentic to the original conception of the artist than the grimy and discolored surface that existed before the current conservation campaign. Even the implied criticism of potential removal of the paint layer itself is repeated by anthropologists without any evaluation of the context. For example, Holtorf (2013) quotes from an interview recorded by Fallon with the Irish artist William Crozier (1930–2011), who stated, "What they have taken away is the age of the paint." Holtorf (2013) utilizes this accusation of the removal of age to vindicate his view that the *pastness* of the work has been damaged because the age of the paint has been compromised. In terms of the materiality of the work, the restorers were very aware of any potential criticisms arising from inadvertent or deliberate removal of original fresco pigmentation or even *secco* additions. In fact, in terms of *pastness* or respect for the essential nature of the original and the historical processes the painted layer itself

has undergone, the conservator's determination that no pigment was removed in the cleaning process essentially refutes Crozier's point. The last thing to be taken away in any cleaning process of this ceiling is the painted surface, but that does not mean the painted surface has not aged both chemically and physically. It may have altered in ways that are visually imperceptible to us even if they are theoretically chemically determinable (Colalucci 1986; Pietrangeli 1994). Because the pigment particles are trapped in the fresco technique by carbonation of the fresco layer, there are bound to be diachronic interactions that cannot be reversed by a very careful cleaning strategy; the fresco painting preserves some of the subtle interactions between paint, media, and the viewer in assessing how the ceiling now appears. Bomford (2003:12) makes a salient point regarding the intercession of conservators as arbiters of an evolving narrative structure:

The narrative continues with cumulative events in the subsequent history of the work—aging, deterioration, accident, repair, intervention, adaptation, reinterpretation—positive and negative events. . . . The conservator as practitioner then has to decide which elements of these histories of creation and survival are most important: which aspects of the historical object must be maintained and kept visible, and which may be, for the time being, concealed. The conservator as narrator inevitably both interprets and intervenes in the narrative. The difference between attitudes of today and those of fifty years ago is that there is now much greater acceptance of visible aging—a more benign view of the past and a less active role for the present.

Holtorf (2013) sees the anthropological question as a dichotomy between materialist and constructivist approaches to the past, a dichotomy that has affected appreciation of issues of materiality regarding artifacts. Holtorf (2013) states that what is needed is a cultural concept of authenticity that can be linked to the materiality of a specific object while also avoiding assumptions about qualities that are inherent in the object. Authentic archaeological objects, writes Holtorf, are those that can be defined as possessing pastness. So are the assumptions concerning the qualities of the frescoes on the Sistine Chapel justified? That would depend on which qualities are required to be specified. Here the most pertinent are how well the fresco is adhered to the *intonaco* and the *arriccio*. How stable are the layers on the ceiling? One might want to know about aqueous qualities—how wet or dry the ceiling is. That could affect how the restoration work is carried out and even if the work can be carried out. How much paint has already been lost from the ceiling? What qualities would be appropriate or desired from a visual reintegration of parts of the image? Respecting the historical and aesthetic authenticity of the work, quality will be retained by completing the missing parts in watercolor using *tratteggio*, not completely solid pigmented areas that cannot be visually discerned from the decayed original. In that sense a visible reintegration could be regarded as a constructivist approach to a question of materialist concern (Colalucci 1987; Colalucci and Mancinelli 1983). Bomford's 2009 assertion of the historical importance of the cumulative narrative of the work incorporates the three principal strands of authenticity proposed in this book: the historical, material, and conceptual. Pastness is not a panacea

for the complexity of dealing with artifacts of the past. For example, the materiality of a specific object may be irrelevant in the case of objects or monuments ritually rebuilt every 50 years. There is no link to the materiality of the original, but in terms of conceptual or intangible authenticity, there is no problem with the event and the actions taken. The Nara Document, which discusses concerns regarding the conceptual aspects of authenticity at length, appears to be overlooked by anthropologists, but it could usefully be integrated into the debate concerning constructivist views of authenticity.

Some restorations have been made with the application of animal glue and other modifications to the *buon fresco* surface. In connection with the black shadowing of several figures, Colalucci (1997:199) writes:

The debate over the cleaning took as its point of departure the removal of the black shadows around the figures which had given them their sense of plastic relief, although in a monochromatic key. Some considered them authentic, because they seemed to respond to the sculptor's sensibility. . . . These black shadows were added by past restorers in order to restore the modeling of the figures and to accentuate a chiaroscuro effect where they had faded beneath an accumulation of foreign material or had been flattened by timid and summary cleanings.

Questions regarding the restoration can still be debated, however. For example, scores of bottoms and genitals originally shown naked by Michelangelo have been covered up at various times due to the prudish view of many observers that these were unacceptable to the viewing public and had to be hidden

## Leonardo da Vinci and the Restoration of *The Last Supper*

by obscuring layers of paint. Should all these overpaintings be removed to better judge what Michelangelo painted himself? If the artist's intention is invoked here, how could we not? Genitalia regarded as objectionable were overpainted after the death of Michelangelo by the Mannerist artist Daniele da Volterra (1509–1566), who thereafter was referred to as the “pants painter,” much to his chagrin.

The Council of Trent (1545–1563) concluded that 11 such depictions of genitals had to be covered over with paint to conceal them. In succeeding centuries, another 43 were painted over. The Italian restorers in the 1990s had to decide whether to keep these overpaintings in situ or whether they should be removed. The decision was reached to remove all restorations that postdated those ordered by the Council of Trent in 1563 and to keep those that the council had ordered because they were the only documented and historically verifiable interferences with the original frescoes. Do documented restorations that disguise original painting trump the artistic intention of the artist in the name of a historically definable veracity? One could have differing views regarding the justification for leaving the documented overpaintings in situ or the historical authenticity of leaving all the overpaintings as successively representative of the changing taste in contemplating nude flesh. However, it is not just overpaintings that have afflicted the original materiality of the work but pronouncements of the Council of Trent concerning the figures of Saint Catherine and Saint Blaise, which were described as “indecent nudes” and “a thousand heresies” (Colalucci 1997:194). Consequently, these figures were destroyed and were replaced by new fresco work by Daniele da Volterra. It is not quite accurate that all later restorations covering

genitalia were removed. Colalucci (1997:197) remarks that some of the later repainting were retained as documentation of later interventions, although he does not specify which ones. A pertinent question is why only 11 genitals and bottoms were ordered to be painted over by the Council of Trent. Why were these particularly censored while the rest were allowed to remain before those too were covered over in later centuries? We do not know the answer to this question, but it would be interesting to see via infrared reflectography what the objectionable parts that Michelangelo actually painted look like and to understand the entire discourse related to the partial restoration undertaken on the artwork. The intention of the artist may be seen as ahistorical, but the reality is that here it has been overridden by the historical imperative of retention of restorations that have nothing to do with Michelangelo's intentions as an artist.

### Leonardo da Vinci and the Restoration of *The Last Supper*

Works of art completed by the innovative use of unsuitable materials bring with them problems of inherent vice. This is especially true of those that are not allowed to die a natural death and must be restored continuously for both present and future use. A prime example of a contested relationship between a work and the various instantiations it has represented over time is *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci, measuring 460 x 880 cm, “painted” on a wall at Santa Maria delle Grazie, a Dominican monastery in Milan, between 1482 and 1499. Its material authenticity was compromised at birth. The *intonaco* was covered with a fine layer of plaster containing an oil, which was then primed with a lead white layer. Leonardo then experimented

with a *tempera grassa* binder for his paints. *Tempera grassa* is egg tempera to which a certain amount of oil is added, no more than 1:1, possibly with water additions. The oil prolongs the working time of the tempera, although the paint can usually be applied only in thin layers and tends to undergo differential drying phenomena. Hence the work was neither created in *buon fresco*, as would have been customary, or in oils, which is what restorers before Luigi Cavenaghi believed was the case (Barcilon and Marani 2001).

With Leonardo painting in fits and starts, the project dragged on to the point where the monks threatened to lock him in until the work was finished. Legend has it that Leonardo retaliated by painting the abbot as the image of Judas. Visitors had already begun to notice that the admired masterpiece was in an actively decaying condition by 1517. In 1642 Scanelli noted that only confused vestiges of the figures remained (Scanelli 1657, quoted in Kemp 1990). The saga of endless restorations began in the eighteenth century, as the painting was still deteriorating markedly. In 1726 Michelangelo Bellotti (?–1744) cleaned the work with caustic solvents and covered it with layers of oil and varnish. In 1770 Giuseppe Mazza removed the layers added by Bellotti and repainted much of the work in oils, which created a great deal of critical comment at the time. In 1853 Stefano Barezzi, in one of the most alarming interventions, tried to detach the painting entirely from the wall. He failed and sought to consolidate the painting by gluing paint fragments back on the base. In 1903 Cavenaghi began a large-scale campaign of photographic documentation and established that the work was in tempera, not oil as previously supposed. From 1906 to 1908, Cavenaghi cleaned the surface and retouched missing areas of the

original, leaving many earlier repaintings intact. In 1924 Oreste Silvestri removed further grime (Barcilon and Marani 2001).

In 1943 a British bomb destroyed the refectory in which the masterpiece had been painted, but the north wall, together with the mural, survived. From 1947 to 1949, Mauro Pelliccioli gave the painting another cleaning and eliminated the mildew covering part of the surface. He fixed the paint with shellac rather than glue, which would make subsequent restoration even harder. In 1979 Pinin Brambilla Barcilon began restoration work, which was to last for 20 years, under the auspices of Milan's Superintendent for Artistic and Historic Heritage (Barcilon and Marani 2001). Barcilon's primary task was to prevent further deterioration. Chemical analysis suggested that the overpainting, which remained in situ, was potentially damaging the remaining fragments of the original by delamination, taking original paint with it. One consequence of this discovery was the decision to remove everything that had been added after Leonardo finished the painting in 1498.

The restoration therefore demanded accuracy at the micron level and attention to the smallest details. A detailed examination showed that mold, glue, repaint, and atmospheric pollutants had badly affected the painting, while infrared reflectography enabled restorers to examine the artist's original work under the layers of overpaint. Small-diameter coring surveys were also performed. Samples taken from the corings were analyzed to provide information on the colors and materials utilized by Leonardo. Miniature TV cameras inserted in the boreholes provided information on the cracks and cavities. Sonar and radar surveys provided information about the elastic and structural characteristics of the masonry and the base the painting resides on.

## Leonardo da Vinci and the Restoration of *The Last Supper*



**Figure 8.12.** *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci, late 1490s. Tempera on gesso with pitch and mastic; 460 x 800 cm. The mural, in Milan, was subject to a restoration controversy. (Image in the public domain)

Using such technologically advanced analysis and employing the careful use of solvents, which enabled the removal of multiple layers, Barcilon faced an extremely slow and meticulous process. Often, only an area the size of a postage stamp was cleaned each day.

Once referring to *The Last Supper* as a sick patient, Barcilon proclaimed that she and her colleagues were able to give back “the expressive and chromatic intensity that we thought was lost forever.” Besides letting the original colors come through, she added basic color to blank areas, which in theory cannot be confused by the viewer with the original color. In certain areas, blank patches were left and were not retouched (Barcilon and Marani 2001).

Leonardo’s *Last Supper* was reopened to the public in May 1999. The painting is now preserved by a sophisticated air filtration system, a relative-humidity-monitored environment, and dust-filtering chambers. If one wishes to observe the work, the usual baleful restrictions

apply: Visitors must make reservations in advance and groups are limited to 25 people for viewing times of only 15 minutes.

The most recent restoration, which took more than five times as long as Leonardo’s execution of the painting, has been trumpeted by many but also condemned by some in the art world. According to some critics, what is left is 30 percent Leonardo and 70 percent Barcilon. James Beck calls it 18 to 20 percent Leonardo and 80 percent Barcilon. Martin Kemp, a more mainstream critic than Beck, was also unhappy with the result, or at least the philosophical position taken by the restorer as regards the cleaning and removal of old repaintings. Kemp (1990) writes that the campaign of restoration involved a rigorous stripping of the mural to what were considered to be the remaining authentic fragments of Leonardo’s original paint and that this represents the most radically archaeological approach of the many attempts at restoration of the work. Kemp (1990) states:

This campaign raises, in the sharpest manner, questions about the assumptions, aesthetic and scientific, which underpin present practices, and their status with respect to previous approaches. It is argued that present techniques, for all their gloss of scientific objectivity, are based upon a questionable series of values and presumptions about works of art and how one looks at works of art. In this respect, it is suggested that the recent campaign is no less rooted in the values of the period than the past campaigns which are now so brusquely dismissed. It is argued that the aesthetic, perceptual, scientific, and institutional bases for the procedures need more rigorous scrutiny.

As far as the authentic original is concerned, Kemp worries about the difficulty of determining which pigments are truly original and the irreversible physical change in some of the materials and asks if the notion of recovering and retaining only that which is by Leonardo's own hand is identical to reinstatement of the "real" Leonardo? How far can recovery of the fragmentary original be identified congruent with a respect for the artist's intentions, if such intentions are reconstructable at all? Are we aiming, Kemp asks, to recapture the authentic experience of the original? Is there such a thing as an "authentic experience" to be reconstructed, in terms of either viewing *The Last Supper* in 1498 or the circumstances of the present-day spectator?

Kemp (1990:20) suggests using information contained in extant copies of *The Last Supper* to "the extent of a judicious but detectable infilling of general masses to tie the picture together." Kemp basically objects to the fragmentary nature of the surviving end product of the conservation treatment and

states that he would not have been inclined to strip the heads of Christ and the disciples down to "bare vacuous silhouettes."

The first observation is that the material authenticity of the original is so badly degraded that very little of it remains; the authentic experience of perception of the original cannot be regained through conservation. The choice to be made depends on the extent to which the various campaigns of overpaint are valued as desirable aesthetic states in themselves. If, as Steinberg (2001:227) intimates, some of the campaigns of overpaint were influenced by erroneous copies, that defeats the argument that copies could be used to create a more sympathetic pastiche of Leonardo's remnants with skillful overpaint. Besides, this approach could hardly be said to respect the intentions of Leonardo when changes to suit the taste of the time were made by artists who copied the original and other artists who repainted the original work itself. In this connection, Brandi's stricture that the restorer cannot insert himself or herself into the mode of production of the artist and must refrain from any conjectural restorations is a sound philosophical principle, not considered in Kemp's argument. No responsible restorer would be able to create a more authentic work by this kind of surrogacy. From the published pictures following Barcilon's restoration, it appears that the restorer completed certain outlines of the work—for example, extending the outlines of fingers that the original remnants suggested but that were too decayed to visually complete; these have been inpainted in watercolor to allow for later removal should that become necessary or desirable.

There is no doubt that the physical, chemical, and biological degradation of the original work was so extreme in this particular case that there were really only two viable options

Leonardo da Vinci and the Restoration of *The Last Supper*

available regarding the restoration: Either leave the painting as it was, in a physical state from 1978, with attempts to adhere the decayed work to its support, or try to remove the various layers of overpaint and stabilize what was left.

The assertion of the restorer that the later overpaints were delaminating, taking the original with them, would seem to eliminate the possibility of leaving the work as it was, since its preservation into the future could not be guaranteed. In many cases, the removal of all old repaintings might be seen as compromising the historical and aesthetic authenticity of the work, but in the case of *The Last Supper*, the material degradation it has undergone overrides the historical concerns in a return, as far as possible, to the material authenticity of the original. It is not really a philosophical argument over the state of the patient; it is a matter of survival. However, in the process, the historical authenticity of the work has been lost, and this represents the restorative dilemma. What remains after the derestorations and reresoration is a decayed work that has lost its aesthetic nature, according to critics such as Kemp. Only in the extensive documentation does a history of its altered states reside. The question is, what is more valued here: the fragmentary remains of Leonardo's faded masterpiece or the numerous readaptations that artist-restorers such as Mazza created? In ignoring the Brandian stricture that time is not reversible and that history cannot be abolished, has the restorer valorized the material authenticity at the expense of the historical/aesthetic authenticity of the work?

Because of the different approaches and meanings attached to the various instantiations of the work over the past 500 years, a compromise solution, as far as the art historian

or general viewer is concerned, would be to respect the historical authenticity of the work by displaying a perfect replica of *The Last Supper* in its state in 1978, before the recent 20-year restoration, adjacent to the 1999 version of the work with overpaintings removed. As the example of the Laocoön illustrates, exhibition of the two instantiations would allow the authenticity of condition to be seen and allow aesthetic alterations over time to still be available for public view. Because the contested state of *The Last Supper* represents an extreme end of the spectrum of the work-being of the object and its various interpretations, the ability to contemplate both the original remnants with watercolor restorations and the historical document of its preconserved state with numerous oil, glue, and shellac restorations still in place would allow the material authenticity and the historical authenticity to be seen together in their materiality.

It is not quite true that the only surviving material would be documentation of the various instantiations of *The Last Supper* if the original were to completely decay. Steinberg (2001:227–253), notes that by 1810, Giuseppe Bossi (1777–1815) recorded the existence of 26 copies, including Bossi's own full-scale “reconstruction,” which was owned by the viceroy of Italy and destroyed by German bombing in World War II. The fate of some of the copies has been dire. One by Antonio da Gessate of 1506, a detached fresco from the Ospedale Maggiore, Milan, described in 1810, was subsequently covered over with whitewash, revealed again in 1890, and displayed in the refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie until 1915. It was completely destroyed by British bombing in 1943. Some of the copies of the masterpiece were copied from other copies rather than from the original work. These copies were then employed

as inauthentic points of reference for erroneous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century attempts at restoration of the original.

Steinberg (2001:228) writes that some of these copies perished in World War II; others donned new attributions or were identical to other copies long since translocated. By the 1970s, when Steinberg was trying to untie the Gordian knot of where and how many of these copies still existed, there was little interest in them anymore. Few were displayed except in unvisited sacristies, and those owned by museums such as the Louvre or the Royal Academy in London were in a state of neglect and deterioration. The copy in the Soprintendenza, Milan, had blistering and delaminating paint; the one in the Royal Academy was mysteriously cut down and put on semipermanent loan to Magdalen College, Oxford. By the time Steinberg was able to reassess the number of copies in the 1970s, the list had theoretically grown to about 43, although many were in appalling condition or had been destroyed. The fate of these copies or versions is a reflection of the aesthetic demotion of copies as unworthy of any appreciation in and of themselves—a historical affliction particularly prevalent from 1890 to 1970. As seen from the perspective of 2016, renewed interest in copies and the historical tradition they represent has resurrected them from obscurity to become part of a narrative on changing taste and cultural norms. *The Last Supper* with reinvented settings (by Giovan Pietro da Cemmo in 1507); free adaptations (by Tommaso Aleni in 1508); critical improvements in architectural detail and the position of limbs, with substantive haloes added (by an unknown individual in the early sixteenth century); immense broadening of Christ's shoulders (by Fra Girolamo Bonsignori in 1513); and so on offer reflections on artistic practice, aesthetic taste, documentary sources, Christian

ethics, and the cultural milieu prevalent at the time. The fact that the copies have undergone their own historical demise and degradation will paradoxically result in their reevaluation in years to come as valued creations in their own right. The twenty-first century will be the century of reevaluation of copies and replicas. In many ways, it has already become so.

### Restorations and the Identity of Paintings

Changing taste, fashion, cultural norms, and religious dogmas resulted in many panel paintings of the Renaissance or medieval period being overpainted, repainted, altered in meaning, cut down in size, forgotten, censored, or destroyed. A prominent text concerning Renaissance practice is that of Conti, which has been translated by Helen Glanville (Conti 2007). It distinguishes between three variations on restoration of paintings: *restoration as conservation*—that is, abstention from action that would result in any change or employing an archaeological approach that respects all traces of original material; *aesthetic restoration*, or employing invisible retouching and completion of the image by analogy to other known works by the artist; and *visible restoration*, which is in harmony with the original yet leaves the restorations clearly visible. *Restoration as conservation* is defined as undertaking the structural stabilization of the work but not integrating the image with retouching or inpainting. This approach, a sine qua non as regards material authenticity, was championed by Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle (1819–1897) in the nineteenth century (Glanville 2007) and continued into the twentieth century. These three criteria interact with approaches regarding cleaning—namely, *complete cleaning*, *selective cleaning*, or *partial cleaning*. In



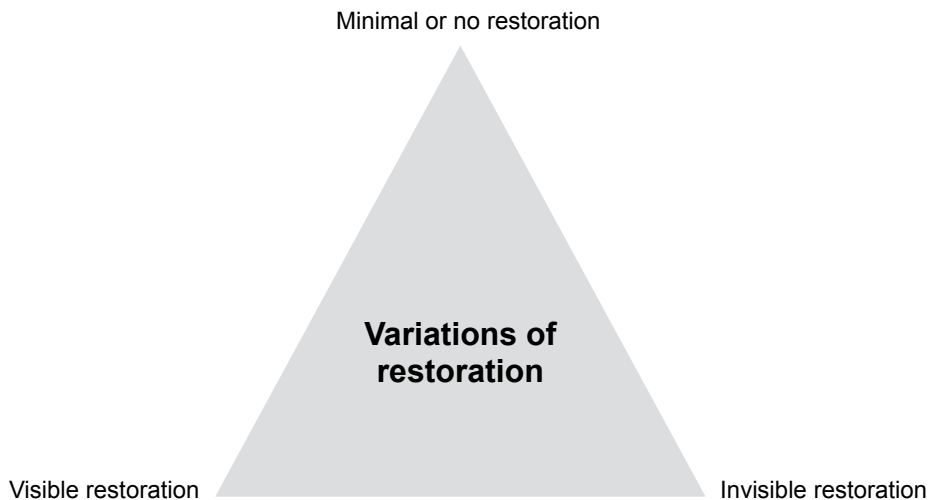
## Restorations and the Identity of Paintings

*complete cleaning*, the aim is to remove all discolored coatings on the surface of the work in an attempt to return it to an assumed original state or appearance. In *selective cleaning*, areas or sections of the work are treated differently depending on evidence for retention of original varnishes, heavily degraded pigments, fragile binders, and so on, so that only some areas are cleaned. In *partial cleaning*, some of the patina resulting from interactions of the original material with its environment is kept in place. Cleaning in general terms has already been discussed in chapter 1.

This simplification is a useful categorization in cases where motives are invoked in isolation from individual works of art, which are then treated as a group phenomenon rather than as objects needing specifically tailored attention. For example, Seymour (1970) undertook *total cleaning* on fourteenth- and fifteenth-century panel paintings in the Yale University collections in the belief that the artwork would be left as a “fragment in its authentic state” (Seymour 1970:7) and that this authentic state was more

instructive than a repainted image carried out in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. In fact, the total cleaning removed not only all nineteenth-century overpaint but also some of the original glazes, decayed pigment, binder, and varnish, leaving the paintings in a practically undisplayable condition in the name of a spurious authenticity of condition. This is not to say that total cleaning would necessarily result in a less authentic condition than that the artwork currently displays. For example, a Raphael on display in a grand house in Northumberland, thought to be a copy, was covered with very dirty varnish, so that features of the artwork were barely visible. When the painting was cleaned at the National Gallery, with the old varnish removed, the picture could be reassessed properly, at which point everyone agreed that it was not a copy of a Raphael but the lost original.

The complexity of dealing with the restoration of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century panel paintings cannot be undertaken by professors of art history but must be left to



**Figure 8.13.** Varieties of approaches to the restoration of Renaissance works of art. (Diagram by the author after Conti 2007)

those properly trained in the art and science of picture restoration. Apart from a misguided philosophical conception, this is essentially what went wrong with the treatment of the paintings at Yale. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century panel paintings have to be restored with great care due to the extensive degradation they have undergone. They cannot be stripped back to represent the condition they would have presented in 1430 because of the alterations time itself has inflicted on them, even disregarding the problems created by later overpainting and retouching.

### Aesthetic Restoration

Conserving wall paintings or frescoes by structurally stabilizing them and leaving missing areas blank, as seen in restoration work carried out by Italian restorers working for the Getty Conservation Institute's project in the Tomb of Queen Nefertari in Egypt, respects the archaeological veracity of the fragmentary images. Even here there may be problems with the concept of nonintervention on original images. For example, old restorations on the celestial cows in the tomb were not removed. The approach taken was that documentation will preserve knowledge of the earlier intervention, even if this is not obvious, or even explained, to the visitor to the tomb.

Material authenticity (McDonald 1996) of vestigial remains is of paramount importance in the sense of adhering to a philosophy of scientific empiricism, but it may be overridden by intangible concerns regarding meaning or context.

In *aesthetic restoration*, the aim is to produce an imagined authentic past that is re-created by the restorer in the present. The damages and aging inflicted on the work by time are erased, or rather masked, by the restorer's brush. As Conti says concerning the famous

Italian restorer Pietro Edwards (1744–1821): “If the frame of reference for the restorer in his approach to the restoration of the work of art is the cultural context and taste of his own time rather than that of the artist himself, then the restoration will be a reflection of this . . . updating to new visual demands and because the frames of reference change with passing taste and generations” (Conti 2007:190–216).

Glanville (2007:xxii) invokes Heisenberg's “uncertainty principle” here. As an analogy of the “act of concentrating on the particle-like properties of a quantum entity (in this instance the painting), we gain a good sense of the isolated part at the expense of the whole; if we focus on the wave-like qualities we have a sense of the whole but lose our ability to focus on the part or the particular.” This is a strange way to interpret the uncertainty principle, which states that the more precisely the position of a particle is determined, the less precisely can its momentum be known and vice versa. The analogy with a painting that is undergoing an act of restoration is an eccentric way of examining the problem. Knowing where restorations are to be undertaken but being incapable of understanding the image as a whole, or understanding the entire picture but being unable to successfully integrate retouchings to harmonize with the entire painting is how Glanville utilizes the uncertainty principle. Ethical and unethical approaches to the aesthetic integration of the image are more fundamental here. Chapter 1 gives an example of a painting by van der Weyden of which only about 25 percent was left, the remaining 75 percent being aesthetically restored—in this case invented by the restorer and art forger Jef van der Veken. If a viewer cannot distinguish visually between what has been restored and the vestigial original, is that tantamount to art forgery?

## Aesthetic Restoration

In general, the consensus is yes, and the division between ethical restoration and unethical restoration is a moving target, depending on cultural norms, museum practice, curatorial preferences, how the past is evaluated, and public opinion prevailing at the time. Even in the same institution, approaches to restoration can vary over chronologies as short as 20 years, resulting in very different decisions being made as to how an artwork should look. In the commercial art market, if a Renaissance portrait is complete but has a missing upraised arm, the position of the arm will be invented by the restorer to complete an aesthetic image, with the monetary value of the work at auction being greatly enhanced.

For these reasons, restorers now complete artworks in a media that can be distinguished from the original under ultraviolet light (most of the time). This is why *tratteggio*, a concept introduced in chapter 1, is a clearly delineated choice in restoration practice to eliminate these ethical difficulties. This is part of the concept of the third approach to restoration,

*visible restoration*, which in some cases might be comparable to the conservator's *compensation for loss*.

Gestalt psychology maintained that completion of the expected image by the observer would ensure that neutral areas of fill or inpainting would recede in the viewer's perception so that the artwork could be completed by the mind and contemplated as a whole, rather than the fills being seen as obtrusive or becoming more visible in perceptual terms than the art object itself. With some artworks, such as Giotto's (circa 1266–1337) frescoes in Padua, the utilization of *tratteggio* is very successful in completing images without the appearance of blank areas of fill, deceptive restorations, or nonconformance with a Gestalt, but not all artworks can benefit from this approach. One could argue that the image in Figure 8.14 would benefit aesthetically from a *visible restoration* rather than *restoration as conservation*, since filling in the missing parts of the face with neutral tones creates a visually disturbing image.



**Figure 8.14.** Restored wall painting from the Tomb of Queen Nefertari, completed by the Getty Conservation Institute at a total cost of \$11 million. The purist adherence to *restoration as conservation* by the Italian conservators is perfectly understandable but creates a disturbing image of the masterful painting, since the face of Osiris is hard to differentiate from the background. (Image courtesy of the Getty Conservation Institute; rephotographed by the author)

Glanville (2007) states that the use of invisible retouching media, for example, imposes on a work of art the viewpoint of one observer and that by eliminating individual evaluation, the use of ready-made solutions carried out on behalf of the individual limits his or her choices, analogous to restrictions of political missives of a nanny-state society. This likens restoration and its evaluation to a paternalistic government, an analogy which the author does not agree with.

Does the use of invisible retouching media impose on a work of art the viewpoint of one observer? First of all, retouching performed by a professionally trained paintings conservator in the twenty-first century is removable retouching. In the best case scenario, it does not invent but visually completes missing gaps in the image. If the various stakeholders do not like how the retouching has altered the perceptible properties of the painting, the retouching can be removed and substituted with a different version. It is the theoretically reversible nature of such retouchings that accords with the ethical principles of modern conservation norms; the viewpoint of one observer can always be changed in the future. Secondly, the aesthetic ability to react to a completed image of a face in which the retouching cannot be visually discerned is very different from reacting to a visibly retouched face, where one's attention is all too often drawn to the area of retouching, marveling at the skill of the restorer; mentally criticizing the choice of color, hue, tone, or line; or becoming distracted by contemplation of the extent of damage and its historical causes rather than giving due attention to the work of art itself. It is better if changes brought about by retouching are perceptible by using special lighting equipment rather than detecting the retouching by eye under ambient viewing

conditions. The old 6-inch/6-foot rule for the retouching of broken pottery could be used. This means that the repainting is not visible from 6 feet away but is visible from 6 inches. But this rule is less successful for paintings, since observers are often only 12 to 15 inches away from the surface of the work.

Visible restoration has become less popular over the past 50 years, perhaps spurred by the huge increase in museum visitors in that time. They might prefer to see aesthetically pleasing works skillfully restored rather than incomplete images lauded by the conservation elite for their ethical purity, but the desire for aesthetic reintegration may go too far for some tastes. Refraining from using the same pigments and binding media as the original artist is a *sine qua non* of modern restoration practice. But even if restorations cannot be visually distinguished from originals, they can be detected by the use of infrared or ultraviolet illumination.

### **The Restoration of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne***

Numerous cleaning controversies have afflicted this painting in the National Gallery, London—stretching back to the 1850s and most recently in the 1960s when the painting was cleaned again. According to Glanville (2009), the invisible retouching of every loss has created a kind of fictional state for this picture and the scientifically rigorous cleaning it has undergone has dramatically shifted its color balance. The painting is one of a famous series by Bellini (circa 1430–1516), Titian (?–1576), and the Ferrarese artist Dosso Dossi commissioned for the Camerino d'Alabastro (1490–1542) (Alabaster Room) in the Ducal Palace, Ferrara, by Alfonso d'Este, duke of Ferrara, who around 1510 tried to include Michelangelo (1476–1534) and

## The Restoration of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*

Raphael (1483–1520) among the contributors. Titian's painting was in fact a substitute for one with a similar subject that the duke had commissioned from Raphael. Bellini's *Feast of the Gods* for this room is dated 1514, and the three works by Titian were painted between the 1518 and 1525.

Lucas and Plesters (1979) produced a detailed article on the painting. There is no doubt that earlier attempts to clean and restore works of art were less sympathetic to the retention of vestiges of age than the approach taken today, because today's restorers

have access to scientific connoisseurship and readily removable high-class retouching media. Nevertheless, the evidence adduced by Lucas and Plesters (1979) and the very striking difference in appearance of the picture before the recent restoration and after the restoration of 1969 were bound to come as a shock, as the blue of the sky and the colors employed by Titian can be clearly seen. It is these differences that resulted in tremendous criticism regarding the change in appearance of the painting. Lucas and Plesters (1979:36) write,



**Figure 8.15.** *Bacchus and Ariadne* by Titian, 1520–1523; 176.5 x 191 cm. Theseus has left Ariadne on Naxos. Bacchus arrives, jumps from his chariot drawn by two cheetahs, and falls in love with Ariadne. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Of the many differences revealed by cleaning one of the most important has been the re-establishment of the effect of recession. The nineteenth century varnish, by blurring the transitions from blue to green in an all-over muddy tone, had the effect of diminishing the distances within the picture. The intensity of the blue of the sky can be seen to vary, as it does in nature, being more intensely blue overhead.

These dramatic changes in appearance have created the view that the authenticity of what Titian painted has been ruined through restoration, when in fact the poor condition of the work and the activities of previous restorers are responsible for the muddy brown varnish that so obscures the actual work. The Gestalt view that Glanville proposes results in the present condition of the painting being seen in a pejorative light. However, if, as Lucas and Plesters (1979) maintain, the alteration of the balance of colors in the painting is not a desirable effect of aging but a deceptive appearance produced by a thick layer of discolored varnish, then the argument revolves around whether the cleaning was too “harsh” in not attempting to leave traces of the original surface of the work, if that can be thought of as a kind of patina.

### Categories of Authentic Paintings

In attempting to formulate categories of artistic practice that proceed from the more authentic to the less, Marijnissen (1985, 2011) describes a spectrum of works, ranging from those that can be confidently attributed to an individual artist all the way to commercial reproductions created by mechanical or digital means. In terms of paintings, this progression takes us from the individual expression

of an artist to entirely spurious works that lack any authenticity.

The first category is illustrated by self-portraits executed solely by the artist. An example is shown in Figure 8.16. Often these self-portraits are painted for the artist by the artist, and they depict the painter as he or she was in life. In that sense they are a personal reflection on the artist as an authentic creator. Reflection is sometimes too literally a problem. For example, in the Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669) self-portrait in Kenwood House, Hampstead Heath, London, the artist shows himself as holding brushes and an easel in his left hand, with the right hand raised toward the canvas. But in the X-ray radiograph of the picture, the underdrawing reveals that Rembrandt painted himself with his brushes and easel in the right hand, with his left hand toward the canvas. The artist had originally painted his reflection as it appeared in the mirror, not as his image would have appeared to a viewer looking at him. When he realized his mistake, he had to correct the picture and swap the arms; any other asymmetry would have to stay as the mirror reflection of itself (Bomford 1997). Because of numerous copyists producing their own versions of Rembrandt self-portraits, the authentic nature of the Kenwood self-portrait is confirmed by the X-ray radiograph, showing the hidden narrative of the creation of the work of art. The originality of the painting is revealed by the X-ray radiograph, uniquely identifying the work as that of Rembrandt.

The second category concerns *paintings left unfinished and completed by another artist* contemporaneous with the first. Marijnissen (1985:20) gives the example of one of the Justice Panels unfinished by Dieric Bouts (1415–1475) at the time of his death in 1475. Jacob Jordaens (1593–1678) was

## Categories of Authentic Paintings

commissioned to complete the panel. All too often, the information necessary to establish completion by another artist is not known or has to be surmised from an art historical and scientific study.

The third category is *paintings executed with the aid of the artist's own assistants*, whose collaboration is integrated into the master's style and craftsmanship. This was the norm from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century in the Low Countries. Marijnissen gives as an example some works by Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640): *Prometheus Bound*, with an eagle painted by Frans Snyders (1579–1657), and *Last Judgment*, a copy begun by a student but retouched by Rubens so that the

painting could pass as an original work by the master himself.

The next category is *paintings resulting from an agreement between two or more artists to collaborate on their creation and execution*. An example is *Pomone*, painted by Abraham Janssens (circa 1567–1632), with a landscape by Jan Breughel the Elder (1568–1625) and fruit by Adriaen van Utrecht (1599–1652). The collaboration between Rubens and Jan Breughel is well-known, and their collaborative paintings were much admired at the time. Rubens and Breughel had trouble keeping up with demand for their work, despite the fact that their paintings were very expensive. The insatiable demand led



**Figure 8.16.** Self-portrait by Charles-Antoine Coyppel (1694–1752), 1734. Pastel on paper; 98.1 x 80 cm. Self-portraits are often not commissioned and may be authentic autographic works painted by artists themselves, although numerous copies of self-portraits were produced later. (Image courtesy of Getty Open Content Program, Getty Museum, accession no. 97.PC.19)

## The European Renaissance and Beyond

to an usual consequence. Numerous copies by lesser artists were produced, and even though it was generally recognized that these were indeed only copies, they were purchased with enthusiasm.

Marijnissen (1985:20) continues his categories with *a replica of a painting by the artist himself*. Successful artists often had copies or replicas produced by assistants, but in the case of the



**Figure 8.17.** *Prometheus Bound* by Peter Paul Rubens, completed 1618; oil on canvas. The work was painted by Rubens but with the eagle entirely painted by Frans Snyders. Philadelphia Museum of Art. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)



## Categories of Authentic Paintings

René Magritte (1898–1967) painting shown in Figure 2.9, identical copies were produced by the artist himself, a typically ironic Magritte statement on uniqueness and repetition.

The next category is *studio replicas*, repeat works executed under supervision of the master himself or works that the master helped fabricate. Examples are the numerous castings and marble sculptures by Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) and the painting studio practices of Rembrandt and van der Weyden. Then there are *works produced in series*, possibly

using industrial methods, such as silk-screen paintings by Andy Warhol (1928–1987). Next comes *more or less faithful copies of paintings*—there are endless examples of these. With *study copies*, artists were often interested in creating the artistic effects of admired predecessors. The intent was not to produce forgeries for sale but to emulate the master concerned. *Imitations* may or may not have closely resembled the original. For example, Elaine Sturtevant’s imitation of Claes Oldenburg’s pies had the style of the originals but were not



**Figure 8.18.** *Virgin and Child in Flower Garland with Angels* by Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder, circa 1616. Oil on oak; 243.8 x 209.5 cm. This is a perfectly authentic work, despite being the product of two painters. (Image courtesy of Alte Pinakothek, BayerischeStaat; in the public domain. Photograph by DcoetzeeBot, Wikimedia Commons)

identical. The next category is *entirely authentic works to which something has been added to mislead or deceive*. The most common example is a false signature added to a lesser artist's work to increase its monetary value or reputation. Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978) apparently signed contemporary forgeries of his own work in keeping with the surrealist's abnegation of the reality of the bourgeoisie. Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) said that he signed copies of his work “because it devalues them so.” Copies made by other artists and signed by de Chirico as originals assume an ambivalent status but are not uncommon. Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot (1796–1875) signed many imitative works by artists he knew so they could be sold as Corot originals to help the artists financially. The standard joke is that there are 2,000 genuine Corots—8,000 of which are found in America alone. The artist's intention in signing the forgeries is a subversive act in different senses for Corot and Duchamp. In the case of Corot, the aim was to disseminate forgeries created by others to imbue them with enhanced monetary value and perhaps to spread his fame to ever wider circles. In the case of Duchamp, the intent was to devalue them through repetition, to subvert the uniqueness of artistic production.

Another category is *paintings that have been changed significantly*. Many earlier paintings have been altered to accord to the taste of the time (Giannattasio 2013). The problem is inextricably linked with the cultural zeitgeist of the period: To what degree are the alterations judged to be significant or insignificant, and who decides on whether they are so judged? A good example of signification of alteration of works of art is the removal of an infant Christ child from the triptych *The Virgin Mary with Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Paul* by Florentine painter Bernardo Daddi (circa

1280–1348), painted in about 1330. It is shown in Figure 8.19 with the Christ child still intact and in Figure 8.20 with the child removed.

This was a hard decision for Rothe (2003), the former Getty paintings restorer, to make. Technical examination showed that the Christ child was added later, probably in the sixteenth century, to alter the meaning of the work, and that it was painted over the original, which was in excellent condition for a work from 1330. Frequently, paintings restorers overpaint alterations judged to be significant changes to the concept of the original to restore the prior appearance of the work, but here the condition of the original was so good that any attempt to paint over the Christ child would have remained visible in painted relief, so the decision was made to remove the infant entirely. A mysterious total overpainting of the blue robe of the Virgin with a dull, dark-brown color was probably carried out at the same time the infant was added, perhaps to make her raiment more modest rather than to improve on the fine ultramarine pigment of the original, which would have been very expensive; perhaps for symbolic reasons or religious associations.

Differentiation between material authenticity and historical authenticity should be on view to the observer, and one way to achieve that would be to include the image in Figure 8.19 in the gallery contiguous with the painting in its reresetored condition. This approach would at least provide a glimpse of the work-being, the ongoing development of authenticity as a historical event, which Heidegger proposes as integral to any preservation.

Attitudes about the significance of the work-being have changed, even over the past 30 years. For example, *Saint John the Baptist with Saint John the Evangelist and Saint James*, an altarpiece in the National Gallery, London, by Nardo di Cione (?–circa 1366),

## Categories of Authentic Paintings



**Figure 8.19.** *The Virgin Mary with Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Paul* by Bernardo Daddi, circa 1330, before reresoration. Tempera with gold leaf on panel; 121.6 x 113 cm. The Christ child is a significant addition that will either be removed or overpainted. A very similar triptych by Daddi has been dismembered. Part of it is in Rome and other parts are in Bern; the sad fate of many triptychs is to be scattered across the globe. (Image courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles)

circa 1365, tempera on poplar, would originally have been framed with a predella, columns, tracery, pinnacles, and crockets, but all that was lost when it was removed from Florence (Bomford 2003). In the Victorian

period, an elaborate gilded frame in imitation of the supposed original framing was fabricated. This was removed in pieces in a 1983 restoration (Gordon et al. 1985). The frame replaced with a plain gilt molding



**Figure 8.20.** *The Virgin Mary with Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Paul* by Bernardo Daddi after restoration, with the Christ child removed. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, framed with the original engaged frame; 121.6 x 113 cm. This version represents the original material authenticity of the work but does not honor the historical authenticity of the painting over time. (Image courtesy of the Getty Museum, Los Angeles)

that attempted to present a purely neutral, functional containment for the altarpiece, as if it were almost incidental to the intended aesthetic of the material authenticity of the original.

As seen from the perspective of 2003, when a review of this restoration was published by Bomford, a reassessment might well regard the *disiecta membra* of the Victorian creation as a disputed act. The Victorian

## The Forgeries of Icilio Frederico Joni and Umberto Giunti

conception of what the frame might have looked like, the continuation of its work-being, was more authentic to the origination of the artwork than a truncated minimalist approach that attempts to valorize only the object-being of the altarpiece. From the perspective of 2016, this is still the case. If anything, additions made in the Victorian period, as a narrative on the mores of Victorian taste and interpretation, are even more valued than they were 30 years ago. If the work were restored at the National Gallery today, allowing for amelioration of structural problems the Victorian addition created for the altarpiece, the frame would not be removed. Once again, a didactic panel in the gallery with a photograph showing how the painting looked in the Victorian period would help repair and bring together the historical authenticity of the altarpiece and its current material authenticity, but as of my last visit to the gallery, this had not been included.

Paintings that have undergone significant physical alterations over time present difficulties in terms of their treatment. There is no uniform philosophy that can be applied in such cases. An example is the portrait *Young Woman with Unicorn* in the Galleria Borghese in Rome, circa 1506. In 1760 it was identified as a portrait of Saint Catherine of Alexandria holding a Catherine wheel and was attributed to Pietro Perugino (circa 1446/50–1523). A restoration in 1934–1936 showed that the painting was in fact by Raphael and that it was not a portrait of Saint Catherine (Meyer zur Capellen 2001). But in 1959 a reexamination of the underdrawing showed there was no unicorn at all and that Raphael had actually painted a small dog. The painting that Raphael created was *Lady with Lap-Dog*. The unicorn still appears on this painting, even though this is not what Raphael painted

(Seracini 2012). So in this case, the Catherine wheel has been removed to reveal the unicorn, but the unicorn has not been removed to reveal the dog. The intention of the artist has presumably been ignored because of the popularity and exoticism associated with small unicorns. There is no indication in the Galleria Borghese of these important historical transfigurations.

Marijnissen (1985:22) next cites *industrially manufactured reproductions disguised to appear as paintings*. These can indeed be very deceptive. Even Philip Mould, a well-known London art dealer with a respected eye and finely developed skills in the detection of fakes and sleepers (a painting neglected or misattributed that a skilled connoisseur might recognize as a bargain purchase), once purchased a gilt-framed and varnished Renaissance painting that was a reproduction on paper stuck to thick card (Mould and Bruce 2012). Next come *integral forgeries produced with modern materials only*. This is very common in the world of fakes and forgeries, since procuring of the right materials, those which would have been used by the original artist, is far too difficult, expensive, and time-consuming to contemplate for the vast majority of forgers, as the examples below illustrate.

### The Forgeries of Icilio Frederico Joni and Umberto Giunti: Renaissance Pictures of the Twentieth Century

Two Italian forgers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Icilio Frederico Joni (1866–1946) and Umberto Giunti (1886–1970), together with Alceo Dossena (discussed in chapter 7) and Giovanni Bastianini (1830–1868), created some of the most admired forgeries of trecento and quattrocento artists. While these forgers reused the frames

and gesso layers of old panels, they did not worry unduly about scientific connoisseurship and made little attempt to avoid pigments with a post quem date of introduction long past the quattrocento period.

What was important was the overall appearance of age, created by the use of old wood panels, the stylistic mimicry of earlier artists, and the creation of a convincing craquelure or general damage to create the illusion of centuries of wear and tear. Joni, whose work formed an important part of a 2004 exhibition (Mazzoni 2004), worked as an apprentice, learning the trade of gilding. Later, when settled into his life as a restorer and forger, he raised falcons in his studio in Siena, played the mandolin, staged many pageants, and enjoyed a picaresque lifestyle. Apart from Sieneese paintings of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, Joni was very skilled in the creation of illustrated book covers. Despite his humble origins, meager education, riotous gang-like adolescence, and rollicking time in his early adulthood, Joni's accomplishments in the fine art of fakery have come to be much admired (Mazzoni 2001, 2004; Mazzoni and Olivetti 1993). In a sense his background is like that of the later English forger of Renaissance drawings, the working-class Eric Hebborn (1934–1996), who once tried to set fire to his school and whose works have come to be collectible in their own right.

For a street-smart kid without the benefit of a solid education in the arts, Joni showed a deep appreciation of stamps, coats-of-arms, insignia, and other fine details, worthy of the best art historians of the period, such as Bernard Berenson (1865–1959) and Frederick Mason Perkins (1874–1955). Joni's work began to be collected as real trecento and quattrocento paintings, although

whether he promulgated them as such or let others come to their own erroneous conclusions, as Hebborn is alleged to have done, is not clear. Berenson originally thought Joni's work was authentically old, until doubts began to surface and he asked a restorer in Milan for his views on the paintings. The Milan restorer told him that they were probably painted by Joni.

According to Joni's autobiography (1936), Berenson was at first fooled by his forgeries when he started to buy them in Florence. Following the lead from the Milan restorer, Berenson traveled to Siena and found Joni working in an isolated farmhouse with four comrades. One did the underdrawing, another painted in the pigments, another did the gold tooling, and the fourth did the artificial aging and made the frame. Berenson was by this time inextricably involved with the dubious practices of the English art dealer Joseph Duveen (the first Baron Duveen, 1869–1939), who kept Berenson on a retainer and used him to authenticate works, some of which also were probably not what they were claimed to be. Duveen's sister once remarked that some of Duveen's Old Masters reeked of fresh oil paint. Several works by Joni were subsequently funneled through Duveen to collections in the United States and Europe. Berenson kept two of Joni's fakes, probably to test the acumen of his rivals or to remind himself of the problems of his own attributions. Joni once took a genuine fourteenth-century panel to Berenson, who would not see him later in life. Berenson sent back a message: "Tell Senor Joni that his work continues to improve." Joni countered, "When I take him originals he calls them a fake and when I get a fake past him, it then becomes an original." Hebborn did exactly the same thing with the Colnaghi Gallery in London after his exposure as a

## The Forgeries of Icilio Frederico Joni and Umberto Giunti

forger of Old Master drawings and he met with the same kind of response.

When the trade learned that Joni was intent on writing his autobiography, he was offered a substantial sum of money to desist, but Joni, true to the communal mode of production of his work and pride in his achievements, had no interest in such suppression. Like many skilled artisans, Joni considered the paintings he produced, modified, or restored to be authentic artworks. Joni (1936:338) writes: “An artist who creates a work of art of his own, in imitation of the style of an old master, is not a forger; he is at worst an imitator, and he is creating something of his own. And if he produces something that merely reflects the style of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, without limitation, it is something really and truly creative.”

When the autobiography was published in English in 1936, it was censored, with some names removed (such as Lord Duveen’s). Copies of the work rapidly disappeared from bookshops. It was rumored that Lord Duveen bought up every copy he could find and had them destroyed.

Joni makes few comments concerning the technical aspects of his craft in his autobiography. In one passage he says that he ground up his own colors until Windsor and Newton began to supply the powder pigments, which would not of course have been those actually used in the Renaissance period. For the punch work decoration, he first used knitting needles of varying thicknesses, which he stuck in and drew out with pincers so that the holes remained intact. Later on, he discovered a way of making holes with a small drill. He made the bronze bosses at the corners of the cover look old by bathing them in ammonia. For the iron plates he used tincture of iodine, which rusted them in just the right way. He

chemically aged his work using ammonia, says the Bruce Museum catalog, but that was for only the copper and bronze components, not for the pigments. After exposure of the finished painting to the air and sun, a chamois or kid glove was used to rub the surface with sepia dust or very finely crushed pumice to give it the worn look of an antique painting. A blunt instrument was then employed to make the marks and damages expected on an old work (Joni 1936; Mazzoni 2001).

The artistic abilities of a forger such as Joni, whose art is part of his life, are hardly compatible with writing a scientifically objective account of his working practices. Consider, for example, what Joni says about his punches. An investigation of a Joni pastiche in imitation of a busy crucifixion scene consisting of 23 figures (Muir and Khandekar 2006) by the fourteenth-century northern Italian painter Altichiero da Verona (circa 1330–circa 1390), also known as Aldighieri da Zevio, in the collections of the Fogg Museum, Harvard University, showed that the gold halos had been punched with a six-sided flower-shaped motif. Frinta (1978, 1982) linked together several forgeries whose restored areas showed the recurring use of the same punch, from different periods, all attributed to Joni. Skaug (1994) has subsequently shown how useful these punches can be in terms of attributions, although none in his catalog match those used by Joni. Many of the pigments examined in the study by Muir and Khandekar (2006) proved to be modern, and an astute appraisal by Zeri (1968) suggested that new gilding had been applied to the panel and cracked with the aid of a pin, a fact confirmed by Muir and Khandekar in their technical examination. This is the same Zeri who resigned as a Getty trustee when the purchase of the disputed Getty Kouros went ahead, against his advice, some years later.

Many admired forgeries can be traced back to Joni and his coworkers. These include *Madonna and Child with Saints Michael, Caterina d'Alessandria, and an Angel* in the style of Benvenuto di Giovanni (circa 1436–1509/18), in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore; a fine triptych in the Courtauld Institute of Art in London; *Madonna and Child with Saints Mary Magdalene and Sebastian* in the manner of Neroccio di Bartolomeo de' Landi (1447–1500); and a copy of the Agnano Polyptych (circa 1386–1395) from the church of Saint Jacopo Apostolo in Agnano near Pisa, made around 1936 by Joni. It has an interesting story: The fourteenth-century original, by Cecco di Pietro (circa 1330–circa 1401), and its copy are now the property of the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Pisa. Joni's polyptych, which, unknown to the authorities, replaced the fourteenth-century altarpiece in the church in Agnano, was recovered from the rubble left by wartime bombing. It was later believed to be the original and mistakenly published as such by several illustrious scholars. A fragment of a panel depicting Saint Ansanus, in the possession of the heirs of the antiquarian Carlo De Carlo of Florence, also created problems. It was thought to be by a painter akin to Duccio di Buoninsegna (1255–1319), the "Master of Tabernacle Number 35," whose oeuvre was defined by US scholar James H. Stubblebine in his essential monograph *Duccio di Buoninsegna and His School* (Stubblebine 1979). It is, in fact, by Joni. Even recognized as imitations, his work had great cachet. Lady Harriet Sarah Wantage (1837–1920) commissioned several decorated bookbindings from Joni, knowing that they were fake, imaginative copies of bindings from the ancient Biccherne of the commune of Siena. According to Nixon (1969) and Foot (1985), at least 14 examples

of his illustrated book covers are known, with many more probably in circulation and regarded as authentic.

Joni painted *Madonna and Child with Angels*, ostensibly by Sano di Pietro (1406–1481), an early Renaissance painter from Siena. It was exposed as a forgery in 1948 and is now in the Cleveland Museum of Art. Joni's painting is noteworthy for its use of color and its tender portrayal of its subjects, says the Cleveland Museum website, not mentioning the apparent attribution problems. There is another *Madonna and Child* in the Umbrian-Sienese tradition of the quattrocento in the collection of the Berenson Foundation at Harvard University. A particularly evolutionary phase in Joni's production took place around 1910–1915, when he painted *Madonna and Child with Saints Mary Magdalene and Sebastian* in the style of Neroccio di Bartolomeo de' Landi. This, together with three fragments from a predella in the style of Sano di Pietro, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

*Portrait of a Young Lady*, an excellent copy of a work by Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449–1494) of circa 1490 in the collections of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, was produced by Joni. Joni's *Portrait of a Young Lady* is in the collection of Chigi Saracini in Italy. The principal difference between the two paintings is the hairstyle and crown worn by the Joni fake, but otherwise his work is practically identical to the Ghirlandaio original.

Close comparison of the two works shows just how well Joni captured the style of the master. Many works by Joni probably remain unknown in collections to this day, waiting to be unmasked in the future.

Joni (1936) ends his autobiography with a rhyme, sage advice to museum curators investigating his work. It is taken from a canto



## The Forgeries of Icilio Frederico Joni and Umberto Giunti

of Aristo, in which a sorcerer tries to persuade Rinaldo to drink from a cup that bears this inscription:

If you are the one who wears the Cuckold's  
crest,  
My wine shall spill and scatter on your  
breast,  
Ere a drop pass your lips; but if it so be  
Your wife is faithful, you shall drink from me.  
But the wise Paladin the cup declined:  
Tis mad to seek what it were pain to find;  
Thus far by faith alone my life is blest;  
What should I gain by putting it to test?



**Figure 8.21.** *Portrait of a Young Lady* by Icilio Frederico Joni, after Domenico Ghirlandaio, tempera on wood panel. This forgery closely matches the style and detail of the original. It is a skillful Joni production. (Image courtesy of Chigi Saracini, Florence)

In one sense, the extract from the canto of Aristo captures the nature of the problem of deciding on the authenticity of the paintings that passed through his workshop. What is to be gained from putting them to the test? There is a whole spectrum of fakes, from lightly restored fourteenth-century panels to pastiche works, from heavily restored panels all the way to completely fabricated paintings in the style of early Renaissance masters, such as Joni's version of Ghirlandaio's *Portrait of a Young Lady*. To what extent does the reworking of an authentic fourteenth-century panel invalidate the authenticity of the original? From the point of view of the material authenticity of the work, it has been heavily compromised. The conceptual and aesthetic/historical dimensions of authenticity are a different matter. If Joni's work is admired as a beautiful work of art, and if the decayed original cannot be retrieved from a repainted fourteenth-century panel, there is little point in removing the later overpaint. As Appadurai reminds us in *The Social Life of Things*, meanings ascribed to objects change diachronically and become commodified in turn as different epochs find different aspects to value. The historical period in which Joni worked is now appreciated or of interest to us on its own terms, the Heidegger work-being having become valorized in terms of the progression of events since the 1920s. The hermeneutic dialogue between the original Ghirlandaio and Joni's version is now seen in more nuanced terms, because our attitude to these copies in the twenty-first century does not have the same foundational pejorative view of copies that prevailed during most of the twentieth century.

If the apparent aesthetic authenticity is now seen as desirable by a viewer, the philosophical justification is not dissimilar to Joni's

own assertion regarding the nature of his creative work, quoted above. In terms of Hans-George Gadamer's hermeneutics, the three paradigms of the methodological analysis involve (Radnóti 1999:116):

The understanding of the author's intentions; to understand them better than the author himself and finally to combine these elements into a circular understanding, which Gadamer calls the "merger" of the respective horizons of the author and the interpreter—in cases where the author is of the past and forms part of the tradition, this means the merger of historically different horizons.

Gadamer is here essentially following Heidegger in stating that every work of art has a history of effect (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). Radnóti (1999:117) adds a fourth paradigm, namely the *appropriation of tradition*, of direct relevance since Mazzoni (2001) thinks of Joni as influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, the fascination with the work of the Pre-Raphaelites at the time he was painting, and the studious interest of his contemporaries for the techniques of early Italian panel paintings. The hermeneutics of appropriation apply to Joni and his stated intention that an artist who creates a work of art of his own, in imitation of an Old Master, is not a forger. If a claim is made to understand that intention, and to honor the appropriation of tradition, then Joni's work occupies an increasingly privileged position in the world of authentic fakes.

Philosophers have tended to assume that forgeries proceed forward in time from initial acclamation, followed by a period of doubt and calling into question, leading to

universal condemnation (Mackenzie 1986). This is a natural progression in many cases but not all. Historically, this can already be seen to be false. The necessity of some forgeries to create a history that should have existed, a *sine qua non* for authenticity, has already been exemplified in the case of Venice, discussed above in the section dealing with intentionality and the production of fakes. In that case, historical research showed the direct relationship between Venice and Saint Mark to be fabricated, but this did not result in universal condemnation. In the case of forgeries by the likes of Joni or Dossena, the aesthetic authenticity of the works led to a hermeneutic inquiry into how the past can be understood through the present, how the horizon of the forger himself is now distant from us, as Mazzoni (2001, 2004) points out, and a new horizon has to encompass these three horizons in 2016. These inform us, not only in terms of what was desired or performed by the forgeries or pastiches in 1920 but in terms of our own historical recognition of their phenomenology.

An inquiry into Joni's intention in this paradigm is relevant. He writes: "I had often said to Berenson that I should like to try to sell my things for what they were, on their own merit; in this way, as he himself said, I should cut out the possibility of others making illicit profits out of them" (Joni 1936:120). The problem here is the tension between the stated intention of the artist and the historical milieu in which selling his works as his own, rather than as the work of an Old Master, would be feasible. In 2016 Joni's fakes would be in great demand, but in 1932 public interest was severely limited and the concept was economically unsustainable, which effectively prevented Joni from pursuing this path for his admired authentic fakes.

## The Forgeries of Icilio Frederico Joni and Umberto Giunti

A substantial series of fake fresco fragments in the fifteenth-century style, from the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin and the National Museum of Warsaw, is representative of another talented forger, Umberto Giunti, who created many fakes between 1907 and 1925. Giunti painted an admired work in the style of Botticelli during the 1920s, at the height of his career. Other impressive works are a large panel in the style of Sano di Pietro and *Ritratto Virile* in an “Antonellian” style in the Collezione Bologna-Buonsignori of the Societie di Pie Disposizioni of Siena. Other known works include *Madonna and Child with Saint Catherine of Alexandria* in the style of Matteo di Giovanni (circa 1430–1495), which was left to the Academia di San Luca in Rome in the legacy of Baron Michele Lazzaroni,

an ambiguous *marchand-amateur* figure. The “baron” was responsible for the hyper-restoration of several works of art, including a Ghirlandaio in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Francesco Sassetti and His Son Teodoro*, in which the father’s face was completely over-painted, figures in the background were removed, and other unnecessary emendations were carried out (Secretst 2013:251). It was said that the baron’s hyper-restorations were so similar in their effect that his pictures all looked alike.

A painting of the Montefeltro family of Urbino in the National Gallery, London, attributed to the late fifteenth-century artist Melozzo da Forli (1438–1494), has caused a great deal of trouble. The expert restorer at the National Gallery pronounced the work authentic in the 1930s. But it was not actually the work of Melozzo da Forli. It was painted around 1920, probably by Joni or Giunti (Wieseman 2010:36–38).

Apparently the raised cuff carries folds that defy gravity, while the extent of cloth above the elbow is too liberal. To the expert eye, the checkered cap is tilted back too far for the period. The armorial badge stamped into the gesso at upper right, a very sophisticated touch, suggests that the sitters were members of the Montefeltro family. In the gallery’s 1951 catalog of early Italian paintings, opinion had shifted. Curator Martin Davies concluded that “this picture appears to be modern.” Further evidence of the modern origins of the portrait group emerged in 1960, when costume historian Stella Mary Newton demonstrated that the garments worn by the figures were both anachronistic and structurally impossible. In fact, the man’s checkered cap was inspired by a distinctive woman’s fashion of about 1913. The painting’s curious technical aspects were



**Figure 8.22.** Art forger Icilio Frederico Joni. (Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Web Art Academy)

explored yet again in 1996, when a scientific investigation was launched to determine how the forgery was crafted (Wieseman 2010:36–38). It was painted on a thin wood panel that was stuck onto a thicker panel of old wood and artificially cracked to heighten the impression of great age. Although the traditional gesso ground and egg tempera medium were used, the latter confirmed by gas chromatography-mass spectrometry analysis, Fourier transform infrared microscopy, and

scanning electron microscopy with energy-dispersive analysis of X-rays, identified a number of modern pigments in the samples: cobalt blue, cadmium yellow, viridian, and chrome yellow. None of these were available before the nineteenth century, and Joni or Giunti, unlike van Meegeren, were not bothered by or especially interested in these technical niceties. Giunti's creations follow the same paradigm as Joni's: admired fakes of the twentieth century.

## Chapter 9

# From the Baroque to the Early Twentieth Century

Baroque and Rococo Excesses  
The Century of Restorations  
A Desire for the Original  
Romantic Decay

Posthumous Works  
Copies  
Forgeries

*During the seventeenth century the central role played by reproductions of antique statues within the academic curriculum was enshrined increasingly in theoretical texts.*

—Martin Postle, *Antique Statuary in the English Academy: From Lely to Haydon*

### Introduction

The seventeenth/early eighteenth century ushered in what has been called the Baroque period, although the artists then living would never have referred to themselves as such. The Baroque is widely recognized as a period of flamboyance, exuberance, and lavishness in creation of and spending on the arts, which contained the contradictory notions

of ennobling the spirit and the worship of God. The era saw the creation of sumptuous palaces, buildings, and works of art, the sheer cost of which led some into bankruptcy (Harbison 2000).

The desire to create visions of ecstatic veneration was one of the Catholic aims of the period, to convince worshippers that the true church was the Roman version of the Christian

faith, with its saints and miracles, incense and indulgences, not the purified version offered by the Reformation (Lambert 2004).

The present-day fascination with the Baroque, however that is defined, is part of the postmodern reevaluation of the interaction between viewer, artist, and object, seen by Mieke Bal as a “shared entanglement” (Bal 1999:30). That entanglement is part of the discourse between representation and reality. Maggie MacLure writes:

The art and philosophy of baroque is currently providing a fertile source of reclaimed theoretical energy in fields including art and cultural theory . . . actor network theory . . . philosophy and aesthetics . . . and literary theory. The baroque has come to stand for an entangled, confounded vision . . . the blurring of distinctions between subject and object, surface and depth, reality and representation (MacLure 2006:740)

The subject of authenticity is rarely addressed in Baroque studies, since it involves both the conceptual authenticity of the viewer’s interaction with the work and how material and aesthetic authenticity are evaluated. In that sense, its relations with the postmodern are dynamic and relevant, as evidenced by the numerous texts that deal with the Baroque sensitivity in the contemporary context, such as works by MacLure (2006), Lambert (2004), Harbison (2000), Buci-Glucksmann (1994), and Baudrillard (1998).

### Baroque Instantiations

The fabrication of fantastical objects during the Baroque period—from cabinets of curiosities to anamorphic artworks and *trompe l’oeil* creations—is part of its fascination with

creativity imbued with spiritual presence (Baudrillard 1998; Buci-Glucksmann 1994). The cabinets of curiosities contained works whose conceptual authenticity was of paramount importance. Whether a merman, such as the example illustrated in Figure 2.14, was regarded as materially authentic or not depended on its mode of reception, which the cabinet of curiosities made palpable and intriguing and which created for its contents the aura of authenticity.

As far as the completion of fragmentary works of art are concerned, the tradition of remaking ancient statues continued through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During this period the production of pastiche works increased. There was no interest in undertaking a faithful reconstruction of a sculpture. Preferred instead was a reinterpretation and restitution of the work as an allegorical or mythological figure, often with the addition of imaginative details. An example is the addition of the Cupid to the Ludovisi Ares (Conti and Longhi 1973:103), discussed earlier. Many works were altered to suit the taste of the Baroque period. They were adapted to the style of the period without regard to the material authenticity of the original, but as modern scholarship points out, this is one of the salient characteristics of the Baroque (Harbison 2000; Lambert 2004).

The taste for restoration in the Baroque was part of its exuberance. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the families of the papal entourage began to assemble collections of ancient sculptures, which were largely present in Rome at the time and were also discovered in the first archaeological excavations, carried out under the aegis of King Charles III (1716–1788), who ruled the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Charles

III began a systematic campaign to unearth the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum (Loh 2004). Many of the finds were skillfully restored by artists as elevated as Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680).

Loh (2004:478) provides numerous examples of the problems of imitation. In 1614 a virtually unknown painter, Alessandro Varotari (1588–1649), copied Titian's (Tiziano Vecellio, circa 1488–1576) *Bacchanal of the Andrians*, dating from 1520–1523, as well as a pastiche of works by Venetian, Roman, and Bolognese masters of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Giovanni Andrea Podestà (1608–circa 1673) produced engraved copies. The Florentine painter Giovan Battista Vanni (circa 1599–1660) also copied *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (1523–1526), while Peter Paul Rubens produced two Titians for the king of Spain, Philip IV (Loh 2004:478). The two are today regarded as authentic works qua Rubens rather than as Rubens's forgeries of works by Titian.

Other painters, including Domenichino (Domenico Zampieri, 1581–1641), made two drawings, now lost, of Titian's *Bacchanalia*, while Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) and François Duquesnoy (1597–1643) produced sculptures after Titian's oil painting *The Worship of Venus* (1518–1519). As late as the second half of the seventeenth century, Neapolitan artist Luca Giordano (1634–1705) copied Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* and reused the same figures in numerous paintings in the 1680s. The painted copies of *Bacchanal of the Andrians* made by Varotari and others are not demonstrative, creative, or competitive repetitions per se according to Loh (2004), who writes: "They belong to another category of imitation that fulfills a documentary purpose before cameras."

Several authors (Belting 1994; Jaffé 1977) observed that Rubens consciously painted the altarpiece for the Oratorians' church in Rome in the style of Paolo Veronese (1528–1588), with Gian Pietro Bellori (1613–1696) writing that it was based on the intentions of Veronese. Good style was to be achieved through discriminating imitation, recombination, and transformation of previous and existing artists (Loh 2004). The ambivalence with which we view these transformations today is a contested field, with the Baroque instantiations of altered works of art alien to the intentions of the original artist but working playfully with representation and reality (MacLure 2006). As testament to the historical taste of the Baroque, these alterations are frequently not removed but left as authentic imitations of the period. To remove all of them would deny the historical understanding of Baroque taste.

The Council of Trent (1545–1563), called by Pope Paul III (1468–1549) to counter the effects of the Reformation, stated that art should be used to explain profound dogmas of faith for everyone, not just the educated elite. The new art was to be direct, emotionally persuasive, and powerful. Certain works by Michelangelo were censured as not being fit for this purpose, resulting in the overpainting of 11 depictions of genitals and bottoms on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, as discussed above. Despite this, the council encouraged the depiction of grandiose visions, ecstasies, conversions, martyrdoms, and deaths, probably because such simple themes could be appreciated by peasants as authentic expressions of Christian faith (Spear 1989).

The Jesuits were in the vanguard of the Counter-Reformation but were not necessarily convinced that the copies artists supplied them with performed the authentic

functionality they sought. It is fitting to quote from an argument Pierre II Legros (1666–1719) had with the Jesuits in support of the replication in plaster of his own marble sculpture *Saint Stanislas Kostka* in Sant'Andrea al Quirinale in 1703: “The piety that the statue is said to stimulate in the little chapel will be equally stimulated by a similar statue of the same shape, since it is not the material that stimulates piety but rather what is represented. . . . The veneration given to God and the saints increases through the multiplicity of their images. . . . In venerating them one does not think about whether they are originals or copies by the artist” (Spear 1988:99).

Some years later, during the French Revolution, art historian and dealer Alexander Lenoir (1761–1839) devised a plan to preserve historical French monuments from the destructive tide of the revolution. Lenoir gathered pieces from French castles, churches, and cathedrals, exhibiting them in the former Les Petits Augustins cloister in Paris to show the French people the artistic value of monuments that had lost their political or religious value. This collection is considered the first public museum of the modern era. It shared one interesting characteristic with the Baroque: Many pieces were assembled with fragments of different origins, as if at the end of the eighteenth century, the fragment had not the same value as a complete work of art.

An example is the marble funerary monument of Abelard and Heloise in the courtyard of the cloister (today in the École des Beaux-Arts courtyard, Paris), which was assembled from various unrelated components of different ages and remains a complex pastiche today. This approach to the restoration of ancient monuments was also the principal reason the museum was closed in 1815, by a commission under the direction of Quatremère de Quincy

(1755–1849); the authenticity of the collection was viewed as being too heavily compromised by spurious restorations.

The eighteenth century saw an increasing professionalism in the questioning of the recognition and narrative value of works of art. Baroque inventions or transformations were no longer regarded as desirable, and a reassessment of what kind of authenticity one was to seek in the fragmentary remains of the classical world resulted in increasing demands for documentary research and comparisons between different works and artists. This reformulation created a philosophy that sought to respect the original intention of the remaining physical components of the work, as far as practicable.

This became something of a mantra, which gained in stature as a camouflage to restorative acts that failed to respect the true nature of the surviving fragments. Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (circa 1716–1799), the most successful restorer and sculptor of his time, is a typical example of this philosophical shift. While he pronounced that his restorations respected the concept of the original, in many cases they did nothing of the kind. For example, when Thomas Jenkins (circa 1722–1798) purchased the Barberini Venus, it was missing its head, right arm, left forearm, and part of a buttock. Cavaceppi had a suitably sized head of Agrippina (Julia Agrippina the Younger, Roman empress, 15–59 C.E.) wearing a veil in his workshop, so the veil was chiseled away, and the head was pared down to fit the body of Venus. Newly carved arms were added, one coyly placed to allow Venus's hand to rest over her genitals, which the Roman original would not have done. It was sold as an original work to William Weddell (1736–1792) of Newby Hall and was recently sold at auction in London, restorations noted, for £7.3 million.



Where possible, Cavaceppi tried to be more respectful of the original: He left the ancient fragments intact, without polishing their surfaces, adapting the new components to the original fragments and leaving the joints visible. This change in philosophy, away from a completely deceitful or entirely fanciful restoration, inspired or encouraged attention to a “stylistic and . . . iconographic accuracy, as well as archaeological and philological meaningfulness based on scholarly pursuits and objectivity,” along with a demand for “an authenticity verifiable in ancient literature and physical evidence” (Howard 1990:24).

This philological approach was influenced by the works of Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), whose project was to create a “comprehensive and lucid chronological account of all antique art” depending on “an analysis of successive stylistic phases” (Haskell and Penny 1981:101). Winckelmann’s methodology was characterized by a thorough analysis of small details of the work of art and attention to the shape and size of anatomical parts, such as nipples, fingers, and knees (Haskell and Penny 1981:102).

The results of this new attitude were the elimination of most Baroque restorations and the increasing importance of historical and material authenticity, evidenced by stylistically faithful additions. In some cases, such as the Elgin Marbles or the Ceres of Cambridge, sculptures were not restored at all, to preserve their documentary and educative value or to highlight the intrinsic aesthetic qualities of the remaining fragments (Conti and Longhi 1973:197). The refusal of such a famous sculptor as Antonio Canova (1757–1822) to restore the fragmentary Elgin Marbles was a sign that wholesale completion was no longer necessarily the desirable state of a work of art (Philippot 1966:216; True 2003:5).

### **The Late Eighteenth to Early Twentieth Century**

The late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century was not only a time of increasing innovations in art, how artworks were produced, and what they represented; the period has also earned the dubious sobriquet “the century of restorations” (De Angelis-D’Ossat 1948:51). It is also known as the century when fakes and forgeries began to achieve increasing prominence. Because of the rapid rise in the number of people who could appreciate works of art, visit museums to see them, read about them, see lithographs of them, or actually own them, an increasing number of imitations, replicas, and forgeries began to be produced to satisfy the demand.

Many of the restorations and fakes discussed in earlier chapters were created in the period from 1850 to 1930. This was a period of greatly renewed interest in medieval and Renaissance art, spurred by the many European travelers on the Grand Tour and by exposure to ethnographic and exotic arts seen or obtained from around the globe. The renewed interest, especially in the arts of old Europe, China, and Japan, coincided with a period when many skilled craftsmen had ready access to imported materials such as elephant ivory, turtle shell, gemstones, precious woods, and blocks of Roman marble; precious or ancient fragments that could be used to produce fakes; and a ready supply of fourteenth- to sixteenth-century panels, sixteenth- and eighteenth-century canvases, hand-ground pigments, old oils, and traditional varnishes. Clocks, watches, manuscripts, carpets, lithographs, and ceramics were added to the ever-growing list of the inauthentic. Dawson (1990:212) notes that soft-paste Sèvres porcelain, much in demand from

1804, began to be extensively faked, along with Meissen, Chelsea, and Chinese ceramics. Even redecorated Sèvres milk jugs with applied gilding, bearing the authentic marks of the original French gilders, were faked. Abraham Moore mugs from 1765 were much faked, as was anything else for which the demand exceeded the legitimate supply. The faking of classical gems in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century became so prevalent, due to the activities of British fakers James Byres and Thomas Jenkins, that the market was in turmoil for many years. The taste for gems reached a peak in the 1780s. The 1990 British Museum catalog of fakes illustrates an intaglio in sard of a drunken satyr and an intaglio bust in carnelian of a warrior—a fine piece of work but dating from the eighteenth century, not classical Greece (Rudoe 1990:147). These forgeries were principally made for monetary gain, and while of interest in their own right, they do not add anything especially new to the story of authenticity.

### The Nineteenth Century

As far as the themes of this book are concerned, four principal concepts come into sharper focus in the nineteenth century: the relative merits of restoration of originals; the value of copies and replicas; how fakes and forgeries are to be regarded; and the valorizing of the original.

Because of the Baroque and Rococo excesses, restoration was now based on the aim to preserve as much of an original as possible; many examples have already been discussed. There was a new art historical interpretation, a desire for the original that sought to remove obtrusive or misleading restorations from works of art in an effort to assess and evaluate the artistic quality of the unadorned original. Many restored pastiche works created

in the eighteenth century were reassessed in the nineteenth. Vaughan (1992:42) makes the point that many of these were restored partial fakes, that eighteenth-century taste for visual homogeneity tolerated excessive restorations that would be unacceptable in 1992, and that a paradigm shift occurred in 1812 with the decision not to restore the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum, although that may have been farsightedness on the part of Canova rather than the real shift alluded to by Vaughan. However, it is true that there were other voices raised against excessive Baroque and Rococo restorations. Risser and Saunders (2013:199) cite evidence from an Italian context: In 1818 Naples issued a royal decree that sought to limit the extent to which additions could be made to ancient artifacts. It stated, “Restorations are an obstacle to the certain interpretation of ancient monuments, which come to be permanently altered if the restorers are not fully informed as to the style as much as the ideas that guided the ancient craftsmen in their work” and “It is universally desired by scholars that ancient works of art are left in the state in which they are found, adding fragments only in a way that does not alter the ancient ones.” Risser and Saunders (2013:199) note that when discussing marble sculpture, the decree advises that restorations be carried out in plaster rather than marble. It made a ruling specifically for bronzes, stating that the patina should not be removed as it provided a sure sign of authenticity.

The nineteenth century also saw the inception of conservation and restoration as legitimate subjects of study rather than just as artisans working on the cleaning or restoration of works of art. This questioning of the purpose and aims of conservation resulted in notable intellectual debates and a synergism or influence between restoration

and philosophical inquiry. The nineteenth-century reflection on the nature of restoration is intimately connected to the idealists and the view that only the painted surface itself carried the potential for contemplation of the essence of the work—that the materiality of the work was secondary to its ability to represent what was eternal and universal.

In the context of the transfer of paintings from decayed wooden panels to lined canvas, then much in vogue, Hayes (2013:47) notes that Schopenhauer had referenced, in passing, the transfer of frescoes in Venice and that while he was curious about the beauty of van Eyck's colors, he suggested that they should be investigated chemically. This was something of an aside, for Schopenhauer saw art as an expression of a Platonic ideal, something that transcended the mere materiality of its form. Schopenhauer writes (1988:369): "Thus this sequestration, this separation of form from matter, belongs to the character of the aesthetic artwork, indeed because its purpose is to bring us to the awareness of a (Platonic) idea. It is hence essential that the artwork gives the form alone, without material, and to do this clearly and obviously."

The lack of a tangible material component for paintings transferred from wooden panels to canvas is therefore seen by Hayes as being underpinned by philosophical currents active at the time. Hayes gives as his prime example Hegel, who was not only an art connoisseur but knew several restorers and artists personally. Hegel was also much influenced by the idea of pure form or pure spirit as a transcendental experience above the physical plane on which art existed. Some of his statements regarding art are discussed in chapter 2.

There was even admiration for decayed pictures, which seemed even more evocative to some viewers than pictures in perfect

condition (Hayes 2013:49). This was part of a nineteenth-century nostalgia overwhelmed by the grandeur of the classical past, leading to the taste for Victorian pessimism. Matthew Arnold's (1822–1888) poem *Dover Beach* was a watershed, stemming from a reaction to the excesses of the Baroque and a loss of Christian faith, which had seemed so certain to a prior generation, who believed in the literal truth of the Bible.

A typically pragmatic British response to this admiration of degradation as far as paintings were concerned was to question the extent to which transcendent experiences could be reconciled with decayed pictures. As Hayes (2013:50) writes:

The restorer Merritt, in *Pictures and Dirt Separated in the Works of the Old Masters*, took issue with this approach, celebrating instead works that would have perished but for their timely transfer from the worn-out timber on which they were painted to other and sounder material. Today these views can be read both as opposition in a dialectic of romantic decay versus preservation, but also as a kind of synthesis: two varieties of dematerialized existence.

For while aesthetics admitted the physicality of an artwork, it to some degree displaced the materiality. Hegel (1974–1975) writes: "Thereby the sensuous aspect of a work of art in comparison with the immediate existence of things in nature is elevated to a pure appearance, and the work of art stands in the middle between the immediate sensuousness and ideal thought."

While the attitude toward restorations gradually underwent a swing toward purism, intellectual currents regarding the merits or

demerits of condition, replicas, and copies were circulating. Debates concerning what pictures should actually look like created a storm of criticism whenever the National Gallery in London embarked on the cleaning of paintings. There were outraged letters to *The Times*, committees of inquiry, and investigations by prominent scientists. Between 1850 and 1853, Michael Faraday (1791–1867) carried out analytical and deterioration studies for the National Gallery, investigating varnishes, cleaning methods, and the impact of London fog, coal smoke, and gas lighting on the discoloration of surface coatings. Paintings with exposed lead white areas were blackened by alteration to lead sulfide, while chalk grounds could grow pustular excrescences or induce delamination of paint layers (Saunders 2000). One consequence of damage from London's heady concoction of pollutants was that paintings were covered with glass to protect them and the backs were protected with canvas, both of which are an impediment to connoisseurship (Brimblecombe 2012). To delve more deeply into a painting's underdrawing, the glazing would have to be removed. Some pictures of the Pre-Raphaelites kept under glass at the Tate Gallery could easily be substituted by high-quality prints. Lighting reflections obscure the authentic nature of their surfaces to such an extent that when the author visited in 2014, the works themselves were hard to see.

### **The Problems of Posthumous Rodins**

Many artists produce posthumous works, sanctioned by the artist's relatives, collectors, curators, museums, or estates. Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) is a particularly contentious case. His multiple modes of production have prompted questions concerning whether his oeuvre is truly represented by the scores of instantiations of his bronze castings, such as

*The Thinker* (1879–1889), one of the most reproduced sculptures in the world, and how authentic these works are to the aims of the artist or to the materiality of his mode of production. We have already mentioned Rodin's seminal work *The Age of Bronze* (1877), for which he was accused of taking molds from a living model, a kind of *surmoulage*, rather than creating the standing figure himself (Le Normand-Roman 2007). Rodin was sensitive to these kinds of criticisms and often produced sculptures that were much smaller in scale or works that were over life-size.

The authenticity of a bronze sculpture inheres in the artist's sanction (Irvin 2005b), since the "original" work is a clay, plaster, or wooden model that is then used to create the piece-molds from which a wax copy is produced. This wax copy is then invested, burned out, and replaced by molten bronze. It is subsequently finished, chased, and patinated, not usually by the artist himself or herself, to produce the finished work. Artisans employed by the studio produce versions in different sizes. The original model for *The Thinker*, for example, was quite small, but the sculpture is known principally from large, life-size casts in numerous cities around the world. Indications of authenticity are found in the signature of the artist in the wax model and foundry stamps applied to the bronze by the casting studio. Hundreds of authentic Rodin multiples were produced during the artist's lifetime, and thousands were produced long after his death. Some of these posthumous works are authentic, and some are inauthentic. The major problem with the latter was created by French art dealer Guy Hain (Wikipedia 2013), who was responsible for many thousands of forged Rodin sculptures. Hain convinced one of the original foundries and its owners, Georges and Bernard Rudier,

## The Problems of Posthumous Rodins

to use the original molds, employed 75 to 90 years before, to recast known Rodin works as well as plaster copies. Hain even purchased the Balland Foundry to undertake production. These Rodin bronzes were fabricated using the same molds employed for the legitimate posthumous replications. The forgeries were stamped with the name Alexis Rudier, who had been one of the casters for Rodin. The numerous works Hain produced brought in more than \$18 million.

Hain expanded his production to include forgeries of works by Alfred Barye (1839–1892), Antoine-Louis Barye (1796–1875), Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (1827–1875), Christophe Fratin (1801–1864), Emmanuel Frémiet (1826–1910), Aristide Maillol (1861–1944), Pierre-Jules Mene (1810–1879), Auguste Renoir (1841–1919), and Camille Claudel (1864–1943). The astonishing range of this fabrication was revealed when Hain was finally arrested in January 1992, in possession of more than 20 metric tons of bronze sculptures dispersed among various foundries in Burgundy and Paris. He was sentenced by the courts, but when released, he just started up production again. Hain was rearrested in 2002. Evidence collected by the Dijon Police Department included some 1,100 copies of the works of 98 different French sculptors. Art expert Gilles Perrault calculated that Hain had produced more than 6,000 copies beyond those the police found and confiscated. Only one-third of the inauthentic posthumous Rodin replicas have been traced, which means that thousands of them are circulating as genuine Rodin bronzes somewhere (Wikipedia 2013).

Disputes regarding authenticity are therefore inevitable. An exhibition of Rodin plaster casts and bronzes at the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada in 2001, valued at more

than \$27 million, was questioned by the Musée Rodin, which declared that none of the works were authentic. The Royal Ontario Museum refused to accept this verdict and maintained that its Rodins were authentic and that many of the plasters were signed. The Musée Rodin countered that these signed plasters appeared only in the 1950s (Edemariam 2001).

The material authenticity of the bronzes and plasters is complicated by the fact that authentic Rodin bronzes can still be purchased from the Musée Rodin until 12 casts have been made from the plaster molds, such as the collection purchased by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1967. The authenticity of these posthumous casts has to be based on a purely conceptual authenticity rather than on material or historic authenticity, since, as with the forgeries issued by Hain, they are cast from the same molds used by the Musée Rodin itself.

The artist sanctioned the Musée Rodin to act as his agent in the continual production of his bronzes. These posthumous works are validated by the intention of the artist, and they exist *qua* sculpture, independent of aesthetic appreciation of the works themselves. Extrinsic to a scientific concept of material authenticity, the intrinsic visual appreciation of the sculptures made by Hain cannot be different from the casts made in 1967. Indeed, it is the compositional and material components of the works that are missing from this story: No attempt seems to have been made to discriminate between works cast for Rodin during his lifetime, those cast legitimately by the Musée Rodin after his death, and those cast by forgers. Scientific examination of materiality should not be extrinsic to the argument here but should constitute integrally, with art historical connoisseurship, an evaluation of claims by stakeholders.

Regardless, some artists and critics take a dim view of posthumous casts. These include artist Gary Arseneau; a page from his website entries is shown in Figure 9.1. Arseneau maintains that the “dead do not sculpt” and holds the view that all of the posthumous casts are forgeries.

The Musée Rodin approaches this problem by maintaining that it designates itself as the guardian of the artist’s moral rights. It stresses that its own documentation circumnavigates problems or protests concerning the authenticity of Rodin sculptures, whose production, long after the death of the artist, continues, but officially only at the behest of the Musée Rodin. Each authentic cast is therefore imbued with the intangible authenticity of a moral right of the dead artist, together with a certificate of authenticity issued by the museum. That is what separates the real from the inauthentic, even if there are no visible or discernible differences between the posthumous forged copies and the posthumous legitimate copies.

### **The Virtue of Copies**

In terms of fine art, as a result of the expanding appreciation of artistic works, there was an increasing desire to contemplate the original, not copies or replicas, which were increasingly viewed with distaste as the nineteenth century progressed. From the point of view of the connoisseur, it was desirable or necessary to be able to differentiate copies from originals to understand the development of art and its stylistic and diachronic material alterations.

However, this is only one side of the story. The Victorians were also enthusiastic copiers whose aim was to provide an enlightenment universalism of artistic forms for the benefit of the educated elite. Copies were often taken

from plaster casts of the original and included photographs, reproductions of prints or drawings, and electrotype replicas of original art in a variety of different metals or finishes (Scott and Stevens 2013).

The use of copies in the museum environment was heralded across Europe as a noble enterprise that sought verisimilitude of admired originals that could not be possessed themselves. Appreciation of aesthetic form came via replicas, which negated the archaeological or material veracity of substance, subsumed in the Victorian sensibility of the beautiful rather than the material authenticity of the original.

A pan-European agreement promoting universal Reproduction of Works of Art for the benefits of Museums of all Countries, signed at the Paris Exhibition of 1867, obligated the signatories to form their own commissions for obtaining such reproductions as they might require for their own museums. The signatories were from Great Britain and Ireland, Prussia, Hesse, Saxony, France, Russia, Sweden and Norway, Italy, Austria, and Denmark (Department of Science and Art 1867). Of these countries, few formed a national collection of copies that survives today; many collections were not conserved, and some were destroyed or lost. The most well-known collections are the Royal Cast Collection in Copenhagen, part of the National Gallery of Denmark, founded in 1896, and the Cast Galleries of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, founded in 1873 (Baker 1982), the latter containing many plaster casts and electrotypes.

What happened to the other collections? The philosophical tide of art historical opinion began to turn against the view that plaster facsimiles or electrotyped copies were of any aesthetic or historical value. This denigration

## The Virtue of Copies



### ALEXIS RUDIER FOUNDRY [Lifetime]

1 of 35 ? , Mrs Joseph Pulitzer  
2 of 35 1913, P. A. Cheramy

### NO FOUNDRY MARK [Posthumous]

3 of 35 Oxford, Ashmolean Museum  
4 of 35 Cairo, Mahmoud Kahlil Museum

### ALEXIS RUDIER FOUNDRY [Posthumous]

5 of 35 [About thirty casts by Alexis Rudier]

[List of 7 of the -about- 30 casts known locations]

- \* former Lucien Mellerio Coll., acq before 1919, no. 2
- \* Paris, Hotel George V, 19 December 2001, no. 7
- \* Los Angeles, Cantor Coll., acq. 1972 [w/dedication]
- \* St. Louis, City Art Museum - 1953
- \* Tokyo, Bridgestone Museum of Art - 1961
- \* Lyons, Musee de Beaux-Arts, - 1997
- \* Los Angeles, Cantor Foundation

[PHOTO & LISTING] Auguste Rodin, French (1840–1917). *The Thinker*, modeled 1880, cast number and edition size unknown, ca. 1931. Bronze, 14 3/4 x 7 7/8 x 11 3/8 inches. Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Collection.

<http://www.nelson-atkins.org/art/exhibitions/rodin/thethinker.cfm>

[*RODIN, A MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION CATALOGUE*] Rodin, Auguste, *The Thinker*, 1880, reduced in 1903, cast about 1931, Bronze, Alexis Rudier, 14 3/4 x 7 7/8 x 11 3/8 in. (37.5 x 20 x 28.9 cm), Signed A. Rodin and inscribed Alexis Rudier/Fondar Paris with special plaque on marble base that reads: Le Conseil du Musee Rodin a son colleague M. Paul Doumer, en souvenir de sa precieuse collaboration et avec ses vœux les plus ardents pur son septennat, 20 November 1931, Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Collection, promised gift to the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation, 11100 (page 175)

[BACKGROUND SOURCE] 35 [or so] *The Thinker* casts, 38.5 x 20 x 27.1 cm high with casting and/or acquisition dates & collection location, p. 587, *The Bronzes of Rodin* by Antoinette Le Normand Roman, © 2007 Musee Rodin

## NON-DISCLOSED POSTHUMOUS FORGERY

**Figure 9.1.** Page from the website of Gary Arseneau, an artist who takes a particularly dim view of the authenticity of posthumous casts, declaring them to be forgeries. This view represents an extreme end of the spectrum in terms of evaluating the authenticity of later casts. (Image courtesy of Gary Arseneau and GaryArseneau.com)

## From the Baroque to the Early Twentieth Century

was also connected to the use of plaster casts in academic art classes toward the end of the nineteenth century. Sir Kenneth Clark (1978:23) wrote:

I was taught drawing at school in a dismal room that contained about a dozen casts, which I was required to draw in pencil. As I drew them every week for four years I got to know them fairly well. Four of them were by Bastianini, one was the British Museum Caesar, another fake long lauded as the best bust of Caesar ever, and a bust of a female saint that was undoubtedly nineteenth century. There was not a single cast that was authentic, even a Donatello would have had a style upsetting to my drawing master, and the same was probably true of art schools all over the country.

The travails of some of these casts were quite extraordinary. As recounted by Avery (1994), Robinson mentions that one cast of a Giovanni di Bologna (Giambologna, 1529–1608) sculpture was discovered in a London antiques shop by an Italian dealer and purchased for £20. The dealer took it back to Florence, where it was sold to a British buyer for £300. It then made its way back to England. The Victoria and Albert Museum later acquired it for £470. Clark's statement is a revealing commentary on nineteenth-century taste, and how the cultural ethos of the time appropriated inauthentic portrait busts because they conformed with what had come to be expected of admired artistic creations.

It was not just the outcry against the endless use of copies for teaching purposes and the stultifying influence of copies on original creation that caused problems for the retention of museum replicas. It was exacerbated by

the renewed emphasis on the original work of art as something distinct from a replica. This view became prevalent after the First World War and effectively lasted through the 1970s.

The use of plaster of Paris or flexible molding materials based on animal glue and treacle mixtures, employed in the nineteenth century for the taking of casts, may well have occasioned surface damage to delicate polychromy or patinated sculpture. Signs of *surmoulage*—where a knife or blade was used to cut molding material applied to a bronze sculpture to separate the mold into pieces, which could be removed from undercuts or other areas of the limbs—can sometimes be seen. *Surmoulage* could damage the delicate patina of Renaissance bronze sculpture. If the original was not waxed or oiled, plaster casts from fragile stone originals could easily disturb the surface. Since casting operations were carried out by skilled craftsmen rather than conservators, traces of oil or wax used as a separation layer sometimes remained on original sculpture, encouraging the accumulation of dirt and grime.

On the other hand, art historians and conservators argue that preservation of replicas of some works of art allows the material authenticity of the original to be assessed in terms of preservation of surface detail. Replicas have substantially more detail than some originals, which have withstood more than 100 years of weathering, deterioration, alteration, or loss. As Baker (1982) remarks, in the case of the tympanum from the north portal of the Church of Saint Godchard in Hildesheim, a lunette marble carving of a rather Byzantine-influenced Christ, Saint Godchard, and a nimbed bishop, probably Saint Epiphanius of Pavia (Williamson 1998), the original has undergone the usual sad deterioration to which marble sculptures are prone after centuries of exposure to polluted air.



Comparison of the plaster cast in the V&A with the original reveals the degradation of the surface of the original following 120 years of additional and more severe environmental deterioration, suggesting the potential of historic casts to act as long-term conservation monitoring devices or as more authentic representatives of the appearance of the original work than the original itself.

Unlike Lowenthal's quip that old forgeries show us how the past came to view the past, the preservation of these replicas allows us to see how the past has helped preserve an appearance of the originals. The renewed interest in these Victorian replicas has been established as a historical referent to an inquiry concerning the nature of the copies themselves (Scott and Stevens 2013). There is a phenomenological problem with the continued production or collection of copies vis-à-vis casts collected 130 years ago. Can copies produced in 2016 be regarded as viable art object replicas in the same way copies produced in 1870 are regarded today? Are modern replicas less historically authentic than those made in the Victorian period even though the standard of their physical surface appearance may be higher in some cases than that of a cast produced in 1870? A Japanese museum exhibits only recently made, very high-resolution copies of a variety of Western art objects, which shows that modern copies assembled as an entire museum for the benefit of the public are not necessarily incompatible with the verisimilitude of artistic creation. In the Victorian period, the newly discovered chemical technology of electrotyping was used extensively for the production of works of art as well as commercial production. This forgotten technology was in fact an important facet of the founding of the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a museum of copies and replicas.

### **The Neo-Renaissance of the Nineteenth Century**

Given the plethora of forgeries produced during the nineteenth century, one of the most interesting developments, as the quotation from Kenneth Clark above reveals, is the reverence accorded to certain ancient and Renaissance artistic styles created by nineteenth-century artists such as Giovanni Bastianini (1830–1868), whose oeuvre has recently been the subject of a reassessment (Moskowitz 2013). Bastianini, a skilled artisan with little formal education, was eventually apprenticed to Giralomo Torrini (1795–1853). Even at this time, his reliefs and busts were purchased by discerning clients and acquired Renaissance attributions along the way. Later, while working for the antiquarian dealer Giovanni Freppa, Bastianini began to exhibit his own work. He continued to make busts, portraits, and statues for Freppa, which were often sold as antiques or Renaissance examples, but there is no evidence that Bastianini ever attempted to misrepresent his own work, a point that Moskowitz (2013) makes in distinguishing Bastianini's output from that of a forger. Bastianini was a neo-Renaissance imitator. One of Bastianini's highly skilled creations, a terra-cotta bust of the humanist poet Girolamo Benivieni (1453–1542), one of the most admired "Renaissance" works of portraiture, created an embarrassing public scandal. Made in 1863, it was purchased by the Louvre in 1866 for an enormous amount (of which the artist typically received only a tiny fraction) as an unattributed and undisputed Renaissance masterpiece. It was subsequently exhibited in a gallery along with sculptures by Desiderio da Settignano, Michelangelo, and Benvenuto Cellini. When it was learned that the sculptor was

still alive and living in Florence, the French authorities could not believe it and vigorously denied it, eventually forcing Bastianini to issue declarations and letters that he had, in fact, created the Benivieni bust in 1863. When this became widely known, it created a media sensation.

Many forgeries purchased as masterpieces at the time of their creation came to be easily recognized as forgeries by succeeding generations of scholars. Let us examine in detail one of Bastianini's fakes, the gesso *Bust of Giovanna Tornabuoni*, formerly identified as *Ginevra dei Benci*, in the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Florence (Moskowitz 2013:figure 17). Moskowitz (2013:55) writes:

The image is not based on a sculptural prototype but rather on painted pictures by Domenico Ghirlandaio. . . . Rather than repeating the coiffure of the Giovanna in the fresco . . . Bastianini creates a variation of the knotted scarf wound about the head of Ghirlandaio's Mary in the Visitation. . . . It is tempting to imagine that, having received commissions from the Pandolfini family, Bastianini saw Ghirlandaio's portrait, which then, together with the fresco in Santa Maria Novella, inspired his own rendering of the lady.

The Ghirlandaio painting dates from 1488 and was certainly an influence on his act of emulation. Much of Bastianini's output can be criticized on the grounds of art historical connoisseurship, in keeping with the belief mentioned above, but this portrait cannot be dismissed in these terms, as the evaluation of Moskowitz makes clear. The most that can be said is that in terms of style and cultural setting, it closely matches

known Renaissance examples that it does not misinterpret; it only reinterprets them. Moskowitz finds more derogatory comments, made with hindsight, concerning some of Bastianini's busts, but if this particular *Bust of Giovanna Tornabuoni* was not known to have been produced by Bastianini, then art connoisseurship would not be able to prove otherwise on the basis of its visual appearance and art historical assessment.

The same is true of some sculptures attributed to Bastianini, reattributed to the Renaissance, doubted again as being modern, and left in a state of confused identity—further proof of the lack of definitive ability to discern nineteenth-century production from fifteenth-century originals based solely on art historical connoisseurship. For example, two terra-cotta busts in the Hermitage were attributed to the nineteenth century (Moskowitz 2013:100) and cataloged as by Bastianini, although Moskowitz sees no discernible characteristics of our faker at work in one of them. The other was later thought to have been made by a follower of Benedetto da Maiano (1442–1497). Moskowitz (2013:102) writes: “Two other reliefs have been suggested to be by the hand of Bastianini, the much debated Santa Cecilia/Sant’Elena in Toledo, Ohio and the Singing Youth in Cleveland. The former has recently been restored to Desiderio da Settignano. . . . Having examined the relief carefully . . . I remain strongly inclined to see it as dating from the Ottocento, although probably not by Bastianini.” That Bastianini had later imitators or copyists is undoubted, but the problems of aesthetic appreciation in determining exactly what was created by Bastianini and what wasn't, over the course of three generations of scholars, is illustrative of the authentic neo-Renaissance world that he created.

## The Neo-Renaissance of the Nineteenth Century



**Figure 9.2.** Neo-Renaissance portrait bust of Giovanna Albizzi by Giovanni Bastianini, circa 1860; gesso and polychromy over wood and mixed media. Andrew W. Mellon Collection, National Gallery, Washington, DC (Image courtesy of [blog.naver.com/cjlw](http://blog.naver.com/cjlw))

What is missing, somewhat surprisingly given the recent date of Moskowitz's work, is the general application of scientific connoisseurship to determine the extent to which Bastianini's works have made their way into museum collections as genuine Renaissance works. There seems to have been little effort to characterize the marble, terra-cotta, or gesso used by the artist for comparison with authentic artworks. Only in the case of the bust illustrated in Figure 9.2 was modern X-ray radiography used. It showed that internal constructional details of the bust were not Renaissance but nineteenth century.

This is an obvious omission in current research that will no doubt be tackled in the future, for without a database of scientific determinables, it is doubtful if the extent to which works by Bastianini have entered the hallowed halls of Renaissance art can ever be discovered.

During his lifetime, Bastianini was recognized and known as a sculptor who imitated or based his models on fifteenth-century prototypes, but with encouragement he could create works that showed the full extent of his own originality rather than being solely inspired by the past. As Moskowitz

(2013) makes clear, his work was inspired by Renaissance examples, but none of his output is actually a direct copy of a Renaissance original. Rather the works are nineteenth-century versions of an evocation of how an authentic Renaissance work would look. Some of Bastianini's works are signed by him and some are portraits of nineteenth-century individuals. No attempt was made to add false signatures to his work, and his abilities were not secreted away behind a veil of deception. Bastianini, like Dossena, received little monetary reward for his exceptional talents. Dealers, middlemen, and collectors made the real monetary gain.

Moskowitz (2013) argues that there is no proof that Bastianini ever functioned as a forger, despite assertions to the contrary throughout the early twentieth century. To analyze this statement, three considerations need to be discussed: the intentions of the artist, the nature of the work, and the mode of reception of the work. The intent to forge and to pass off the forgery as real is intimately connected to the four criteria discussed earlier: stylistic mimicry, artificial aging, a spurious context of reception, and the use of

old materials only. Bastianini's involvement here is comparatively minimal. He did not use old materials, artificial aging, or a fake context. Stylistic mimicry was the principal methodology, but even here there was no direct copying, and any spurious context was devised by dealers or collectors, not by the artist himself. The intention of the faker was to create a sculpture that embodied the aesthetic of the quattrocento, regardless of how his work came to be regarded.

The nature of the work was evaluated by art historians, based on similar works from the Renaissance, and was judged to be authentic. The consequence of the valorizing of the sculptures was their purchase by most of the major museums and their entry into permanent collections, often after the sculptures had changed hands several times and gained their own spurious Renaissance attributions. The mode of reception of these works has changed; following the realization that the sculptures were made in the nineteenth century, many observers who originally regarded them as authentic came to describe them as forgeries (Moskowitz 2013). From the perspective of the viewer, this may be true. Observers perceive a work and internalize their reactions to it as they would to a work they regard as a forgery and then ascribe that motive to the sculptor himself. The ontology of intentionalist aims cannot be inferred from the mode of reception of the works, but this is what has tended to occur, for example with the pronouncements of Pope-Hennessy (1958), who believed that Bastianini was guilty of forgery.

Bastianini died at the suspiciously young age of 38, when his notoriety had achieved international attention, shortly after purchase by the Louvre of the *Girolamo Benivieni* bust. Exactly the same thing happened to Eric

Hebborn (1991): After publication of his autobiography, Hebborn was murdered on a street in Rome by having his skull smashed, a crime possibly organized by a disgruntled member of the art establishment. The same may well be true in the case of Bastianini. Hebborn's killer was never found, and whether Bastianini was the victim of foul play or not, we will never know.

In terms of Goodman's categories, the class of works attributed to Bastianini compared with the class of works attributed to the Renaissance cannot be used to assess which class a given work belongs to because the class of Bastianini's work still cannot be unequivocally distinguished from the class of genuine works of real Renaissance masters. His achievement is a remarkable one. It is overly simplistic, or even misleading in Moskowitz's view, to describe the oeuvre of Bastianini as equivalent to that of a forger.

The certainty of the twentieth century in dismissing his works as transparent forgeries can be seen, on a closer examination, to be based on prejudices of the time and the denigration in absolutist terms that was part of the art historical critique of nineteenth-century production. In the twenty-first century, the emulation evoked by the neo-Renaissance of the nineteenth can be reassessed, as all historical periods enter their process of adjustment and reconfiguration of what is regarded as an authentic mode of expression of the artist and his time and what is not.

Documentary sources from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries indicate that the practice of adulterating consumer goods was widespread (Carlyle 2007). Ample evidence in artists' manuals, treatises, and handbooks, as well as contemporary encyclopedias, suggests that artists' materials were not exempt from fraudulent practices.

# READ ONLY/NO DOWNLOADS

## The Neo-Renaissance of the Nineteenth Century

Pigments, oil, and resins were all subject to significant adulteration as well as outright substitution with cheaper materials. Thus the use of authentic materials by the artist

was often subverted by commercial gain. Cheaper substitutes were sold to the artist in lieu of the superior pigments the artist thought he was purchasing.

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## Chapter 10

# The Modern, Postmodern, and Contemporary

Conceptual Authenticity

Ephemeral Art

Modern Art Forgery

The Meaning of Original

Duchamp's Readymades

The Artist's Intention

Contested Works

Self-degrading Art

Installation Art

Performance Art

Narratives of Engagement

Appropriation

Reenactment

*It is not only that not everything about art happens to be through which it makes its natural entry into philosophical consciousness, and that which makes art entrancing and absorbing and important often is simply philosophically irrelevant.*

—Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*

### Introduction

The modern and contemporary field of art—its cognates, replicas, and reproductions—is both a treasure trove and a minefield for any discussion regarding authenticity and

its relationship to art, conservation, and the philosophy of art. An inquiry into the topic reveals just how valuable, or disputed, the notion of authenticity is in relation to a whole range of contemporary works, from the point

of view of the original artist (who may deny that a displayed version of his or her work is authentic) to artists who continually subvert the concept altogether, to viewers and their interaction with the work, which represents their own subjective interpretation of it. This may be all that remains in the case of an ephemeral production.

This interaction may encompass performative, self-directed, and direct feedback from the artist or from the work itself. Discovering how an iterative exhibition of an installation may be considered authentic or not is now part of a discourse between artist, conservator, and curator. Given the problems with installation and digital artworks, there is a burgeoning field of literature that will undoubtedly expand greatly over the next few years. International working groups now address concerns with installation art. These include the InterPARES project (Roeder 2009), which represents a collaboration between archival theorists, artists, conservation scientists, and government agencies investigating what authenticity means to creators of digital content, including interactive installations, performance art, animation, theater, and multimedia works. Authenticity steps out of the shadows in the contemporary arena only to be surrounded by a myriad of burning questions concerning its relevance and whether it can be anything beyond the purely conceptual.

### **The Ever-Expanding Field of Authenticity**

The widening areas of artistic expression range from thought experiments—where no material authenticity is involved, only the conceptual authenticity of the artist and the interaction with the observer, such as some works by Yoko Ono or Tino Sehgal—to entire buildings wrapped in plastic by Christo,

transitory states commemorated in postcards but that otherwise reside only in the memory. Wharton (personal communication 2015) draws attention to the fact that Christo creates vast quantities of documentation, which he then sells, which is how he makes much of his income. The ontological and epistemological problems created by the multitudinous facets of contemporary art reflect our uncertainty as to how to deal with problems of authenticity and how these interact with the intentions of the artist, the prerogatives of institutional owners, and the desires of collectors. Some of these reflections entail recognition that authenticity is not a fixed entity at the time of creation, *contra* De Clercq (2013), but an ongoing process that interacts with observers and actors and how they are engaged with the work in its various instantiations, particularly in the museum, studio, or gallery (Richmond and Bracker 2009:xiv–xviii).

The ephemeral nature of many modern and contemporary works of art is part of their essential existence. Ephemeral art is often regarded as a phenomenon of the recent avant-garde, but the medieval *tableau vivant* was ephemeral too (Eichberger 1988), and little attention has been paid to issues surrounding this kind of art of the past. The ephemeral has been recognized in terms of ethnographic arts, such as Australian Aboriginal sand paintings produced for a ritual performance and destroyed after the event, so there is nothing new about conceptual authenticity in this regard. There are areas of overlap between art that is ephemeral, conceptual, auto-destructive, performative, and reenactive. All these modes of artistic expression subvert the material authenticity of production and place emphasis on the intangible, so that the work of art may have, in some cases, no physical existence at all.



Artists have become gallery exhibits in themselves, while deceased artists' studios have achieved a kind of immortality as recreations or replicas displayed as permanent art installations to be gazed at voyeuristically. Words displayed as the written word can function as works of art in their own right, sometimes self-referentially, or as philosophical statements about the work itself, which may refer back to the meanings of words associated with the exhibit. Telephone installations offer a philosophical explanation as to why no artwork can be displayed in the gallery by the artist, the conceptual inability to display the work representing the work itself. In terms of ethnographic parallels, the conceptual art of the Igbo of Nigeria (Achebe 1988 [1958]) constitutes an interesting example in which original works of art are destroyed so that each succeeding generation has to re-create the essence of the original, which is available only as a conceptual phenomenon.

Artists have assumed the performative tasks of conservators in dusting vitrines as an artistic statement, with the result that the cleaning of the vitrine in question is now elevated to the status of artwork and lodged with the museum registrar as a documented phenomenon to be recorded as an artistic event, not as a janitorial prerogative of conservation maintenance. Certificates of authenticity have themselves become museum exhibits, as authentic statements of the authenticity of something else, since the often contested texts have been recontextualized as art exhibits from their own materiality. The list of possibilities and manifestations knows no limit, prompting some philosophers, such as Danto (1981), to opine that no further developments can take place in the theory of art, or even in art itself, a statement that has given rise to numerous philosophical discussions (see, for example, Rollins 1993). It was

the problem of the lack of aesthetic or perceptually discernible differences between Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* and the commercial originals that forced Danto to reconsider the nature of contemporary art. Aspects of this argument have already been discussed in this book.

Artworks may not exist only in their original physical manifestation and condition; decomposition and degradation may be central to their authenticity, as an individual path of decay may be an integral function or purpose in the creation of a work. The potential for the ephemerality of degradation or deliberate destruction of artwork has already been mentioned, in the case of Goldsworthy, the art of the Zuni, and Navajo sand paintings, to name only three examples of different approaches to either sanctioning ephemerality or actively embracing it.

Modern and contemporary artists often employ materials that were never intended to last, as with paintings incorporating elephant dung, fish suspended from trees, fruit encased in lead wrappings, and bathtubs full of rotting meat. Even materials that were once standardized and sought after for their defined levels of chemical stability may be spurned by modern artists, who instead seek house paints, brilliant synthetic dyes, or pigments that fade badly on exposure to light. Some artists have covered their work with varnishes, finishes, and binders that blanch, exude, crack, delaminate, or discolor. While certain artists embrace this alteration or ephemerality, others are materially illiterate and are dismayed to discover that their work will not last even for 10 years. Mark Rothko's chapel paintings (Anfam 1998), for example, suffer from inherent vice due to the idiosyncratic use of mixed media and paints employing differential binders, such as egg tempera or various acrylic formulations (Stenger et al. 2015).

## The Modern, Postmodern, and Contemporary

Artists have created a variety of conceptual works whose transitory existence can be preserved by conservation documentation, digital video recordings, source-code preservation or transcription, artist interviews, gallery records, and the detritus sometimes left from works that have suffered from inherent vice, the latter often inadvertently destroying themselves unless conserved at a particular stage of their lives. More controversially, physical remnants of works that were designed as auto-destruction art are sometimes preserved in museum collections when no material remains of the work were meant to survive at all.

The boundaries between some of these categories, such as the ephemeral, the conceptual, the performative, and the auto-destructive, are not simply static boundaries whose fixed points can be seen as demarcations. They are broad movements with different artistic and cultural contexts, so that discussion of them could easily merge across several related fields, including the disputed territory of reproductions (Hughes and Ranfft 1999).

The rapid development and expanding number of artists in the field of contemporary art and its tendency to commodification have been responsible for conservators of modern and contemporary art achieving a certain degree of personal prominence and enhanced job security. It was not long ago that the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County sacked its only conservator, who was responsible for 33.5 million objects. Such an event would be unthinkable at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where several conservators are employed and are even supported by dedicated conservation scientists delving into the complex issues associated with modern material utilization, characterization, degradation, stabilization,

and documentation. Indeed, the creation, continuation, or reinterpretation of some contemporary works is dependent on the involvement of the conservator, so much so that material or historical authenticity can be thought of as a process rather than inhered in the fixed production of an artwork, which may not be able to exist in an essentialist state but only as a contingent event, dependent for realization not only on the artist but also on the physical intervention of the conservator.

There is only one conclusion to be drawn from this disparity: Modern and contemporary art of the last 100 years is more highly valued and requires more constant attention than millions of artifacts whose origins cover the entire history of the earth, including huge reference collections of fish, nematodes, birds, and butterflies and displays of dinosaurs, insects, bird skeletons, rare fossils, and minerals, and en passant, steam cars, electric trams, ancient aircraft, dioramas, old film props, costumes, and indigenous Indian remains.

The importance of the conservator's interaction with the preservation of contemporary art, or the preservation of the record of art that once existed but is no longer extant, is recognized within the museum context as being of fundamental importance in the process of contemporary interactions between artist, conservator, curator, and art historian. As interest in contemporary art has increased among the public, it has created its own aura of appeal to those who visit art galleries, seeking the latest fashionable creation, the next sensational installation, or the next controversial exhibition. The vibrant nature of that interest is part of the phenomenon of the early twenty-first-century museum. While the brilliantly revamped galleries of historic silverware of the Victoria and Albert Museum were sparsely

attended on the day the author visited in 2013, the queues for the David Bowie exhibition trailed down Exhibition Road.

Modern and contemporary art is now the lingua franca of the international avant-garde. The tens of millions of dollars paid at auction for even modestly regarded modern and contemporary artworks have spawned a veritable industry of fakers creating forgeries of works by Chagall, Mondrian, Warhol, Nicholson, de Kooning, Rothko, Coons, Ernst, Pollock, Motherwell, Still, and so on. The names and identities of some of these forgers are still unknown to us, and their work will continue to create problems in the art market and for the nature of contemporary artworks that are ostensibly authentic for decades to come.

A recent book by Jonathon Keats (2013) is entitled *Why Fakes Are the Great Art of Our Age*, although the book discusses mostly historical cases of well-known forgers such as Lothar Malskat (1913–1988), Alceo Dossena (1878–1937), Han van Meegeren (1889–1947), Eric Hebborn (1934–1996), and Tom Keating (1917–1984), who are in fact not responsible for the great art fakes of our age at all but for those of the past. It was either Sir Ernst Gombrich or Richard Wollheim who remarked that the great art fakers of our time are still unknown because forgers currently at work have not yet been unmasked. How true this is: In 2014 it was revealed that Spanish art dealer Jose Carlos Bergantiños had employed New York artist Pei-Shen Qian to produce scores of forgeries of works by Rothko, Pollock, de Kooning, Motherwell, and Still (Shoichet 2014). Bergantiños bought old frames at flea markets and stained newer canvases with tea while providing Qian with old paints for his work. The freshly produced forgeries were then subjected to a variety of aging processes, including heating, cooling,

exposure to the elements, and the use of a blow dryer. The case involved some \$80 million of fraud, with the amounts accruing to the forgers in excess of \$33 million. The London gallery Pure Evil purchased works by Haring and Warhol online, although one might assume it should have known better. One of the Warhol boxes was supplied with a certificate of authenticity that proved to be a facsimile of a unique Warhol original in a museum in Pittsburgh (Kinsella 2014). In 2014 a Florida pastor was convicted for selling forged paintings by Damien Hirst (Peltz 2014), and it is only recently that the work of Ken Perenyi (2012), active for more than 30 years, and the great German forger Wolfgang Beltracchi (2014), active for more than 25 years, has been revealed, with Beltracchi producing works by Picasso, Chagall, Motherwell, Ernst, and others. An FBI investigation into the activities of Perenyi was mysteriously dropped after he had been shadowed for some time by FBI agents trying to build a charge against him. Perenyi, a very street-smart operator, learning that the case had lapsed, waited for the statute of limitations to expire and then published his autobiography. His file at the FBI is apparently so sensitive that it still cannot be seen, not even via a freedom of information request. Presumably his case was closed because it would have been too embarrassing for the New York art elite if it had gone to trial. The sheer range of the premodern work produced by Perenyi that eventually must have been sold through London and New York may have been part of the problem, as the forger produced scores of works supposedly by Martin Johnson Heade, Fernand Léger, Maurice Utrillo, Sisley, Monet, Modigliani, Gainsborough, Claude Joseph Vernet, Sir Peter Lely, Charles Brooking, and Giovanni Paolo Pannini, to

name only a prominent few, that have been effortlessly absorbed into the mainstream art market. One suspects, therefore, that high-level New York FBI contacts suggested that it would be better for all concerned if his case was just filed away, which is exactly what occurred. What is intriguing is that Perenyi's file cannot be seen at all, which simply adds to the allure of the story, exciting the curiosity to determine what exactly remains unknown.

Beltracchi, who did spend a short period in jail, ensuring his notoriety, is one of the truly gifted fakers of our time. He was only caught initially because a tube of zinc white paint he had purchased for one of his forgeries was contaminated by the manufacturer with titanium dioxide white. A supposed Max Ernst painting made by Beltracchi was returned to the artist as a known forgery during a court case in Germany, but the New York collector missed it so much that he paid to get it back, declaring it one of the best Max Ernsts he had ever seen.

Scores of fake artworks by quixotic American artist Mark Landis (1955–) were accepted as real by some 60 museums and institutions in more than 20 US states over a period of more than 20 years. These fakes were all donated to the museums by Landis, who took no monetary reward or tax deduction for them. Landis used a variety of disguises and aliases to donate his work. He was exposed in 2008 with the donation of a Maynard Dixon (1875–1946) picture to a Californian museum (Miranda 2014). Landis's works could truly be described as fakes in the sense employed by Dutton rather than forgeries. The conceptual nature of Landis's action is in giving—donating his fakes to institutions whose readiness to believe in them is the complicity of the

recipient in accepting the gift. Given that scores of paintings executed by Landis have been widely disseminated and assumed to be authentic, it will take decades to distinguish them all, in terms of museum documentation, from those works actually by the original artists.

Examples of fakes and forgeries will, without doubt, continue into the future because the demand for modern and contemporary works is so high.

The insatiable world demand for works of art of all kinds is not the only problem. The commercialization of the art market has raised prices to such an extent that an original cannot be insured on display in a home and instead must languish in a bank vault. At the same time, a Chinese art factory artist produces a high-class replica, which can be placed on display as a surrogate for the authentic work, while the value of the latter increases until it can be sold again, sometimes for millions of dollars in profit. Thus the authentic work has become so valued that it ceases to perform any function except to be used as a source of investment for its accrual of monetary worth.

According to one art expert who examines a great deal of art submitted for authentication (Martin 2007), the startling truth is that forgeries make up some 90 percent of art offered for sale today, including Banksy prints, Dali woodblocks, Buddhist bronze sculptures, and Jackson Pollock paintings. Similar sentiments are expressed by Scotland Yard officers responsible for hauling in forged works of art sold as real in the United Kingdom (Mould and Bruce 2012). In this sense, fakes are indeed the great art of our age because our desire for the authentic is now so pervasive that the only way to satisfy that desire is to embrace the inauthentic on an increasingly massive scale and to call it authentic.

## The Readymade

### The Readymade

With Marcel Duchamp's (1887–1968) readymades, art began its philosophical conversation with the nature of its own existence, in one sense, a *theoretical object* as Mieke Bal (1990, 1992) has it. Readymades were found objects, in theory authentic craft objects of commercial manufacture. The first readymade, dating from 1913 and entitled *Bicycle Wheel*, was a bicycle wheel attached to a European stool. A bottle rack, signed by Duchamp and called *Bottle Rack*, was the first unaltered utilitarian object to be produced as a readymade under the influence of the Dada movement. In 1919 Duchamp created his *L.H.O.O.Q.*, a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* altered by the addition of a mustache and goatee and the inscription “L.H.O.O.Q.,” which is said to sound like “She has a hot ass” in French, although in a later interview with Arturo Schwarz, Duchamp gave a loose translation as “there is fire down below.” A 1964 replica of the 1919 “original” is in the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena. A color reproduction made from the original in 1940 was stolen in 1981 and has not been seen since. Thirty-eight replicas were made to be inserted into a limited edition of Pierre de Massot's *Marcel Duchamp, propos et souvenirs*, while in 1965 Duchamp completed his philosophical cycle by producing *L.H.O.O.Q., rasée*, an unmodified reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* except for the inscription “L.H.O.O.Q.”

The most famous of Duchamp's readymades is a porcelain urinal, or *Fountain*, which is signed with the pseudonym R. Mutt. It was unleashed onto the unsuspecting art world in 1917 and refused admittance to a modern art exhibition, ensuring its continued fame and prominence. Wollheim (1993:34) thinks that the importance of Duchamp's readymades has been overstated. He writes:

One way of thinking about Marcel Duchamp's readymades, which have exercised an influence over contemporary aesthetics that seems to me quite out of proportion to their interest or significance, is that they occur in an interval or space that this discussion opens up. This is the interval that lies between the possibility of the singular transgression of any of the assumptions upon which art rests and the impossibility of the universal transgression of any such assumption.

Since Wollheim was writing, now more than 20 years ago, the transgression that readymades was responsible for has, if anything, assumed not a singular event horizon but a continuum of transgressions, resulting in *Fountain* being voted the most influential artwork of the twentieth century in 2004 by a poll of 500 recognized artists and art critics.

Part of its reputation is its ability to act as a symbol for the problems and potentialities of what made art possible in the twentieth century. Could another porcelain urinal from the same manufacturer, of exactly the same type, be considered to be a work of art? The artistically mimetic properties of an identical urinal have come under attack, or defense, from a number of directions. As Danto (1981:91) remarks, the question is whether aesthetic considerations belong to the definition of art in such cases. An aesthetic condition has been deemed necessary by Dickie (1974) in that things considered to be works of art are “candidates for appreciation,” almost akin to a status conferred upon an artifact by the art world. “If something cannot be appreciated” writes Dickie, “it cannot be a work of art.”

Objections to this, raised by Cohen, are mentioned by Danto (1981). Cohen lists

among a series of mundane objects that cannot be appreciated as artworks such things as tacks, carpet runners, and urinals. As Danto says, the objection to Dickie's theory is that negative reactions to something considered to be a work of art cannot by themselves constitute a criterion of unacceptability of appreciation. We may regard a bathtub full of rotting offal, as exhibited by British artist Stuart Brisley (1933–, sometimes called the “godfather of British performance art”) at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in the 1980s, as quite disgusting. Indeed, the author was unable to stay in the room for more than a few seconds. But simultaneously, it is clear that not only is it a bathtub full of rotting offal but that the bath and offal have an effect on the viewer as a work of art in an art gallery, in a different sense than the effect on a viewer in an abattoir. Even if that effect is one of revulsion, it is revulsion with a purpose that stays in the memory long after the event.

Dickie (1974) asks why the ordinary qualities of *Fountain* are such that they can be appreciated as an artwork, whereas its shiny surfaces and deep reflections invoke qualities similar to those of works by Brancusi and Moore. Danto (1981:95) replies:

There are qualities of the urinal in question, which do resemble certain qualities of Bird in Flight. But the question is whether the artwork Fountain is indeed identical with that urinal, and hence whether those gleaming surfaces and deep reflections are indeed qualities of the artwork. Cohen has supposed that Duchamp's work is not the urinal at all, but the gesture of exhibiting it; and the gesture, if that indeed is the work, has no gleaming surfaces to speak of. . . . But certainly the work itself has properties that

urinals lack: it is daring, impudent. . . . My own view is that a work of art has a great many qualities, indeed a great many qualities of a different sort altogether, than the qualities belonging to objects materially indiscernible from them but not themselves artworks. And some of these qualities may very well be aesthetic ones, or qualities one can experience aesthetically. . . . But in order to respond aesthetically to these, one must first know that the object is an artwork, and hence the distinction between what is art and what is not is presumed [to be] available before the difference in response to that difference in identity is possible.

Solomon and Higgins (1993:116) state that Danto proposes that an artwork can usually be distinguished from its material counterpoint by virtue of its historical characteristics. A thing can be an artwork only if it has an appropriate history and is appropriately positioned within an art historical context. The philosophers here are not attempting to understand the work of art in its historical actuality, with the consequent material degradations and incidental damage that history inflicts on a work of art, which is part of its authentic condition, but only the historical antecedent existence of it, which a non-artwork would not possess. Therefore the artwork might also be distinguished from its material replica by virtue of the historical processes of alteration or decay that have afflicted the work since it was made, as well as its mode of manufacture or installation as a work of art.

Some theoretical positions regarding the supervenience theory are of interest in relation to the notion of conceptual art. The core of the idea has been stated by Gracyk (2012:126), who distinguishes between

## The Readymade

metaphysical supervenience and epistemological supervenience: “A relationship of supervenience is present if the existence of a property of one type depends on the presence of a property or arrangement of properties of a different type.”

In the former, one property depends on one or more other types of properties while with the latter, one judgment depends on one or more of the others. Gracyk (2012:128) asks: Does the supervenience base for aesthetic properties *require* sensory properties and is the supervenience base for aesthetic properties *restricted* to sensory properties? However conceptual art does not require that any sensory properties be inherent to the artwork itself, since the work may not actually possess a physical component, such as Yoko Ono’s 1964 *Listen to the Sound of the Earth Turning*. If the artwork as a concept invokes aesthetic enjoyment, then it cannot have a supervenience relationship to a sensory perception. The sensory experience of a conceptual artwork that does physically exist, such as a urinal or a bicycle wheel, is not dependent on the sensory properties of a urinal or a wheel qua utilitarian object but as a conceptual instantiation of a work of art.

As the original version of *Bicycle Wheel*, dating from 1913, was thrown away by Duchamp’s sister and later American versions sit on stools of a different height than the European original, how are we to assess the authentic state of the later remade readymades, such as the third version, made in 1951 under the directions of Duchamp, currently in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York (Tomkins 1996); a version made in 1963; or one in the Philadelphia Museum of Art from 1964? If an artwork has only a weak interaction with an original work to begin with, how much significance can be accorded

to the remade surrogate work? According to Duchamp’s philosophical position, which follows from his statement that copies are to be encouraged “because they devalue the original so,” what would be the difference between my version of *Bicycle Wheel*, made in 2013 in Mar Vista, California, and the one dating from 1964, especially since I had Duchamp’s encouragement in my enterprise and my entirely authentic authorial purpose is to question the validity of any special status for posthumous copies in the absence of the original? The valorized remade readymades are only such because they reside in museum collections. I cannot see how they have an aesthetic difference from my copy, which could be interchanged with the 1964 version as neither can claim to be original. If the intentions of the artist were to restrict the work to presently existing copies, then one could argue that my copy is a fake, but if Duchamp believes in the antiestablishment encouragement of copies in their ability to undermine the monetary value of “originals,” then I have the blessing of the artist in his stated intention, particularly as there is no original and the entire function of *Bicycle Wheel* is to question the basis of what constitutes a work of art, although that is not my aim; my work is intended as a philosophical point of discussion regarding the status of posthumous replicas and the issue of materiality. Can I function as a legitimate appropriation artist in the manner suggested by Irvin (2005b), whose account contrasts how a forger might anticipate the work of an artist he is trying to copy, which he then produces in advance of the actual artist’s work, and the appropriation artist who produces a replica of the artist’s work post facto. If, as Irvin reminds us, Foucault (1979) asks what difference it makes who is speaking, then it in fact does matter who is speaking in trying

to describe what appropriation artists create. Irvin (2005b) acknowledges that appropriation artists are recognized in the world of art as artists, as authors of their works, not as forgers, and this is bolstered by the fact that innovation is not an essential feature of artistic authorship; nor is motive. Irvin (2005b:127) writes: “We might want to think that some form of authenticity, purity of motive or freedom from instrumental concerns is an ideal for artists; but it could be implausible to claim that lack of authenticity prevents one from being an artist at all. Authenticity of this sort cannot make for the difference between the forger [of the art not yet created by the artist] and the artist in the present discussion.” What Irvin appeals to rather than motives is that the artist may need to possess only a minimal intention that is constitutive of authorship, that the artworks are produced by virtue of the intention that they be artworks. The artist qua artist has to stay true to the objectives inherent in the work. The authorship of the artist does not consist in either the mode of production, writes Irvin, or the type of product. Authorship is defined by the ultimate responsibility for every aspect of the objectives of the artist sought through the work itself. In assigning meaning to features of a work, Irvin sympathetically invokes a hypothetical intentionalist approach to looking at how works can be validated. The appropriation artist does not remove the work from authorial intention; many works are signed by the appropriation artist or are otherwise displayed in a gallery in circumstances that make clear that the voice of the appropriated works is different than that of the originals. Even if there is no innovation or invention in terms of the materiality of the appropriated forms, that does not prevent the work from being viewed as an artistic creation. One could argue

that the innovation is the act of appropriation itself, as a conceptual event, rather than any physical innovation of the instantiation of the work being required. Sturtevant sometimes introduced small errors or blemishes into her appropriated images to physically distinguish them from the originals. Even if the ordinary viewer would be unable to discern if the damage was perfectly contiguous with the original, that is what the artist stated, clearly not entirely unself-consciously (Arning 1989).

Irvin’s analysis adds additional confirmation to the conceptual authenticity of my copy of *Bicycle Wheel*. It is not a copy I made to understand the construction or materials of the original, in the hallowed tradition that all artists follow in paying homage to previous inspirational works. Nor did I make my version to pass it off as a forgery of the original. If I invoke a hypothetical intentionality in this artwork, it is in homage to the lost original and to question the status of copies that are also imbued with a conceptual authenticity rather than an original material authenticity (Meiland 1983). As a scientist, I may be especially interested in the aura of the nickel- or chromium-plated steel of the original, which is clearly delineated metallurgically from materials available for copies produced after the Second World War, when differences from the 1913 work in terms of materiality would be especially apparent. I may even be especially interested in the authentic aura of diachronic degradation that the original has suffered, as if that itself validated my response to the authentic work. If the aura of the original can be appreciated in those terms, all later versions could be viewed as lesser works in my estimation. That may be the intention of my version to question.

According to Danto (1981), your ability to distinguish between my version from 2013



## The Readymade

and that from 1964 involves you being in a position to know which one is an artwork and which not, to be able to arrive at a different response to it, and to see a difference in identity between these physically identical versions. Can the transfiguration of the commonplace apply to the version from 1964 without applying to mine? If we accept the historical nexus of creation as being an integral part of the link between artist and artwork, how much historical credence can be attached to a version made 50 years after the original if the intention of the original was not only to spawn copies but to be devalued by so doing? The aesthetic component of the argument rests on the assumption that I will experience a different response to the 1964 version than to mine of 2013, but I am aware that the 1964 version is just another copy, so how much significance can I invest in it compared with mine? The answer is that both versions lack the intangible authenticity or material authenticity of the original, so it is hard to see, beyond the commodification of the art market, any aesthetic difference between the two. The Kantian view that origins always make an aesthetic difference seems quite reasonable in terms of classical art, but in the post-modern era, this may be almost as irrelevant as a concern about materiality, which may be transposed in semiotic directions that validate origins in a whole complex of contexts, not just materiality tied to a specific mode of production. In connection to my copy of *Bicycle Wheel*, it is interesting to note that in 1963 Ulf Linde made an unauthorized replica of *Fountain*, which was later endorsed and therefore rendered conceptually authentic by Duchamp (Paterson 2009:185).

Let us suppose that instead of being thrown away, the original *Bicycle Wheel* suddenly turned up. By means of scientific

connoisseurship, the paint, wood, steel, and iron components could be dated to a period around 1913, confirming the material authenticity of the newly discovered original, quelling the doubters. The result would be that the version in the Museum of Modern Art, as well as my version from 2013, would be reduced in status to simply examples of later copies. If the 1913 version was then purchased by the Museum of Modern Art, the original would, without doubt, be on display and the 1951 version would be consigned to storage. Unlike the Laocoön, there would be no interest in displaying the two versions together, since iconic works of modern and contemporary art do not like body doubles but prefer to be admired on huge plinths where they take center stage as singular entities. The ontological problem here is to make a distinction between surrogate copies and nonoriginals that cannot be easily resolved in aesthetic terms. The context of appreciation may be all that divides the phenomenology of our experience. The reader will have to form his or her own ideas on what this entails, since there can be no easy consensus.

The readymades, contra Wollheim, have now assumed a historical instantiation of their own, so that endless references are now made to *Bicycle Wheel* by a succession of artists who have either appropriated the concept as originally defined materially or have produced their own versions based on the concept of the work. Examples include French Fluxus artist Robert Filliou's *For Duchamp* (1969), Mike Bidlo's *Not Duchamp (Bicycle Wheel 1913)* (1986), Rob Pruitt's *Low Rider Art* (2004), Richard Hamilton's *Readymade Shadows* (2006), and Scott's (2014) *The Representation of Difference: Bicycle Wheel* (2014).

Duchamp remains a central figure in conceptual art, where ideas inherent in the work,

the conceptual or intangible authenticity that they represent, take precedence over the material authenticity, which simply may not exist in any ordinary sense of the word. If the artist refuses to commit to having conservation documentation recorded and kept, there is no historical authenticity to consider either. Some conceptual works can be freely replicated with permission of the artist granted as an a priori condition of the existence of the work itself. A posteriori statements imply that the viewer would have to ask permission of the artist to reproduce the work, as in these cases it has not been granted beforehand. That does not stop appropriation artists such as Elaine Sturtevant or Sherry Levine from undertaking their referential artistic creations, because in their cases, unlike yours or mine, their appropriations are evaluated by the art market as act of re-creation, not of simple replication. However, artists such as Pierre Pinoncelli (Paterson 2009) take exception to the fact that, unlike the original shown in Figure 4.8, modern museum displays of Duchamp's *Fountain* are based on a series of numerous copies or replicas, some signed by the artist later and some not. As Paterson (2009:186) writes, "Pinoncelli's desire to save *Fountain* from its own success . . . was first manifested at the Carré d'Art in Nîmes on 24th August 1993 when he splashed urine on it and attacked it with a hammer, claiming joint authorship with Duchamp of the resulting 'work.'" The point here is that Pinoncelli claimed to be first returning the urinal to its original function and then hitting the simple object it had become to create a new work of art. This performance art, which is in Duchampian terms perfectly justifiable, pits the philosophy of art against the commodification of the art market, in which case it is philosophy that loses the contest and the performer is fined or imprisoned.

### The Conceptualization of the Authentic

The conceptual nature of contemporary art marks a return to the same kind of criteria valorized during the medieval period, when gravel from a path trodden by the saint was considered to be as permeated with the essence of the saint himself as was his skeletal remains. Instead of the image of the relic invoking the spiritual presence of the saint, the artwork may now invoke an abstract concept of what the work of art is, what it is for, what it represents, or how it could have existed if it had ever been actualized.

In 1953 Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) created *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, in which a drawing by Willem de Kooning (1904–1997) was erased, resulting in a work with the intangible authenticity of the scrubbed-out drawing and, as the drawing was formerly known to exist, creating its afterlife as a purely conceptual phenomenon. The viewer believes that the erased work becomes a work of art itself because the act of Rauschenberg is recognized as being different from the erasure of the drawing by a child, who could have produced the same erasure; the fact that it took Rauschenberg hours to rub out the drawing is neither here nor there. The work is now embedded with a conceptual authenticity because Rauschenberg himself performed the erasure as part of the artist's intention to destroy the drawing.

In 1958 Yves Klein (1928–1962) completed his seminal work *The Void*, declaring that his paintings were now invisible. To prove it, he exhibited an empty room. It was seminal, since in 2001, nearly 50 years later, British artist Martin Creed (1968–) won the Turner Prize for *Work No. 227*, which consisted of an empty room in which the lights went on and off at five-second intervals. Creed does not make any philosophical statement of any consequence

## The Conceptualization of the Authentic



**Figure 10.1.** *Erased de Kooning Drawing* by Robert Rauschenberg, 1953. Traces of drawing media on paper with label and gilded frame. Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. (Image courtesy of Art © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation/licensed by VAGA, New York. Photograph by Ben Blackwell)

about this work, which was “purchased” by the Tate in 2014 for an undisclosed sum, probably in excess of \$150,000 (Clark 2014). It has since been exhibited abroad. I have been unable to determine if exhibits of *The Void* have also recently traveled.

In another early work, Klein created his *Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility*. This work involved selling empty gallery space, the Immaterial Zone, for various amounts of money, to collectors who were then presented with receipts. To complete the transaction, Klein exchanged the purchase amount for gold leaf, which he then threw into the Seine (Lindquist 2010). The collector then burned the receipt, leaving no record of the transaction whatsoever. However, the intangible authenticity of the event has been subverted by the existence of photographs as documentary evidence of some of the immaterial sensibility of the work.

As artist and theorist Sol LeWitt writes: “In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means

that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes art” (LeWitt 1993:24). The aim of some conceptual artists, such as Joseph Kosuth, is to invoke a self-referential philosophical statement or phrase that is part of the work of art itself (Bann 1999). For example, in 1966 Kosuth created a series of works entitled *Art as Idea as Idea*, involving textual statements of dictionary definitions of water, meaning, and idea. Accompanying these photographic images were certificates of documentation and ownership, indicating that the works could be made and remade for the purposes of exhibition. One of Kosuth’s most famous works is *One and Three Chairs* (1968), inspired by Platonic forms of representation and the question this raises. The work features a chair, a photograph of the same chair, and the text of a dictionary definition of the word *chair*:

This is art as an explanation of a philosophy, or a philosophical justification of the art of chairs rather than art as an explanation

## The Modern, Postmodern, and Contemporary



**Figure 10.2.** *One and Three Chairs* by Joseph Kosuth. This 1965 work consists of a chair, a photograph of the chair, and a dictionary definition of the word *chair*. (Image courtesy of Wikiart Visual Art Encyclopedia)

of itself, and the concept could easily be extended to illustrate the philosophy of Sartre, Foucault, or Hegel. An appropriate Hegelian model would be Hegel’s dialectic spiral, in which a thesis is countered by an antithesis leading to a new historical synthesis of chairs as events in themselves or as a combinatorial concept of chairs and the words used to describe the photograph of the chairs.

Kosuth’s work continues to create problems regarding its presentation (Kosuth 1991). For example, *Glass (One and Three)*, which consists of a pane of glass leaning against the gallery wall, a photograph (exactly the same size) of the pane of glass, and its dictionary definition, dating from 1965, has been replicated for representation, but since the photograph has to be retaken, it can no longer be the same size as the pane of glass because silver gelatin prints cannot be made to those dimensions. The photograph was “renewed” in 2005 in a version by Sanneke Stigter installed in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, which was claimed to

accord with the artist’s intent. Stigter (2011) thought of replacing the glass with a smaller sheet or using a digital inkjet photograph of the glass sheet but realized that these options denied the authenticity of the original work. How much could she function as a surrogate of the original artist? Stigter (2011:40) writes: “Analysis of art-historical sources in combination with the artwork’s material particularities and fabrication techniques, the specialist focus of the conservator is indispensable for decision-making, as installation practice itself will translate the concept into a material manifestation again, it is important to be aware of the constructed nature of decision directing this.” Wharton (personal communication 2016) notes, “The fact that the chair in the photo was taken on a different floor from the exhibition may cause concern among some of your readers—especially those who read Stigter. You might choose to use another photo where the floor in the photo matches the floor in the room.” This example reveals

## The Denial of Authenticity

the complexity of representation of these kinds of works.

Contemporary design may exhibit furniture, such as chairs, as works of art themselves, as Darby (2012) explored in her examination of *The Smoke* series by Maarten Baas. Darby writes that a discussion of authenticity in relation to contemporary design may be posited in the idea of authorship and originality and in the notion of genuineness of expression. As computers are increasingly used in both the design and production of objects, questions concerning authorship and authenticity become complex in relation to much contemporary modes of production. The *Smoke* series launched Baas's career in 2002. The idea was that furniture was assaulted by crushing, melting, and throwing before the artist settled on the idea of burning it.

These wooden relics are now scorched in stages with a blowpipe and water, after several disastrous events with plastic furniture. In *Where There's Smoke*, Baas burned 25 pieces of furniture in front of an audience at the Moss Gallery in New York in 2004. In late 2004, the artist was invited to burn 10 pieces of furniture from the nineteenth century, then in storage, at the Groninger Museum in Holland. Since then he has charred a staircase at an Amsterdam hairdressing salon, a paneled dining room, and a timber wall. In Los Angeles he burned a 1938 Steinway grand piano.

Mooodi, a design company, has since gone into partnership with the artist to produce a whole series of commercially burned articles, most of which Baas has never even touched. As Darby (2014:135) writes, "The Smoke series serves as an exemplar of many facets of contemporary design, the theme of appropriation, the interest in material and technical experimentation, and the challenge to formal neutrality and simple functionality. The

cultural authenticity of these works is thus evident, acknowledged and reinforced by museum acquisitions and by its commercial success." The view that an authentic piece of nineteenth-century furniture, probably made of mahogany or oak, can be charred to create something more immediately authentic in the twenty-first century is perhaps debatable, since some of us might prefer the beauty of irreplaceable nineteenth-century wood to the individuality of a charred twenty-first-century wreck. If the Dutch museum could find no better use for fine nineteenth-century furniture than to have it transformed into authentically burned versions of itself, surely a more socially authentic use of these art objects would be to donate them to the poor. A revolutionary use of unwanted furniture of this kind would fulfill the authentic purpose of the furniture itself, the function intended by its maker, authentic in its use. But in the hermetic world of art today, such gestures would deny the art's commodification, as has indeed since occurred with this conception. As French philosopher Michel Foucault (1979) writes: "Art in our society has become something which is only related to objects and not to individuals or to life, that art is something specialized or performed by experts who might be artists."

## The Denial of Authenticity

The consequences of the flood of fakes coming onto the market today have resulted in several committees of authentication refusing to even look at potential works by artists they are supposed to be the preeminent experts for. Their connoisseurship is often superlative, and the pronouncements of these committees carry great authority in the art world. For example, when interviewed in 2014, the head of the authenticating committee for Andy Warhol's (1928–1987) work, located in

## The Modern, Postmodern, and Contemporary

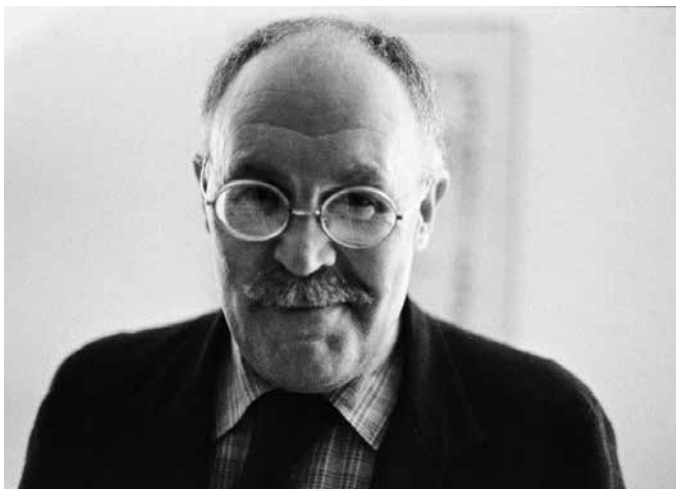
New York, stated that if any potential “new” Warhol was presented to the committee for evaluation, it would “just let it go by.” The apparent lack of interest in material inauthenticity implied by the statement that the committee would just let the work of art pass by without comment is a consequence of the enormous sums of money involved, the commodification of the art market, and the legal dangers of being sued in the courts, potentially for millions of dollars, should a wrong decision be reached, or even a correct decision that is then contested by owners with their own panel of connoisseurs. The safest option is not to get involved with judging the authenticity of dubious Warhol artworks at all, and there are particular reasons why the Warhol authenticating committee should be so fey, having been involved in a number of complex disputes. For example, in 2007 the English collector Joe Simon-Whelan initiated a class-action lawsuit against the Warhol Art Authentication Board for unlawful restraint of trade in the United States. In 1987 the same authenticating board had decided that the artwork in question, owned by Simon-Whelan, was genuine. The work,

*Red Self-Portrait* (1985), was signed by Warhol, and its provenance established a direct link to the artist (McClellan 2011), but in 2007 the board refused to authenticate the picture and would not divulge any rationale for its decision, maintaining that to do so would only assist others who wanted to create forged Warhols.

“Denied” was imprinted on the back of *Red Self-Portrait*, rendering it worthless. The legal case on behalf of Simon-Whelan was dismissed by a US court in 2010, and the collector was declared bankrupt as a result of the legal costs involved.

The former director of the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Karl Gunnar Vougt Pontus Hultén (1924–2006), one of the most distinguished museum directors of the twentieth century, secretly fabricated some of Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* around 1990 in the south of Sweden. He later sold the forgeries for millions of dollars.

These were all attributed to Warhol, with Hultén backdating their existence to 1968, together with faked Warhol Art Authentication Board certificates (McClellan 2011:91), actions that could have resulted in a prison sentence



**Figure 10.3.** Karl Gunnar Vougt Pontus Hultén, first director of the Centre Pompidou, Paris, was a Swedish art collector and a forger of Warhol’s work. (Image licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic)

## The Denial of Authenticity



**Figure 10.4.** *Twenty-Ninth Copper Cardinal* by Carl Andre, 1975. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. (Image copyright by Carl Andre. Licensed by VAGA, New York. Photographer unspecified)

for Hultén had his death not intervened. The Warhol Art Authentication Board has subsequently declared that these are all copies, not originals, reducing the value of the fake *Brillo Boxes* from a few million to a few hundred dollars each, even though aesthetically one cannot discern any perceptible difference between the original copies produced by Warhol and the later copies produced by Hultén that were attributed to Warhol, an argument apropos of the intertwined philosophical debates spurred by Danto (1981) concerning *Brillo Boxes* in a somewhat different context. However, the faked certificates of authenticity are a different matter. Outside of a conceptual artistic process, the production of fake certificates of authenticity is not acceptable as a statement about the work itself. It is a statement about the intentions of the forger, not the intentions of the artist. This is an ironic turn of events, since Hultén, a perspicacious observer of the contemporary art scene, was responsible for the first retrospective exhibition of Warhol's works, in 1968.

The general problem for the board is that Warhol engaged in extensive replication and reproduction of his own work, aided by named assistants such as Gerard Malanga (1943–) and others. Warhol was inconsistent in his own practices; his work was sometimes signed, sometimes not. Certificates of authenticity were issued for some works but not for others. Like Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), Warhol would also sign blank sheets of paper, or shopping bags, so the existence of the artist's signature is not sufficient proof of material authenticity.

The opaque pronouncements of authenticating bodies have resulted in justifiable criticism concerning the mode of authenticity they are pronouncing on. Is the statement of the four experts on the Warhol panel corroborated

by art historical connoisseurship, scientific connoisseurship, documentary evidence, personal knowledge of the artist, catalogue raisonné considerations, or all five criteria? We will probably never know, as the opinions of the board are not based on evidence that can be seen outside of the authenticating board itself.

Artists such as Carl Andre (1935–), Hans Haacke (1936–), and Lawrence Weiner (1942–) all have idiosyncratic preoccupations with certificates of authenticity in connection with their own work and their concepts of what constitutes legitimization. Andre not only issues certificates of authenticity, but he has created a registry of his works, which carefully catalogs and numbers them, as well as listing the owners, with a meticulous approach to numbering, location, and provenance. Joseph Kosuth refuses to reissue certificates if they are lost or stolen, while Gordon Matta-Clark (1943–1978) warned on the certificate itself that it would not be replaced by another if the original was lost or destroyed (Lee 2001).

If the owner of a conceptual work of art does not possess a certificate of authenticity from the artist, then the conceptual work may not be able to be sold at auction, even if the owner can establish that it is the “original” work in terms of materials and provenance, and even if there are no materials or materiality to the work concerned. In such cases, the collector would have to appeal to the estate, if the artist were dead; one of the authenticating bodies; museum archives; or conservation documentation.

Unique events may affect the materiality of a multiple work, such as a print of Warhol’s *Chairman Mao*, which exists in hundreds of versions. One print was shot at twice by actor Dennis Hopper (1936–2010) in the 1970s. As a result of the notoriety of Hopper and his action, the print was estimated as

worth \$20,000 at auction but actually sold for \$302,000 (Brown 2011). Hopper stated that he had mistaken the portrait for Mao himself in one of his drug-induced hazes. Hopper later showed the bullet holes to Warhol, who drew circles around them, labeling the one over Mao’s right shoulder a “warning shot” and the one at his left eyelid “bullet hole.” Warhol declared Hopper a collaborator on the piece, which in this case imbued a conceptual authenticity to the print, elevating it from the hundreds of *Chairman Mao* prints, which also represent one of Warhol’s most faked works of art.

### The Withdrawal of Authenticity

Closely related to the problems of denial are those of withdrawal. McClean (2011) quotes from a poster by artist Seth Siegelau (1941–2013) and New York lawyer Bob Projansky from 1971, advising artists to withdraw authenticity from their work if it were not sold or resold by future collectors in accordance with the rules of the contract they advised be adopted by artists. The revocation of conceptual authenticity, in an analogous sense to what happened in the medieval period, is well exemplified by the case of Robert Morris (1931–) and his 1963 “Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal” in response to collector Philip Johnson, who refused to pay Morris for the artwork *Litanies*. The artist presented the statement on notarized paper together with a sheet made of lead inscribed with the image of a lock and key. In 1974 Donald Judd (1928–1994) sold plans of 14 works, including *Galvanized Wall*, to collector Giuseppe Panza, along with the rights to construct and reconstruct the artworks at Panza’s expense (Buskirk 2003). But in 1989, when Panza showed *Galvanized Wall* at the Ace Gallery in Los Angeles, Judd denied that the work was authentic, writing, “The



## The Withdrawal of Authenticity

Fall 1989 show of sculpture at Ace Gallery in Los Angeles exhibited an installation wrongly attributed to Donald Judd. Fabrication of the piece was authorized by Giuseppe Panza without the approval or permission of Donald Judd" (Buskirk 2003). Clearly Judd was not able to regard this work as an authentic expression of his own. But despite this and in contradiction to the views of conservators and museum curators recognizing the "artist's voice," the artwork was purchased by the Guggenheim Museum and is attributed by the museum, without comment, to Donald Judd.

Carl Andre was very concerned with the materiality of his artworks, which is a perfect backdrop for contentious issues surrounding his installations. In 1989 the catalog for *Immaterial Objects* at the Whitney Museum reproduced certificates of authenticity from the various artists alongside their works. An interesting exhibit in its own right, this revealed the range of views expressed by artists concerning their own certificates. Some artists stipulated that their works had to be completely re-created whenever they were exhibited. Examples include drawings by Sol LeWitt (1928–2007), who later in life changed his views, allowing specially trained artists to work on his creations. Others specified that a particular approach to materiality had to be retained, with clearly defined installation requirements for each gallery exhibition. Unfortunately, the Whitney Museum installed Carl Andre's *Twenty-Ninth Copper Cardinal* (1975) in a manner the artist regarded as not authentic. As Buskirk (2011:99) writes:

The material presence [of the piece] is arguably not lessened by the need to position the copper plates in accordance with the arrangement described on the associated certificate. In this case the irony

was that Andre himself had suggested the work's potential for dematerialization during a conflict with the museum about how it had been installed in the exhibition "200 years of American Sculpture (1976)." After the museum refused Andre's attempt to buy the work back, the artist reduced his offer to 70 cents per pound, for the scrap metal, and mounted a counter exhibition with a competing version of the work. Despite the reference to dematerialization, the Whitney's publication of Andre's certificate [of authenticity] alongside the installation photographs suggests that it is the museum's possession of the original sheet of paper as much as the actual metal plates that affirms its ownership of a work of art rather than a pile of raw material.

Artist's certificates of authenticity may be fundamental to the continuation of the work, especially as they increasingly refer to conceptual events. The self-referential nature of these certificates could be viewed as an example of metaphysical supervenience, since the documents legitimate something that has entirely different properties than the documents themselves. A certificate of authenticity may be the only physical manifestation of a work. Kwon (2006:295) writes, "It is the certificate rather than 'the work' that matters more, or does more work, one could say, in determining both the aesthetic and market value of 'the work' in question (and by extension, the cultural capital of the artist)."

Certificates of authenticity can function as devolved signatures. Dematerialized works such as conceptual events cannot be signed, but their authorized reenactment can be sanctioned by a physically separate material entity, even if the way the certificate is depicted



**Figure 10.5.** *Primo Piano III* by David Smith, 1962; steel painted white or repainted white. (Image © The Estate of David Smith. Licensed by VAGA, New York)

or rendered is an idiosyncratic expression of the artist.

The certificate can also be used to create an authentic sphere of action for the collector rather than for the artist. George Brecht (1926–2008), a Fluxus artist much interested in participatory events, forces the owner of his work *Relocation* to define the locational parameters of the artwork. He grants the owner permission to relocate the work, whatever it is, up to five times (Hapgood and Lauf 2014:83).

### The Voice of the Artist

As the relationship between many modern and contemporary works of art and the plane of material authenticity becomes tenuous, so the conceptual authenticity of the relationship increases. Some see the only hope of salvation from these problems in terms of valorizing the notion of the *artist's voice* (Gordon 2011). Indeed, the artist's voice has been a crucial source of signification in the reevaluation of installations that have been contextualized by reference to published compendiums, international case studies, conservation

documentation, and artist interviews. As Gordon (2011:56) writes:

This has meant placing weight on the artist's intentions for the work and his or her decision-making process, rather than the subsequent interpretations of curators and conservators that inevitably inform the artwork's institutional afterlife. Doing so has led to a greater understanding of artists' conceptions of material significance and their thoughts on the identity of their works. This inevitably bears implications for the preservation and display of contemporary art.

Discussions between the conservator and artist typically result in a compromise solution, such as that described by Gordon (2014) in the case of the various incarnations of *Journey to the Edge of the World—The New Republic of St. Kilda, 1999–2002* by Ross Sinclair (1966–), installed in the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh; the Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth; Art Basel; and the Hamburger Kunsthalle; as well as other venues. The material instantiation of each exhibit was a reflection of the authenticity of what Gordon calls the “critical mass” of the work as an immaterial value that governs and activates the authenticity of the artwork. Gordon (2014:106) writes, “As an indicator of the artist's decision-making process, the identification of the critical mass can provide valuable insight into appropriate incarnations of the work, the way it is interpreted within the museum or gallery, and offers insight into the weighting of value of the work's attributes that will ultimately inform potential conservation treatment.”

The intention of the artist regarding interpretation of the work can be viewed as an epistemological problem separate from the

## The Voice of the Artist

intentions of the artist regarding the materiality of the work and its potentially varied instantiations. This distinction has been proposed by Irvin (2005a), who defines the artist's sanction as an important concept that operates in concert or synergy with intention but that is not an ineffable intention as such and does not invoke behavioral states or unknown psychological events that permeate the notion of absolute intentionalism. Irvin asserts that acceptance of the concept of the artist's sanction legitimates features of the work but does not oblige the viewer to accept that the artist has, in applying his or her sanction, fixed the correct interpretation of the work.

As an example of the application of her criterion of the artist's sanction, Irvin (2005a) discusses the original state of the installation exhibit of *Time and Mrs. Tibor* by Liz Magor, displayed by the National Gallery of Canada in 1977. The artwork consists of a kitchen cupboard shelf unit with numerous glass jars of different preserves found in an abandoned house in British Columbia. The inherent vice of the preserves is in tension with the general degradation of the installation desired by Magor, who had thought the artwork would last as long as her lifetime before being thrown out with the garbage. This is how Magor imagined the future state of *Time and Mrs. Tibor*; as the degradation of the artwork was originally intended to finally lead to its nonexistence. However the inherent vice of the work became alarming when a microbiologist declared that seven of the jars had developed botulism. As a result, Magor agreed to the addition of preservatives and made replacements for the jars that had to be disposed of. Magor then revised her view of the work and stated that when the work was no longer exhibitable, it should be transferred to

the study collection of the museum, where it could still be observed, even if not by members of the general public.

In reviewing the fact that the original state of this artwork was no longer valorized by the artist's sanction, Irvin (2005b:125), echoing the criticisms of Eggert (2009), writes:

Successful restoration efforts sometimes reveal that we have misapprehended the work, as when Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling was restored to its unexpectedly gaudy array of original colors. If we are unable to carry out physical restoration of the object to its privileged state, we do imaginative restoration instead, ignoring damage or color change and trying to see the work as it was when the artist first made it. Change in the object over time is something to be ignored as we interpret the work, not something to be acknowledged and figured into our interpretations.

Presumably Irvin means that the viewer has misapprehended the work, not that the restoration of the gaudy colors was a misapprehension on the part of the restorer. The restorer is concerned here essentially with the removal of grime, the daily bread and butter of picture restoration, which certainly does not, in the twenty-first century, promulgate imaginative restoration over the reintegration of missing components of the image. Nor is it true that diachronic change is an ontological problem of interpretation for the conservator. For many in the profession, artifacts present themselves as altered or damaged survivors whose amelioration does not necessarily imply a return to some imaginative state created through restoration but that respects alterations through time. Irving does

not refer to even Brandi's strictures here, because the loci of conservation theory has not intersected sufficiently the loci of art philosophy. This is, however, a distraction from the principal thrust of Irvin's seminal argument concerning what is and what is not authorized by the artist. Irvin (2005a:320) does not claim that the artist has authority regarding how the work should be interpreted, which is a view she repudiates. The only role the artist's sanction plays in constraining interpretation is an indirectly mediated one. Irvin does not claim that an artist endows the work with features simply by intending that it have those features. She writes: "Neither the artist's conscious or unconscious thoughts or ideas about the work, nor the artist's behavioral dispositions, have any effect on the work's features except insofar as they lead to certain kinds of actions in appropriate contexts. Moreover, the work may, on my view, have features that expressly conflict with those the artist intended" (2005a:320). The features of a work determine how the artist's sanction interacts with it; intention is not sufficient to establish a sanction. A sanction, says Irvin, is like a contract. Learning about the artist's sanction does not depend on retrieving the intention of the artist but on the actions and communications of the artist, including the presentation within a defined context. Hypothetical intentionalism might be viewed as closer to the concept of the artist's sanction than actual intentionalism, since the former may imply that what is debated are the actual intentions of the artist and how they were actualized, but the concept of the sanction is less concerned with interpretation by the observer and more concerned with the artwork and its existence. Nor is the artist's sanction seen by Irvin as a purely modernist concept. Historic artworks incorporate the artist's sanction within a set of conventions

that connect the features of objects to those of artworks in ways that abide by conventions established or manipulated by the artist. For some contemporary works, such as *Time and Mrs. Tibor*, the sanction of the artist is essential in making or keeping the artwork what it is or what it will become. Irvin (2005a:323) writes, "Recognition of the role the artist's sanction plays in fixing certain features of the work does not, however, mean that we must accept the interpretation the artist would have proposed, or did propose, for that work." The sanction of the artist is an externally accessible authorization, and in that sense it is very relevant to the problems of material or conceptual authenticity of contemporary art. *Time and Mrs. Tibor* underwent changes in terms of artist's sanction that could be read as a major alteration of the concept of the work, which was to initially have been allowed to completely degrade until it had to be thrown away, existing thereafter only as a conceptually authentic event in time. By keeping existing jars of preserves from undergoing biodeterioration and producing hermetically sealed replacement jars, the artist incorporated a far greater sense of material authenticity to the work than originally intended for the work in its former state. If, like Mrs. Tibor herself, the artwork of her jars of preserves is to be slowly allowed to decay and die, then that aim is now in tension with the desire of the museum to arrest decay and to conserve the work into the future way beyond the time originally envisaged by the artist. The sanction of the artist still sees the work as decaying, but not at the rate originally discovered, which alarmed the artist.

In connection to the discourse between the artist and the work, Wharton (personal communication 2016) draws attention to a recent Mellon-funded project: "the multi-year Panza research project at the Guggenheim in which

## Contested Materiality

a conservator and an art historian are going through all documentation, interviewing artists and others to get a full understanding of issues of authorship and authenticity with the minimal artists in the collection they purchased from Panza.” These recent developments will have consequences for the framing of this discussion in the future.

### Contested Materiality

Alteration of the material features of a work of art has created special problems with the authenticity of modern art, intersecting through material, conceptual, or historical issues with what the artist wanted or what the work became.

Mulholland (2014) describes some of the disputed rationalizations surrounding the appearance of late sculptures by David Smith (1906–1965), such as *Primo Piano III* (1962). The famous critic Clement Greenberg (1909–1994) ordered the removal of the white coating on a number of Smith’s sculptures in 1973. The stripped and rusted works, such as *Primo Piano III*, were then presented as authentic originals. Greenberg saw himself as the arbiter on what the artist would have wanted, while his critics claimed he had removed all trace of the original intention of the artist and imposed a subjective aesthetic judgment, vitiating the art’s authenticity as true works by Smith.

The materiality in terms of surface finish of these sculptures is potentially critical by virtue of Smith’s dedication to his coatings and their desired longevity. Smith (1965:89) states:

First the iron is ground down so that it is raw, and it is primed with about fifteen coats of epoxy primer; and then a few coats of zinc, and then a few coats of white, and then the color is put on

after that; so it runs about twenty-five or thirty coats and that’s about three times the paint coat on a Mercedes or about thirty times the paint coat on a Ford or Chevrolet. And if it doesn’t get scratched or hammered, I think the paint coat will last longer than I do.

Greenberg, who had known Smith for 20 years, maintained that the white coating was simply a primer and that the artist would never have intended for the sculptures to remain white, or if that was the case, they were degrading and should be removed. In the development of abstract expressionism, Greenberg was not simply an observer: His predilections and desires were sometimes foisted onto the artist himself, with the result that polychrome sculptures by Smith were viewed by Greenberg as being overelaborated beyond the point to which the momentum of inspiration had carried them. Polychromy was viewed as not authentic to the aims of Greenberg’s vision of abstract expressionism.

As Mulholland (2014:91) notes, the attitude of Smith to problems of restoration was complex. For example, he denounced the stripping of original paint from his sculpture *17Hs* (1950) by a private collector as an act of vandalism and publicly disowned the work, declaring it to be of no value. But in the case of *Fish* (1950–1), he allowed the collector to repaint the work when the initial paint coat had deteriorated. Greenberg assumed the conceptual authenticity of the artist in removing what he took to be a deteriorating white preparatory layer on *Primo Piano III*, an action already condemned by classical theorists such as Brandi. The estate acting for Smith took the decision to eliminate the rusted and stripped surfaces, which Greenberg saw as authentic to the artist’s wishes, and

in 1997 had the sculptures repainted with a white finish, in imitation of the original finish. The estate took the view that it was not restoring the works to their original condition but to a condition that matched the aesthetic of their unfinished, white-painted appearance as left by the artist. These events have created the impression that all of Smith's later works have been repainted and lack aspects of the material authenticity of the sculptures as they left the hand of the artist, which is not always the case.

However much an original work may be valued as created by Smith, from the viewpoint of ontological contextualism, the historical trajectory of works subject to surface degradation results in an ongoing process of authenticity as proposed by Heidegger (see chapter 2). Similar philosophies of diachronic conceptual change have been proposed by several conservators dealing with contemporary art, such as Van de Vall et al. (2011:6), who suggest that these works have a trajectory over time, a series of biographies to which they are subject, and that instead of assigning authenticity to a single point on this trajectory, the work has to be seen in terms of the different biographies that have evolved in the lifetime of the work—very much a Heideggerian perspective.

That is all very well, but can the actions of Greenberg be seen as essentially contingent events in the life of the artwork, to be disguised completely by stripping away a rusted surface back to clean metal and repainting the sculpture with white coatings never used or available at the time of creation of the original work? From the perspective of the ongoing accretion of authentic events that have altered the work, Greenberg's actions could be seen as essential, even if misguided, rather than contingent, an extreme example of

conditionalist intentionalism. The absolute intentionalism sought by the conservator of contemporary art is often at odds with the disputed instantiation of works whose original condition or perceptible properties have been altered. The compromise here is to preserve the successive stages of the existence of the work as a series of documented images and records and to make these records readily available. Mulholland (2014) reminds us of what Dykstra wrote 20 years ago (Dykstra 1996:200), namely that artists' purposes, aims, and objectives "exist in a psychological arena where they do not decompose or deteriorate."

That psychological arena can be considered an essential component of conceptual authenticity, whose relevance is especially germane to the problem at hand. The knowledge that the artist was working through the stages of production of *Primo Piano III* when he died results in the material manifestation of that stage of his production, the concept of which is his, and lacking any physical form, the work is part of the conceptualization of the artist, which cannot be interfered with without part of its authenticity being diminished. This case, in contemporary art is far from unique, as many works have been altered to suit the image of the collector, dealer, or museum rather than the artist.

The problem is not with just contemporary art but also with art that has been altered beyond the conception of the material presence of the work intended by the artist. For example, conservation treatments carried out in the past on sculpture by Jean Arp (1886–1966) emphasized the finely polished metallic surfaces, analogous to the aesthetic of Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), many of whose cast-brass sculptures are polished to a highly reflective finish.

## Contested Materiality

However, further research (Hirx, personal communication 2013) suggests that this is not at all the kind of surface finish Arp was aiming for and that institutional decisions have completely ignored the intention of the artist. Knowing the artist's philosophy regarding continual natural degradation is no barrier to continued restoration. For example, Edvard Munch (1863–1944) was interested in the defects of change and decay on his own work. In his early life he painted on cheap supports, such as cardboard, using mixed media, sometimes allowing the cardboard to show through. He was quite happy that many viewers regarded his work as unfinished. He never varnished his work, did not like frames, and spoke about his concept of the “horse-cure”: that his work would have an organic presence as it aged and altered (Jackson 2014). Visitors to Munch's house would find paintings out in the yard while rain or snow fell on them. Munch took the view that his paintings had to fend for themselves in the organic process of their own degradation. When one of his many versions of *The Scream* (1893) was stolen and later retrieved in a damaged condition, it was quite clear that the artist's intention would result in the recovered painting being left in that condition. However, Jackson (2014) notes that several conservators were immediately at work on the recovered masterpiece. Thus the artist's voice was ignored and the work-being promulgated by Heidegger's philosophy was stunted. The institutional prerogative of safeguarding condition or attempting to return the work to the condition in which it existed before the theft was valorized at the expense of the artist's intention.

Notions of the artist's intention have already been reviewed in this book, and the increasing prominence given to absolute or

conditional intentionalism, which the artist's voice implies, can really function only in terms of how much significance is actually placed on the voice and whether what it says are things the institution or collector can agree with or have knowledge of, which, as earlier examples illustrate, is not always the case.

The argument concerning the proximity of the artist's intention to the contemporary conservation debate can produce some fairly dense prose that borders on the unintelligible. For example, Martore (2009:15) writes:

Furthermore, dualism returns to opposition in aesthetic and historical instances where the aesthetic faction is ruled by vision. Western critics have tended to be obsessed by [the] visual, this persists with some contemporaries, including Brandi, who focuses on visibility to that which is recognizable. Rik Van Wegen insists on original “external appearance” [an] idea as a guarantee for artist's intention; he believes contemporary art has a “theatrical aspect,” distinguishing it from the past. Ernst van de Wetering tends toward the same theme, he sees in conservators, who are chronologically close to the artist, a preference for the theatrical, to match visual aspect with artistic intent. Therefore, the theatrical dimension, related to object presentation and its “existential power,” seems to assume the duty of Brandi's aesthetic instance. Once again, the only solid reference is the object in its physical consistency, however aesthetic and historical instances must split, to avoid material authenticity from clashing with the transmission of the original external appearance. . . . Most of the preservation strategies for contemporary art adopt a decision making model chiefly

devoted to the original meaning's recovery. Such orientation is still far from providing suitable solutions to face typical problems regarding time-based and hi-tech-based media art. Now, the ongoing weaving of aesthetics and technology binds kinetic art, video art, multimedial installation, digital and cyber art etc. This categorically heavy knot is a much more coherent fundament for study than many other classifications. Technosphere inherent properties (designing, reproducibility, seriality, functionality, interactivity etc.) have the ability to move and [form] practices into which they are a contradiction in basic terms, such as historical aspect and authenticity.

Immersion of the modern artwork in its own philosophical bath is partially responsible for the hermetic language of some of these conservation texts concerning the contemporary, its complex interaction with the conservator, and how some of the problems in relation to the conservation of modern art are to be approached or discussed. Much ephemeral art of the past had an important "theatrical aspect," such as that used in medieval pageants and carnivals. Kneeling down and praying in front of a painted icon involves an aspect of performance that is an intrinsic function of the work of art—surely part of its "existential power." The existential mode lies in the relationship between the individual and his consciousness of the work and how that particular work affects him as an individual in a cultural or spiritual context. Contemporary art does not have a monopoly on existential theatricality.

The obscurity of some artists' statements about the context of their own art, and the contested field over which these operate, has

been responsible for an outgrowth of luxuriant texts whose dense philosophical foliage is exciting to peer through but whose relevance as a critical commentary on current conservation practice is doubtful. However, the problems of time-based and high-tech-based media art to which Martore (2009) refers are not easily solved and normally involve a pragmatic assessment of what is possible or feasible in the gallery space concerned, which indeed may be contrary to the desired preservation strategies for contemporary art.

It is inevitable that the preservation problems associated with software-based art will be addressed in the future. For example, Engel and Wharton (2014) selected *33 Questions per Minute* by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (1967–) and *Shadow Monsters* by Philip Worthington (1977–)—on display in 2014 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York—for investigation. One of these works was written in Delphi, a derivative of Pascal, while the other was written in Processing. Keeping program documentation synchronized with the source code it purports to represent is an authenticity concern with the preservation of art of this kind. As Engel and Wharton (2014:411) write: "Documenting blocks of code that were clearly no longer in use provided insights into the software engineering or the artistic process, depending on whether the software was written by the artist or by a programmer working with the artist. This form of digital archaeology is parallel to the examination of sketches and maquettes made by artists in traditional media."

For the authenticity of these works to be assured into the future, the documentation of source codes used by the artists has to be seriously considered by the museum immediately following acquisition. Otherwise the works may be lost and would have to be re-created



## Self-Destructive Art

in a different format, which may entail contingent loss.

### Self-Destructive Art

The problems with the authenticity of self-destructive art are connected to tensions between material and conceptual authenticity. An artwork that self-destructs cannot be preserved in its original state, but the concept of the work may survive, although even this survival is not necessarily sanctioned by the stated intentions of the artist concerned. There are subtle differentiations here regarding how intentionality is perceived, all the way from antirealist absolute intentionalism to absolute anti-intentionalism, aspects of which have already been discussed in this book (Livingston 2005) but that need to be revisited in the postmodern context, especially because of the contested nature of museum preservation of fragments of destroyed works or the reliance on conservation documentation of the former materiality of a work of art. What of this documentation? Conservation documentation now fulfills an epistemological supervenience, especially in cases where the original work of art has ceased to exist. The sensory and perceptual properties of the artwork are now represented by a series of interviews, files, notes, films, or conservation documentation of the instances of the work, a kind of documentary supervenience whose preservation itself could be regarded as part of the concept of the work to ensure that survival of the knowledge of its disintegration or destruction continues into the future. Stiles (1991:136) has defined auto-destructive art as:

Interdisciplinary and multinational, combining media and subject matter. Destruction art addresses the phenomenology and epistemology of destruction

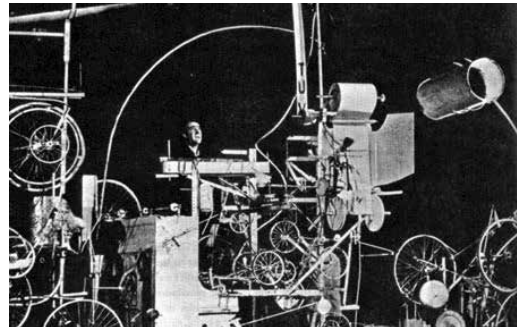
and must be characterized as a broad, cross-cultural response rather than a historical movement. An attitude: a process and a way of proceeding, destruction art is both reactionary and responsive; it is not an aesthetic; nor a method, nor a technique. Destruction art is an ethical position involving diverse practices that investigate the engulfments of terminal culture.

The saliency of the ethical as stated by Stiles here seems at variance with the diverse approaches to auto-destruction taken by different artists. Is an ethical imputation part of the artist's intention in auto-destruction because it is envisaged as a commentary on the terminal state of modern art? This seems to privilege the position of such artists by comparison to numerous other tendencies where the concept of an objective set of ethical pronouncements as applied to their work would seem misplaced. In some ways it is an aesthetic: To watch a beautifully crafted collection of New York detritus destroy itself is a visual experience rather than a philosophical reflection on the engulfment of a terminal art culture of the late twentieth century. The New York work referenced here is Jean Tinguely's (1925–1991) *Homage to New York*, whose auto-destruction took place in the garden of the Museum of Modern Art on March 17, 1960 (Klüver 1968). The 8-m-high sculpture, a complex mechanism of eclectic objects gathered from refuse, including wheels from various bicycles, tricycles, and baby carriages; a bath tub; a go-cart; a piano; bottles; fire extinguishers; a weather balloon; various tools; and a cacophony of bells, car horns, and radios, once set into motion committed suicide by sawing, hammering, and melting itself into complete degradation.

A repeat performance is probably impossible, as no detailed documentation of the original exists. The event itself has gone, and some of the privileged spectators took away with them fragments of the destroyed work. Other pieces of detritus were retained by the Museum of Modern Art as a material reminder of the transitory moment of self-destruction, an artwork now called *Fragment from Homage to New York* (1960). Without the context of their former existence, the cataloged fragments are a meaningless heap of charred remains. As some of these remnants include rubber, the artwork's destroyed components are themselves liable to undergo further diachronic environmental deterioration, as the stabilization of rubber-containing artifacts is both expensive and difficult, demanding attention from a properly trained conservator due to auto-catalytic breakdown, surely a mechanism of deterioration that auto-destruction artists would condone. But whether there are any conservation measures in place is unknown, as is Tinguely's attitude to these archival museum remnants.

Swiss artist Gustav Metzger (1926–) was responsible for creating the term *auto-destructive art*. In his 1959 eponymous manifesto he defines it as

art which contains within itself an agent which automatically leads to its destruction within a period of time not to exceed twenty years. Other forms of auto-destructive art involve manual manipulation. There are forms of auto-destructive art where the artist has a tight control over the nature and timing of the disintegrative process, and there are other forms where the artist's control is slight.



**Figure 10.6.** *Homage to New York* by Jean Tinguely, which destroyed itself in the garden of the Museum of Modern Art on the March 17, 1960. (Image courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York)

In connection with the preservation of auto-destructive art, Leen (2005) writes: “The problem . . . is whether a museum should collect art objects with little or no material endurance. This problem is directly linked with the issues of the work’s objective authenticity, and with the question how a museum can collect contemporary art.” The belief that there is a readily definable objective authenticity in such cases belies the historical and material complexity of the ephemeral. The concept of an objective authenticity cannot be sustained, as this book demonstrates, and perhaps Leen should have said “material authenticity” rather than “objective authenticity.”

### Performance Art

Performance as a confrontation with societal norms of belief and behavior, as a philosophical interaction with the audience, as a novel entertainment, or as a spectacle to shock the viewer out of his or her normal range of responses goes back at least as far as Diogenes (412–323 B.C.E.) and Antisthenes (445–365 B.C.E.), followers of Socrates (469–399 B.C.E.) who utilized performance exactly for this purpose. The hardy individualism,

questioning of received authority, existential approach to virtue, and independent spirit of Diogenes (Hurd 2012) was even admired by Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.E). *Cynic* in Greek means “dog,” and at one dinner party, Diogenes performed as a dog, gnawing at bones thrown by the other guests before urinating over the guests themselves. Diogenes would eat lupines as a performance and accost marketgoers with strange or philosophical questions, much as Socrates had done before him. He slept in a gigantic ceramic urn. Like dogs, some Cynics would make love in public and allow women to choose who they wanted to sleep with (Hobbes 2005). The aim of Diogenes’s authentically individual performances was to question the nature of reality, the conventional wisdom of society, restrictions to virtue, and the liberation from convention attained as a result of freeing oneself from the debasement of modern society, an idea that may even have influenced Jesus via later Cynical philosophers who abandoned the depraved world and wandered as mendicants through the fields.

As far as twentieth- and twenty-first-century performance art is concerned, Goldberg (2001:34) writes, “Performance has been a way of appealing directly to a large public, as well as shocking audiences into re-assessing their own notions of art and its relation to culture.” This statement could easily be applied to the actions of the Greek Cynics before Cynical philosophy became more respectable under the Romans (Hobbs 2005). Urinating over guests in public and appearing naked were not Roman cultural norms; nor were they tolerated. Carolee Schneemann (1939–) produced her work *Eye Body* in 1963. Becoming a work of art herself, she covered her naked body in a variety of materials and

was photographed nude by Icelandic artist Erró, with two garden snakes crawling over her torso and with her clitoris visible (Schneider 1997). The work was certainly authentic to the aims of Schneemann’s fascination with the body but was not to everyone’s taste. Chris Burden, in his 1971 work *Shoot*, was shot in the left arm by an assistant from a distance of 5 m. This was a staged event, but the authenticity of the action was ensured when the artist was actually shot. Marta Minujín performed her artwork *Reading the News* by partially immersing herself in the Río de la Plata, wrapped completely in newspaper. The startling immediacy of these performances undermines attempts to repeat them, which is a tendency now associated with performance art that seeks the comfort of legitimated reenactment in the twenty-first century.

Montenegrin performance artist Marina Abramović presented a work at the Serpentine Gallery in London in 2014. Performing for 512 hours, she interacted with more than 110,000 visitors, who left their handbags, telephones, and wristwatches at the door and donned noise-blocking earphones (Wright 2014). The participants were then led around the gallery by the artist. Activities within the space included staring at the wall, slow walking, and counting grains of rice, the aim being to be “present in the moment.”

Abramović has been responsible for many controversial performance artworks. At the Museum of Modern Art, New York, she sat in a chair for 700 hours. Her solo performances in the 1970s included stabbing herself, taking drugs to induce a catatonic state, and hanging herself from the gallery wall (Adams 2012). These performances left no trace except in conservation documentation, if such exists. Even so, seeing a film of the artist stabbing

herself is not the same as seeing the artist stabbing herself. The mediated nature of authenticity is all too apparent in these performances, and the desire to keep them despite their conceptual authenticity is devoid of materiality.

Bishop (2012) discusses how the outsourcing of performance art to other actors besides the artist became increasingly prevalent in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Bishop (2012:110) writes of outsourced or delegated performances:

At the same time, the realism invoked by this work is clearly not a return to modernist authenticity of the kind dismantled by Adorno and poststructuralism. By setting up a situation that unfolds with a greater or lesser degree of unpredictability, artists give rise to a highly directed form of authenticity: singular authorship is put into question by delegating control of the work to the performers; they confer upon the project a guarantee of realism, but do this through a highly authored situation whose precise outcome cannot be foreseen.

It is not clear which conception regarding authenticity is being denied here and which is being invoked, especially since the artists are engaging in a highly directed form of authenticity.

The performance of an act of maintenance, previously regarded as essentially non-art, can also be seen as maintenance qua art in the postmodern discourse of artistic expression. In 1969 Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1939–) issued her *Maintenance Art Manifesto*, in which she divides labor into development and maintenance (Molesworth 1999:114). In 1972, in her conceptual work

*Hartford Wash; Washing Tracks, Maintenance Inside*, she scrubbed and mopped the floor of the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Connecticut for four hours. In *Transfer: The Maintenance of the Art Object*, she cleaned a display case in the museum and designated it an artwork, a dust painting. Her performance *The Keeping of the Keys* consisted of Ukeles taking the museum guards' keys and locking and unlocking galleries and offices, which when locked were deemed to be "maintenance art." This work was not popular with museum curators, many of whom apparently rushed out of the building. Her work included charts, posted announcements, and a "Maintenance Art" verification stamp. Ukeles's work constitutes a dialogue between private and public space, as well as a feminist rhetoric on the hidden nature of activities such as dusting, cleaning, and washing, compared with the public performance of the museum, which is always observed in its cleaned state by the public. Molesworth (1999:116) quotes here from philosopher Carole Pateman, who writes: "The public sphere is always assumed to throw light onto the private sphere, rather than vice versa. On the contrary, an understanding of modern patriarchy requires that the employment contract is illuminated by the structure of domestic relations." Ukeles's artistic performances were conducted in the 1970s, before the trend to make the activities of museum conservators a visible public event, something that had previously been regarded as a private function within the museum, not for general observation. As conservators are normally viewed through glass screens, there is an element of the panopticon concept to the experience; the conservators (predominantly female) are "performance artists" whose antics and controlled movements render the work of art a static material entity

being massaged and cosseted, valorizing its material manifestation. “Dust paintings” as an authentic art experience are integral to the conservator’s performance, especially when they themselves are on public display, which surely vitiates part of the *raison d’être* of conceptual museum events that themselves consist of dusting vitrines. The mysterious activities of museum curators undertaking research on artifacts in storage is seen only in the abstract, the supervenience of the written word, not the panopticon of our observation of them.

Since the advent of the twenty-first century, museums have increasingly come to regard performance art as collectible entities, even if there is nothing tangible to collect. Conservators have been instrumental as agents of transmission and dealers in the operation of works that may exist in an inactive state, until the time comes for their repeat performance. Fiske (2009:233) writes, in connection with these dormant works: “Tethering secures the work-in-absentia, disarming absence as a condition that could threaten the viability of the work, and rendering it essentially benign.” Views concerning the authentic nature of reenacted performance art (Laurenson and van Saaze 2014:33) are being catalyzed or reformulated by the expanding criteria of what constitutes performance and the more prevalent museum acquisition of live works that can exist independently of the artist and be endlessly repeated into the future, in conceptual terms. From 1960 to 1980, the authentic presence of the artist’s own body was essential, but since the 1990s, the repeatability of delegated performance is considered central to the economics of performance art (Laurenson and van Saaze 2014), although whether the viewer might regard

the Benjaminian concept of aura as adhering as strongly to hired performers as to the original artist is debatable. This is a context-dependent contingency that is not fully explored in the article by Laurenson and van Saaze (2014), because the cases they discuss do not involve the presence of the artist as part of the performance. Artists are not a *sine qua non* for the legitimate repeatability of the works in question. For example, *Good Feelings in Good Times* (2003) by Roman Ondák involves the queue-forming spectacle of 8 to 12 people queuing for 40 minutes at a time throughout the day. But the artist is not physically present, so the authenticity of a re-enactment is not dependent on the artist’s presence. In the case of Tino Sehgal’s work *This Is Propaganda* (2002), for which no documentation is allowed to exist, “A woman can be heard singing and on entering the gallery, a female gallery assistant turns and faces the wall and the singing begins again. . . . At the end of the refrain, the title of the work and the name of the artist is spoken, along with the date of the work and when it was acquired, simulating a wall text” (Laurenson and van Saaze 2014:35). The work, despite being an ephemeral performance of a women singing, comes in a limited edition, which can be enacted only by the artist’s sanction. However, especially in a performance enacted after the death of the artist, what would it mean to produce a forgery of the work or to appropriate it? The forgery would be ephemerally indistinguishable from the legitimate work but materially inauthentic, one could argue, in virtue of the agreement between the gallery and the artist that must exist in the documentary history. The appropriation of the work by another artist, however, may not invoke any bad faith on the part of the

appropriator. Therefore it can be regarded as an authentic performance, both aesthetically, through the performance of singing, and conceptually, through the exploration of repetition and difference. In that respect, authenticity resides in the certificate of authenticity rather than anything else that characterizes the work.

### Narratives of Museum Exhibitions

As the website of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (2014) states, the act of assembling assorted artifacts, the invocation of bricolage, can be an artistic gesture in and of itself, an echo of the cabinet of curiosities whose origins go back to the early Renaissance period and the medieval. Many contemporary artists have created museum narratives of their collections and turned spaces into literal or conceptual cabinets of curiosities. They include Marcel Broodthaers (1924–1976) with his *Department of Eagles* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (Buchloh 1988) and Herbert Distel with his *Museum of Drawers*, Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles, *Salon De Fleurus* in New York (a re-creation of Gertrude Stein’s Parisian salon from 1904 to 1934), and *City Reliquary* in Williamsburg, Brooklyn (a museum of local cultural ephemera).

As with many conceptual works, the material authenticity of such exhibits is in doubt; never existed; was fabricated recently in Anaheim; is an outrageous pastiche; is actually an authentic poster, newsreel, sound recording, or art object; or is entirely irrelevant to the artistic aims of the artist.

The Museum of Jurassic Technology represents and presents an entire museum in a modernist cabinet of curiosities that comingles authentic artifacts with modern re-creations of fictitious events, ambivalent artifacts, or apparently real historical periods of production of

extraordinary items whose history is part of a simulacrum of events that may never have occurred but that succeed in taking the visitor to an entirely different place and time than contemporary urban Los Angeles.

This museum, as an event in itself, is authentic in terms of its conceptual aims and its blend of genuine and fake materiality, challenging the viewer to rethink the nature of how exhibitions are perceived and our own relationship with what we consider authentic or simply fictional. The experience is an interesting blend of suspended belief and puzzlement at the marvels of intricately carved ivory miniatures, fake newspaper reports, ethnographic curiosities that may or may not be authentic, strange scientific facts that may subsequently have been disproved or remain unknown, Hollywood stories, anthropological specimens, and the history of museums as an exhibit in itself. *New York Times* critic Edward Rothstein described it as a “museum about museums.” Smithsonian magazine described it as “a witty, self-conscious homage to private museums of yore . . . when natural history was only barely charted by science, and museums were closer to Renaissance cabinets of curiosity” (Rothstein 2012). Neither of these quotations provides a sense of the totality of the Museum of Jurassic Technology, which creates a disputation of phenomenology, playing with reality, apparently exhibiting technological wonders from the Jurassic period, a geological period far removed from human habitation of the earth. The surrealistic experience of the unreal and fabricated is blended with impossible but sometimes authentic creations. It is not a museum about museums, as the New York critic described it, but an experience of the authentic in the inauthentic, of the authentic seen as unreal, or the inauthentic as

## Installation Art

real. That is the achievement of this unique Jurassic wonder—to force the viewer to question the nature of the experience of the museum itself. The entire museum functions as an exhibit that reflects upon its own paradoxical existence and our interpretation of it. It is much more than a museum about museums. The Eurocentric disposition of museum exhibitions has been exposed in a series of mock museums by American artist Fred Wilson (1954–), whose work questions the conceptual authenticity of the past as represented by current museum exhibitions, which may fail to address the presence of Native American or African American peoples. In 1992 Wilson reconfigured the collection of the Maryland Historical Society to highlight Native American and African American cultural and societal contexts within Maryland (Garfield 1993). The museum as an exhibit of itself has become an interesting commentary on the framing of the museum as originally envisaged, even if what is presented is not true to the totality of historical facts but is skewed by cultural bias.

### Installation Art

Art of unusual materials, designed as bricolage, or formed from diverse objects installed either within a gallery space or outside might be regarded as installation art. Some installations are ephemeral, part of a process of degradation, made with materials that are no longer available, or fabricated using time-based media or other forms of video or sound input whose preservation is often problematic. The term *installation art* became prominent after the 1960s and has been applied to the creation of specific events, site-specific phenomena, engaged theatrical activity, the process itself, spectatorship, and temporality (Van Saaze 2013:17). The essence of installation

art, according to Reiss (1999), is spectator participation, although the parameters clearly may extend beyond that, depending on how audience interaction is defined.

Museums began to collect and conserve installation art during the late 1980s, an act that some see as a process of commodification or an undue concern with materiality, sometimes seen as antithetical to the inherent social dimensions of the work, which may have been of critical importance (Kwon 2000, 2002).

American Ann Hamilton (1956–) is a well-known installation artist whose work includes an enormous wall of water in front of the 1999 Venice Biennale. Inside were arranged Braille dots arranged to spell out verses related to human suffering, slowly being covered with garish fuchsia-colored powder that descended from the walls. According to Katy Kline (2015), director of Bowdoin College Museum of Art in Maine: “She invites the viewer into a set of visible and auditory conditions where their entire bodily experience is activated. They are swept into a state of awareness beyond that of the normal viewer. She tries to intrigue the whole body.”

Another internationally recognized artist is Christo, who together with his wife, Jeanne-Claude Christo (1935–2009), has created many large-scale installations. Their work includes wrapping the Reichstag in Berlin, wrapping the Pont-Neuf in Paris, and *Running Fence*, a 39-km installation in Sonoma and Marin Counties. The artists have repeatedly denied that their projects have any intention other than to create an aesthetic impact. The purpose of their art, they contend, is simply to create works of joy and beauty and to recognize that there are significantly different ways of seeing familiar landscapes (Wikipedia 2014). Art critic David

## The Modern, Postmodern, and Contemporary

Bourdon (1970) has described Christo's wrappings as a revelation through concealment." To his critics Christo replies, "I am an artist, and I have to have courage. . . . Do you know that I don't have any artworks that exist? They all go away when they're finished. Only the preparatory drawings, and collages are left, giving my works an almost legendary character. I think it takes much greater courage to create things to be gone than to create things that will remain."

Installation art and its various instantiations constitute an active field of inquiry in contemporary art conservation. Many problems have to be addressed in such cases, and to make a proleptic argument, artist's intent is paramount in cases where the artist is still alive. However, there is a complex web of possibilities regarding conservation that will be dependent on a variety of factors. The nature of these problems is connected to the following issues:

- A. An installation may have only one valid instantiation in virtue of the unique conditions of the original materials, space, environment, building, or containment in which it appeared. It may be a site-specific work that cannot be re-created.
- B. An installation may have components of the work replaced, in virtue of the degradation, loss, or nonfunctionability of the original installation. The original may be seen as fungible by the artist or artist's representatives.
- C. An installation that is media-based can have its performance repeated on different equipment in virtue of the desire to repeat the performance even if far removed from the original installation. This repeated performance may valorize its conceptual authenticity over any material concerns.
- D. An installation can be purely conceptual. It can be reenacted in virtue of the issuance of a certificate of authenticity by the artist or the artist's estate, which confers upon the event its authentic ability to be restaged.
- E. An installation can be restored, or have selected parts restored, in virtue of the aesthetic appeal of the work or its ability to function in a manner as close as possible to that of the original. The material authenticity may be of secondary importance.
- F. An installation cannot be reperformed in virtue of the artist's expressed desire that no documentation of the work be kept. The work must reside only in memory. If the artist opposes reenactment, this opposition must be adhered to.
- G. An installation cannot be reperformed in virtue of the artist's refusal to countenance any substitutions whatsoever. Denial would render the reinstallation inauthentic as a consequence of the artist's intention.

These seven propositions cover most of the case studies reviewed in the art historical or conservation literature. For example, Caianiello (2009) discusses art created by Günther Uecker and exhibited in Creamcheese, one of the first psychedelic discotheques in Germany, which opened in 1967. The artworks were displayed in the Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf, in 1985 and in a different configuration in 2001 (Witte de With 2005). Caianiello (2009:157) writes that the artworks had lost important aspects of their authenticity, including the original space, dancing, and drug taking that were part of the intertextuality of the work. There is an antinomy here between arguments that valorize only the materiality of the work as opposed to the site-specific



## Installation Art

nature of the installation, which the most recent reconfiguration attempts to give a taste of with videos of the original Creamcheese and the 1960s.

Jadzinska (2009) discusses Koji Kamoji, a Japanese artist long resident in Poland, whose works are often a complex intermixture of the ephemeral and the permanent. For example, his work *Martwa natura* (Still Life, 2003), in the Foksal Gallery, Warsaw, contains

permanent elements, reused in each re-exhibition (album, musical scores, letters, photographs and other objects), but also ephemeral ones—an apple which in each exhibition passes every time from a state of full freshness to the process of rotting, water in a glass, or earth from the gallery’s garden heaped on a newspaper. These items were all linked with the artist’s apparatus for “giving things a voice,” pieces of aluminum strip bent into arcs.

Jadzinska (2009:173) arrives at the conclusion that the authenticity of a work of installation art is an ecosystem based on the unity of the conceptual structure, material structure, and experience of the viewer, according to the artist’s intent. Her response to the problems inherent in this case are that the elements that determine the authenticity of the work can be sought through the conservator’s analysis of the work, the collection of data, interviews with the artist, the creation of specialist documentation, and above all debate among specialists from different fields to create a framework for practical treatment.

Vivian van Saaze (2009) discusses what she calls an ethnographic study into the preservation of *One Candle* by Nam June Paik. Because of the various instantiations of the

work, which appear materially altered each time *One Candle* is performed, van Saaze (2009:194) applies the philosophical diagnosis of Annemarie Mol, taken from her book *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*. Van Saaze (2009:194) writes, “[Applying] Mol’s reasoning to contemporary artworks, then different One Candles appear and authentically can be explored as being done in practice. In other words: by focusing on the ways in which One Candle is manufactured in practice, authenticity becomes part of what is done in practice rather than already being there and waiting to be discovered.”

This view seems to confuse a site-specific requirement with the need for conceptual authenticity of the work, especially since the Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK) in Frankfurt clings to the notion that, despite the work being an installation piece, shown in different versions in Bremen, New York, Seoul, Bilbao, Iowa, Paris, and so on, the only authentic version of the work is theirs. Paik died in 2006, and his assistant is responsible for creating authentic Paik reenactments, but according to van Saaze (2009:196), these are labeled “exhibition copies,” not “versions” or “variations.” Van Saaze (2009:196) writes, “Interestingly enough, when I tried to gather images of the several One Candles abroad by collecting the catalogues, time and again I was confronted with a single image—that of One Candle at the MMK.” Apparently, one single press image of the MMK installation is used, even when the installation itself has features very different form that of the version at the MMK. It has a frozen presence. Proposition E, above, is relevant to this example. The ethnographic inquiry that this investigation would demand entails the discussion of many voices in connection with this study, which would be interesting to present.

### Time-Based Media Works

Time-based media works can be considered a form of installation art with special problems of preservation into the future. Proposition C above is particularly relevant to the problems of authenticity of such works. Real (2001) mentions the usual array of media that may represent a work as originally installed: videotapes, laser disks, film, DVDs, color slides, and so on. Real (2001) asks eight long pertinent questions concerning how media art may interact with the conservator. Laurenson (1999) notes that as a performance, an installation may well be seen as either poorly performed or as well performed, although there could be difficulties in deciding whose opinion to present in such cases. Some subtle details of media installations are evident only to the artist. For example, the reinstallation of *INITIALS* (1993–1994) by James Coleman (1941–) at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art was judged as defective by the artist, as the projected image was wrong. The only difference was the projector bulb, rated for 30 hours rather than 75 hours, as in the original installation. This is an example relevant to Proposition G.

As Real (2001) writes, “Repeat performances of time-based media art is the best guarantee for survival.” However, even an experienced time-based media artist such as Bill Viola (Viola 1998, 1999) has found that some of his earlier work is practically unplayable. There are palpable costs associated with keeping some of this art into the future. Real (2001) lists the cost of producing archival masters of audiovisual components, the cost of future periodic migrations of the masters to newer formats, the cost of successive generations of presentation playback instrumentation, storage costs, and the cost of bringing in a living artist to discuss

matters of preservation, to name only a few. Real (2001) gives several examples of works that cannot be effectively reenacted, such as Nam June Paik’s work *Moon Is the Oldest TV* (1963–1965), which was produced by magnetically disrupting the image on 12 cathode ray tubes to mimic the appearance of phases of the moon. Real (2001) regards the work as so removed from its origins if re-created, somehow, on LCD monitors that its authenticity would be lost.

Noël de Tilly (2009) considers two media-based works, the 1982 installation of John Massey’s (1950–) *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* in the exhibition *OKanada* at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. It was first made of three synchronized 16mm films. There were several difficulties in the original installation, and in 1985 the work was sold to the National Gallery of Canada. The institution bought three projectors and other equipment, but since the synchronization problem was never solved, the work was placed in storage. In 1994 the three films were transferred to Betacam tapes, and from the perspective of 2016, the permanence of Betacam tapes themselves becomes evanescent. However, in one sense the artist took back the authenticity of the work for himself by creating an “artist’s proof” copy, enabling him to sell other copies of the work. The conservation of the work has therefore become a conceptual event, along with many other examples of how media works have been conserved for the future. In 2002 artist Douglas Gordon (1966–) filmed an elephant playing dead in the Gagosian Gallery, New York. A three-channel video installation entitled *Play Dead: Real Time* used two large projections on double-sided screens and one video played on a monitor. Since 2003 the work has been exhibited more than a dozen times. This was

## Gallery Exhibits of Appropriated Images

possible because the work was sold as a numbered edition of three. Its authenticity lies in its presentation in the exhibition space, which is decided upon by the artist—an example relevant to Propositions B and C.

As Noël de Tilly (2009:215), writes: “These examples serve to illustrate how the editioning in relation to video and film works can impact on notions of authenticity. I would suggest that authenticity is something that is constantly being redefined and challenged by many external factors, such as the exhibition space, the medium of the work, and the intervention of the artist.”

As the premise of this book concerns the notion that there is no singular authenticity, de Tilly is using the word in a universal sense, where conceptual, material, or aesthetic authenticity would be well suited to a deeper analysis.

The seven propositions given above represent the range of events of material, aesthetic, and conceptual authenticity that the examples discussed here manifest. How each of them is navigated depends to a great extent on the intentions of the artist, the artist’s sanction (Irvin 2005b), or how the institution concerned takes ownership of the work and then decides what it wants to do with it, which may have very little to do with the original intention of the artist.

### Gallery Exhibits of Appropriated Images

Can art be considered authentic if its content is derived from personal or intimate photographs reused by the artist without the knowledge of the participants? Appropriation from other artists’ works, as in the case of Elaine Sturtevant and the subsequent (re)appropriation of her appropriations from the work of Walker Evans, is discussed as intrinsically

problematic in chapter 2. The art may be regarded as an authentic expression qua artist but not of unwitting participants who may feel ripped off by the inclusion of their personal imagery in a context they never envisaged. After a Berlin artist exhibited Grindr profiles in a public square (Cain 2014), he was punched by one of the Grindr online participants, offended at his personal images becoming part of an art installation. So the question is: If everyone except you sees a photographic image of your penis hanging in a gallery, is it art? Grindr is an app that enables gay and bisexual men to find sexual partners. The penises on view are certainly authentic, but whether the artwork can function legitimately without permission to exist in such circumstances is a question yet to be answered. Glenn Wharton (personal communication 2016) comments: “From my understanding Grindr doesn’t allow members to show images of their penises on their site. Members are allowed to text each other individually and swap photos, but not on the site. I just googled the Grindr site and they have all kinds of rules. I imagine this is especially so, now that they are owned by a Chinese conglomerate.”

In 2013 the feminist art collective Future Femme put on a show in Boston called *Show Me More*, an art exhibit of 400 photographic images of penises. Female artists had combed dating apps for potential contributors, sometimes asking unknown men specifically for images of their penises without telling them they would be part of an art exhibit (Cain 2014). Arne Svenson’s New York gallery exhibition *The Neighbors* featured artistically framed but potentially troubling pictures of his neighbors engaged in daily activities (Pearson 2013), what Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004) called “the decisive moment.” Cartier-Bresson was known to have wrapped

his camera in black tape to disguise it (Cartier-Bresson 1952). Walker Evans (1903–1975) hid his camera in his coat to take photographs on the subway, and Merry Alpern (1955–) peered into the windows of the sex hotel across the road from where he stayed (Mutual Art.com 2015). Miroslav Tichy (1926–2011) took up-skirt photographs of women without their knowledge and created an artwork from the pictures (Cain 2014). Unlike Tino Sehgal and Marina Abramović, who in theory have willing audiences in terms of museum visitors who choose to enter the museum, the lack of knowledge of participants that they are functioning as participants, from the days of Walker Evans to the present, subverts the barrier between the private and the public that is presumably part of the intention of the art. Artists such as Brassai (1899–1994), Nan Goldin (1953–), Boris Mikhailov (1938–), and Larry Clark (1943–) captured intimate and ugly examples of sexual activity, abuse, and drug misuse by spending time with their subjects, much as an anthropologist spends time with the tribes they seek to document.

The desire to capture authentic rather than staged images of real life is in conflict with the right to privacy: a subject of contention in the era of hacked naked photographs of celebrities and Grindr images of homosexual men recontextualized as art. Of necessity in the philosophy of modern art, if it is exhibited in a major gallery, it is an authentic work of art because it is recognized as such, and being so recognized it is authentic.

### **The Authenticity of Reenactment**

Nostalgia for bygone exhibitions and dead artists' studios has led to the desire for their re-creation in the present. Reexhibitions of original exhibitions seek to resurrect the memory of transitory events that possessed no

permanence. The voyeuristic experience of gazing at a replica of an artist's studio invokes awe at the faithful reproduction of the milieu of the artist in his or her intimate surroundings. None of these may be authentic in terms of spatial location or artifactual content. Vere (2012) discusses reconstruction of the original studio of Eduardo Paolozzi (1924–2005) as a museum exhibit. The materiality of the studio is represented by re-creation of the artist's studio in Edinburgh, translocated from its original locale in Chelsea, London. The reality is that Paolozzi never had a Scottish studio and divided his time between London and Germany. However, Paolozzi gifted his studio to the National Galleries of Scotland (Vere 2012). This displacement of authentic location applies to several other reenactments of artists' studios, such as the Dublin location of the London studio of Francis Bacon (1909–1992). Constantin Brancusi's studio was re-created in the courtyard of the Pompidou Centre instead of at his Montparnasse home, and the studio of Giorgio Morandi (1890–1964) was re-created in the center of Bologna instead of at the Casa Morandi, his former home.

The display of authentic artists' tools and artwork is an essential part of these reconstructions, even if the geography of location is inauthentic and the surroundings of the original studio are far away. Why are studios so important that galleries have decided to create copies of them? A reconstruction of a studio is not an artwork in the traditional sense, but by supervenience it assumes all the properties of the works the artist created. Invoking some of the famous tenets derived from Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* discussed earlier, Vere (2012) argues that a photograph of a studio can indeed convey the aura of the place even

## Digital Reality and the Authenticity of Art

though photography, according to Benjamin, has no aura. Benjamin (1968:230) writes of a cathedral that leaves its site to be received in the studio of an art lover: “These changed circumstances may leave the artwork’s properties unchanged. . . . They certainly devalue the here and now of the artwork.” This is a contentious issue, and there may be disagreements with what Benjamin writes. It took three years to exactly replicate Francis Bacon’s chaotic and unkempt Reece Mews studio in Dublin. Apparently, every thumb print, fingerprint, or intervention made by Bacon has been reproduced (Vere 2012). In contrast, the Scottish re-creation of Paolozzi’s London studio is sanitized, without the knee-deep piles of pornographic magazines Paolozzi surrounded himself with, perhaps, the curator speculates, for what they conveyed about the human body rather than for erotic gratification. With this bowdlerized version of the original revealed, Vere passes over the startling admission without comment, which only tends to support the criticisms of Lowenthal that the modern cult of the authentic vitiates the original authenticity because what is presented today is more real than the historical facts. The viewer is not offered the image of Paolozzi gazing at a pornographic magazine and deriving aesthetic sustenance from it for his own art. Instead the viewer is presented with an inauthentic image of the original that seems to undermine the entire fabric of the replication. If it cannot even be known whether what is being observed through a glass window or a gallery barrier is faithful to the form and substance of the original studio, how can its authentic or inauthentic presence be assessed? These questions are not raised by Vere (2012) but clearly should form an important concern in the debate concerning “authentic” replications. It transpires that

far from presenting Paolozzi’s work from the 1940s, most of the sculpture on view was fabricated from the 1970s onward. In a 1995 interview, Paolozzi envisaged the space of his reconstructed studio to be “busy, noisy and active.” The epidiascope (a projector capable of displaying images of both opaque and transparent materials) representative of the artist’s fascination with the projection of seemingly random advertising images, is nowhere to be seen either. Whether it is a more authentic experience to stand behind a barrier looking at the reconstruction of a studio in a city where it never was, or to look at a rope originally designed for climbing simply as a “sculptural element,” as in Morris’s 2009 reconstructed *Bodyspacemotionthings* at the Tate Modern, is a question asked by Vere (2012). It remains unanswered.

If the trend to preserve or create restorations of original studios used by artists were to continue over the next 50 years, one might well be overwhelmed by the commodity of the artist’s studio as art in itself. The viewer of the studio on display regards what he or she is seeing as a re-creation or preservation of something with undisputed veracity. If these instantiations are to be properly understood, the viewer should also be presented with a photograph by which the material presence of the original studio can be appreciated. Or is the concern with only the conceptual authenticity of the work and not its material manifestation? In the case of the re-creation of Francis Bacon’s studio, this is clearly not the case, since every thumb print was replicated to ensure complete allegiance to historical authenticity.

### Digital Reality and the Authenticity of Art

In the Internet age, art can exist in digital rather than analogue form, either in real

or virtual space. Art today can be produced digitally or exist online in myriad formats, which subvert the distinction between what is authentic and what is a copy, not to everyone's satisfaction. When photographer William Eggleston (1939–) produced a limited series of 20 prints of one of his works in the 1970s, using a now obsolete dye-transfer process, collector Jonathan Sobel thought he possessed one of only 20 versions in the world. However, Eggleston began to produce much larger digital versions of the same image in 2011. Sobel sued, unhappy that his authentic limited-edition original was now supplanted by a totally digital version (Crow 2012). In terms of indistinguishability, a very high-quality scan of the digital Eggleston print would be able to be distributed on the Internet with exactly the same fidelity as the 2011 version and would effectively carry the same aura as that digital version. The ability of the Internet to replicate perfectly a digital original subverts the concept of “an original,” as there may be no way to define what an original is. The ubiquity of digital representations and the ease with which source information can be disseminated creates a series of problems for anything defined as an “authentic copy” or even “authentic.”

Bearman and Trant (1997) are concerned with this issue and suggest various modes of documentation that can be brought to bear on the ontological problem. They suggest three technical and social strategies for asserting authenticity: public authenticity, secret authenticity, and functional authenticity. They write:

Public methods for asserting the authenticity of sources include: the creation of copyright deposit “collections of record”; certified deposits of original sources combined with record certification

services; registration of unique document identifiers; publishing “key” data about documents which, when hashed, or otherwise calculated in a publicly available way, should match that of the document in hand, and defining metadata structures to carry document authentication declarations or proofs.

Secret methods involve hiding data in the object to reveal its source. Techniques include: digital watermarking; steganography and digital signatures.

Functionally dependent methods employ specific technologies that are bound together with the information source. Methods employing technical dependencies include: object encapsulation (whether physical or logical), cryptotopes (TM), encryption and embedded active agents.

Some of the techniques proposed by Bearman and Taylor (1997) have already become obsolete themselves: No one today has ever heard of cryptotopes as a functional modality for ensuring authenticity. The danger of any pronouncements regarding authenticity or replication concerning the Internet is that they are doomed to irrelevance by the relentless march of technological change.

Douglas Davis (2014) created the world's first collaborative sentence, which is now more than 3 miles in length and which exists and grows only in hyperspace. Davis (1995) refers back to Benjamin with the title of his paper *The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction*. The aura as imagined by Benjamin, which is potentially damaged by the act of mechanical reproduction, is even more in danger from the faultless reproduction created by digital processes or, one could argue, transferable to them. Artworks

may have a materiality in real life and a virtual existence on the Internet; the source or physical location of the material work of art is on a different continent than the virtual. The Internet may also be used to create artworks by direct interaction with participants. According to An Xiao Mina (2013), the American Twitter community was shocked to learn that @Horse ebooks was actually a performance artwork by Jacob Bakkila and Thomas Bender. Hundreds of thousands of followers were fooled into thinking that it was not an artwork at all. As machines themselves can now draw, paint, and talk, what can be created in conceptual space on the

Internet may have no materiality whatever. Distinguishing these creations from human productions in terms of significance or authenticity will be a contested area for some time to come, as the avenues leading into conceptual authenticity become wider while those leading toward material authenticity shrink or become cul-de-sacs. In the ever-expanding field of digital reality or unreality, the art historical and philosophical discussion seems to be slow in coming to grips with the problems for authenticity that are thereby created. The future is a conceptual space of manipulation, of transfiguration of the commonplace into a place with no fixed abode.

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## Chapter 11

# Some Final Thoughts and Reflections

*The traditional forms of the debate and dialogue between tradition and innovation—by that I mean that the forms that disregard the extreme cases of provocative and open forgery—have survived. The reason why modern art is in a crisis is not that there are no great artists to sustain the connection of high art with the past . . . but that high art, or autonomous art, has been frustrated and can no longer play the part of one of the poles in the family of arts. It has been frustrated by everyday life, mass culture, the media, and multiculturalism. These are the four apocalyptic rides of the other pole, of aesthetic heteronomy.*

—Sándor Radnóti, *The Fake: Forgery and Its Place in Art*

At the beginning of this book, the author posed a number of questions concerning how authenticity is to be regarded. Any analysis of the problems of authenticity has to allow for different scenarios of interpretation. The approach suggested in this book is both flexible and transdisciplinary, as it does not seek to restrict modes of interaction between the viewer and the object to a rigid system of interrogation of the work or its textuality as perceived by a viewer but presents an analysis that is sensitive to the temporal and cultural context of the works of

art while respecting the relevance of questions concerning materiality and conceptual and historical authenticity. I discuss, in closing, some of the salient points from these questions.

The first question was: What does authenticity mean? The simple appellation *authenticity* is still used in common speech or when referring in passing to the topic at hand as “authentic” in situations or contexts where a deeper analysis of the concept is required in relation to art but all too often none is offered. The words *forgery* and *authenticity*

## Some Final Thoughts and Reflections

are studiously avoided by some writers, especially in modern and contemporary contexts, where authors are increasingly conscious of the problems that references to the concepts might create, especially under the influence of postmodernism, deconstructivism, or twentieth-century semiotics, where doubt exists that authenticity has any meaning or relevance whatsoever. Forgery is less relevant to postmodern thought because the interpretation of the viewer—rather than the purely material nature of the work itself—is a critical feature of the evaluation of how works of art are regarded, and as digital productions become ever more dominant, the need for the concept itself becomes contested. The observer, however, is frequently concerned with the notion of originality, especially in terms of the economic value of the work he or she might be interested in purchasing. In the case of some contemporary artworks, what is purchased may be the certificate of authenticity itself, which confers upon the work the originality it would otherwise disguise behind its lack of material substance.

Authenticity has been regarded as an entirely culturally dependent idea, seen as a psychological-behavioral phenomenon, a semiotic construct, an ontological problem, a delusion of a mistaken essentialism, an important feature of works of art, or a subject ripe for philosophical debate. This book proposes that the multidimensional nature of the concept can be interrogated by analyzing the contested, performative, and fragmented associations of what authenticity means across several fields of inquiry, including conservation, restoration, aesthetics, art history, philosophy, anthropology, and scientific evaluation.

There is a need for greater intertextuality of discussion concerning authenticity that implies a willingness to cross boundaries

involving disciplines that all too often do not communicate outside their own confines. One reason authenticity is contested between different stakeholders is that each has a tendency to ignore the voices of outsiders. Western art critics, modern African mask makers, and conservation scientists may hold three different opinions regarding the authenticity of the same mask. The conceptual criteria invoked by the modern African maker may be in opposition to the determination by the conservation scientist that the wood used for the mask is only a few years old and thus is materially inauthentic for an ethnic African product in a major American collection. Similarly, the themes explored in the carving may be thought by the art historian to have been influenced by Picasso, so aesthetically the work is found wanting; it is not an authentic portrayal of truly indigenous stylistic norms but one sullied by Westernized tastes and influences. The African mask maker regards his work as authentic because he is from a family of mask makers. An analysis of these three different viewpoints entails the need for an interdisciplinary approach to the problem and recognition of different evaluative norms. The art historian is using a historical/aesthetic authenticity; the conservation scientist material authenticity; and the Africa carver conceptual authenticity. Increasingly, recognition of the African carver as an artist in his or her own right is seen in the emergence of contemporary African art exhibits in the twenty-first century.

The performative features of authenticity can function in many ways, and as Dutton remarked, even forgery could be regarded as misrepresented performance because the agency or social interaction with the work belies the performance or communicative power of the authentic. Artworks may

## Some Final Thoughts and Reflections

perform as participants with the viewer and may have active or multifarious lives. Those that auto-destruct in front of the viewer participate in a performance of their own demise. Engagement with the artwork may be performative in many senses of the word, as when a nun begins to pray in front of an altarpiece or when the empty room provides the realization that the artwork on view is now invisible.

Artworks may perform their own acts of subtle interaction diachronically or synchronically in the way they decay. The diachronic degradation or alteration of works is often overlooked in a discussion of their authentic appearance or exactly what their altered state implies for a discussion of their authenticity or desired state. Heidegger was not the first to propose that the decay of an object was particularly important in the life of a work of art, represented by its work-being. In 1859 Ruskin gave a lecture “in praise of rust” (Ruskin 2010 [1898]). He described the rusting of iron as part of its natural state and condition and its decay as an integral part of its existence, as a desirable state dependent on the iron, an authentic sign of the passing of time as the iron rusts away. This was a central tenet of the Ruskinian philosophy of the grandeur of ruins, the falsifications wrought by nineteenth-century restoration, and the impossibility of not destroying what was authentic of the past.

The fragmentation of the field of inquiry into authenticity is apparent from some of the discussion presented in this book, which makes use of literature spanning many different fields. As disciplinary boundaries continue to erode, the authenticity of art objects and how they are to be regarded is an exciting area for future research. Indeed, the sheer number of new books and articles related to the topic are evidence of a resurgence of interest in

the subject, not only among art historians but also among philosophers, critics, restorers, and conservators.

Crucially important concepts such as restoration, which has a major impact on the concept of authenticity, remain poorly understood outside of the professional conservation literature, a situation aggravated by the hermetic nature of conservation-related journals and publications, many of which are not readily available online. Nor is the debate helped by sensational newspaper headlines accusing, for example, conservators as staid and mainstream as Martin Wyld, the retired former chief restorer at the National Gallery, London, of ruining paintings without any informed debate, just the brutal infliction of treatments inspired by empiricist scientific methodologies, resulting in paintings emerging from the laboratory as mere shadows of their authentic selves. Most of this criticism is fired from literary canons with poor aim and range. The damage inflicted is in terms of public perception of what restorers in the twenty-first century do rather than what they actually do.

Restoration and authenticity remain troubled bedfellows. Some of the case studies in this book seek to further explore their fascinating juxtaposition. The nature of this hermeneutical inquiry is an evaluation of what happens to works of art as they are observed in time, discussed, or interpreted. The materiality of the work itself, and the alterations that have taken place diachronically, may be of crucial importance to this inquiry. In terms of aesthetics or philosophical writings, the author has found only a handful of papers from the aesthetic and philosophical side of the argument that have restoration as their principal focus. Many of these papers were written some time ago, while interest in the topic within the conservation profession has

## Some Final Thoughts and Reflections

grown enormously over the past 20 years, as a perusal of the online database Art and Archaeology Technical Abstracts, hosted by the Getty Conservation Institute, will reveal.

Fragmentation of the discussion, as in the case of the Sistine Chapel, results in old arguments in the art historical and philosophical literature being repeated. They fail to discuss the work in a context sufficiently elaborated to allow for informed evaluative debate concerning the restoration work, which does not receive the discussion it deserves.

It is possible to define authenticity as an extensive list of attributes, as some recent conservation charters propose, but enumerative attempts to include every possible attribute that might be considered authentic creates a laundry list of topics that seems counterproductive to the holistic picture of the inquiry. This book proposes that authenticity be discussed in terms of the conceptual, historic, or material authenticity of the artwork, since different planes of involvement are represented by these attributes, which simplifies the discussion.

The relationship between authentication and authenticity is not homologous; nor is it linear or necessarily divorced. Some writers claim that authentication is completely different from authenticity, but the mediated condition of what authenticity means sometimes relies upon, or is interlinked with, authentication, which need not be an assessment of a material attribute necessarily but evaluation of a conceptual belief or culturally mitigated functionality of the object. Similarly, objects deemed to have passed through some kind of authentication procedure may be thought of as authentic works of art, but the cultural context and relationships between the two need to be coincident or judged in the same societal context.

The argument as to who defines what is an authentic or inauthentic artwork is often a contested state between evaluations and criteria, between cultures and ethnic representatives, between material, conceptual, or historical associations. For example, visitors to sites or museums may experience authenticity and aura in front of forgeries as much as originals as long as they do not believe them to be forgeries. In many circumstances, authenticity and aura, it could be argued, are not essences of sites or objects but human constructs in particular contexts (Holtorf 2001). This is particularly relevant to our responses to archaeological objects and sites but is less relevant to our appreciation of viewing a painting that we believe is by Rembrandt rather than a copy produced last year in China that appears perceptually identical. Most visitors are quite happy, as the Manitou Springs discussion reveals, to live with inauthentic archaeological sites as long as they fulfill our desire for them and invoke in us an aura of having visited something real.

A complex question this book is much concerned with is: How has the concept of what constitutes the authentic changed over the past few thousand years, and how might this interact with conservation and restoration? Some writers do not agree that the concept of "art" can be extended in time to ancient cultures or even pre-Renaissance periods. Rather than seeing an evolutionary advance in the concept of art in these terms, this book takes the perspective that the human concern for art and authenticity predates the modern era and stretches back into the distant past. For example, a Neolithic necklace consisting of 118 deer teeth and 65 bones carved to look like deer teeth illustrates how the act of replication clearly has a long prehistory. The idea that a material visually similar to deer teeth

## Some Final Thoughts and Reflections

could be created by the carving of bone to look like teeth reveals both the ability as well as the desire to create replicas. Mimetic intention from the Neolithic should not be a surprise. The writings of Dutton (2012) highlight the manufacture of Acheulean hand axes, wonderfully made for a useful purpose but never used as utilitarian objects, which shows that the concept of beauty is deeply rooted in the human consciousness, for some show no sign of wear and are exceptionally well crafted.

An important concern for a wider debate is: How can the scientific nexus of authenticity be integrated into a wider approach to the subject? This remains a contentious issue because, while a heuristic approach to material authenticity would demand the participation of scientific investigation of the work, all too often this is ignored. As far as the historical phenomenology of materials is concerned, the scientist has a belief that these are important aspects of the physical existence of the work of art. If no value is placed on the original materiality of the work, its diachronic degradation, the historical accidents of damage and deterioration, or subsequent acts of restoration, then an authentic scientific component of the work is denied as being of any consequence for aesthetic appreciation or discussion. In some cases the chemical degradation of works of art is considered to be an aesthetically relevant value, but not in others. The implication is that scientific phenomenology has a descriptive role to play in the subject of authentic appearance. This often goes unacknowledged or is not discussed in terms of validating or valorizing the original.

Authentic lives have a hermeneutics of degradative interaction with time that is part of the scientific interest and relevance they generate. If the ostensibly black wings of an angel in a Renaissance work contrasts with

the white wings of other angels and are discussed in art historical terms as such, how viable is that discussion if scientific examination reveals that the black wings were originally painted in an azurite blue? The interpretation or denotation of these wings has to be seen from a holistic perspective that takes account of both art connoisseurship and scientific connoisseurship.

The scientific distinction between three states of alteration—alterations that have occurred to the material constituents of a work through natural processes of diagenesis; alterations that have occurred due to the deposition of foreign substances such as soot, dust, and grime; and alterations created through deliberate acts of restoration—is important for authenticity. An ontological approach to understanding the materiality of artworks involves four historical modes of inquiry: the history of fabrication, the history of use, the history of degradation, and the history of preservation. These interact with scientific distinctions to create a real depth to the discussion.

For example, in the case of Leonardo's *Lady with an Ermine* (1489–1490), the history of fabrication involved the intention to paint a portrait of Cecilia Gallorani, the mistress of Ludovico Sforza, the duke of Milan (Brown 1990). There are three versions by Leonardo hidden in the one painting (Nikkhah 2014). In the first, Gallorani is painted without an ermine (or polecat). In the second, Gallorani has a small ermine. In the final version, Gallorani has a much larger ermine, reflecting either the demands of the sitter to be associated with her famous lover or with the symbolic association of them as finally painted by Leonardo. The history of degradation (Bull 1992) reveals that later a black overpaint was applied to the background; some braids

## Some Final Thoughts and Reflections

and ribbons were touched up with black, the lips with red; white highlights were added in the eyes; and a brown glaze was applied to the end of the nose. A deep craquelure in the paint was caused by the inherent vice of a brown bitumen used by Leonardo. In restoration of this work, the later additions to “improve” upon the dramatic portrait were removed by the restorer, but this kind of removal rarely creates waves of consternation.

Somov (2008) in a semiotic analysis of the painting, talks of the “dark background.” However, from our restoration investigation, it is known that the background was a bluish-gray rather than black. So what is the authentic state of the work? Unfinished in parts as some art historians have erroneously suggested? A simple masterpiece of a painting that sets out to depict the lover with a large ermine? A background that is almost black? Obviously not. Clearly, without the inclusion of scientific connoisseurship, ontological or semiotic studies of a painting cannot denote or interpret the hidden historical nature of a work and its altered signs, understand the origins of deep surface craquelure, or understand gross alterations made by incompetent seventeenth- or eighteenth-century restorers long after the artist’s death. As a desired masterpiece, the painting has been stolen from Poland more than once, hidden by the Germans in a Bavarian home until the end of the Second World War, returned to Poland, and, in an extraordinarily poignant photograph, taken from its rough wooden crate and held up by US troops in a German cattle wagon at the end of the war. Having performed in so many settings, its authentic state has not been denigrated by restoration but has been substantiated and incorporated in a new understanding of what the painting originally looked like and the alterations created by

Leonardo himself. The four historical modes of inquiry reveal a depth to the work, its condition, and its historical evolution that an art historical study alone cannot create.

The story of forgeries and how they are regarded, their representation and denotation, is highly relevant to problems inherent in defining the authentic state of the work. Forgeries have sometimes created a necessary history that never actually existed but that came to (rep)resent what was historically true or valorized. Forgeries, in this sense, became real, or they validated cultural claims to a genuine antecedent past in need of additional proof or less subtle alteration.

Emulations, replicas, and appropriations mix with authenticity in complex ways, sometimes as clearly a copy of what an earlier civilization produced or adapted to new cultural needs, or as a work appropriated to show the power of the appropriator in assigning a new value to it. In the medieval period, the strength of spiritual need as validating the aura of both stolen and fake relics, because of their intangible authenticity, is very apparent.

The laws of supply and demand lead inexorably to the production of forgeries, from ancient Egypt to today. The human desire for ownership and possession is so strong that if the supply is not there, forgeries will be created to fulfill the void, to create a supply of inauthentic works, created by either directly copying the original artist or imitating his or her style. Indeed, forgeries are an inextricable part of what is real, valued, or desired or what has become so in the course of time. How could the Victoria and Albert Museum purchase a bust by Bastianini in the late nineteenth century, knowing that it was not of Renaissance date, for the same price it would have paid for an authentically Renaissance work? The bust represented inherent aspects

## Some Final Thoughts and Reflections

of taste sought after by the late Victorians. It was an authentic expression of what was true and sublime in the refinement of early Renaissance art. In one sense, the forged bust was imbued with a conceptual authenticity, even if the material authenticity, now considered of greater significance, has consigned the bust to storage.

It is startling to learn that a large percentage of art offered for sale today is fake. As museums and elite collectors Hoover up most of the authentic art currently on offer, the rest of the market is increasingly saturated with fakes. Some fakes have considerable artistic merit, which is one reason the works of Eric Hebborn, James Little, Jef van der Veken, Icilio Frederico Joni, Wolfgang Beltracchi, Ken Perenyi, Alceo Dossena, Giovanni Bastianini, James Myatt, and Han van Meegeren have become valued in their own right as interesting and desirable because they have authentic stories attached to them.

Forgeries purporting to be from the seventeenth century but painted by Han van Meegeren are valued more highly on the art market than authentic seventeenth-century work by minor artists of the time. The notoriety of name recognition is valued over the authenticity of the art itself, except that what one is now buying is an authentic van Meegeren work, which might also be copied by others in imitation of the forger to cash in on the fame of the name. The emulation of successful forgers by later artists is a comment event, driven by greed.

The problem with high-class forgeries is whether they subvert genuine appreciation of artworks known to be authentic. Pieter Meyers (personal communication 2014) notes recent forgeries of early Ming Dynasty imperial Sino-Tibetan cast-bronze sculptures produced in monasteries in Nepal and China.

The very skillful productions have entirely correct Buddhist attributes. They are chased and mercury-amalgam gilded and are indistinguishable from genuine fifteenth-century Buddhist works. The monasteries employ traditional casting techniques, which they have been using for generations. Some museums and collectors believe they are purchasing genuine fifteenth-century imperial Ming Buddhist works when in fact they might have been made last month in China or Nepal. They do not possess the historical authenticity of the fifteenth-century works, but in other respects they are authentic mimetic works of art made by Buddhist monks in a monastic setting. When traditional forms are part of a living cultural system, the production of superlative forgeries of Buddhist art is more of a discomfort to the Westernized art market than a reflection on the works of art themselves.

An exciting field of discussion is: Can the postmodernist approach to art entail a meaningful discussion of authenticity or is the concept irrelevant to conservation actions taken on behalf of objects? The chapter dealing with the modern and contemporary reveals just how valuable or disputed the notion of authenticity is in relation to a whole range of contemporary works, from the point of view of both the original artist, who may deny that a displayed version of his or her work is authentic, and artists who continually subvert the concept altogether.

Despite the fact that fakes are so prevalent today, there is not necessarily extensive scholarly interest in them. Numerous newspaper reports attest to continuing public amusement at the sight of art experts being made to look foolish by the endless stream of revelations concerning forged art, often involving millions of dollars of fraud, once pronounced by major auction houses to be authentic.

## Some Final Thoughts and Reflections

There is a deeper problem in terms of contemporary art and postmodern tropes regarding the mediated nature of representation, the concept of difference, and the loss of authorial empiricism. If the author is dead and the observer cannot escape from the semiotic constructions of his or her own interpretations, does it matter if what is being observed is a construct of a forger or a real work by the artist? In terms of our mental states, there will be a difference if the participant is told that what he or she is looking at is really a fake Chagall rather than an authentic one, or a fake Damian Hurst shark in a tank of formaldehyde rather than the original (which decomposed and had to be replaced with another). Our mediated response to a work of art is less dependent on the physical existence of the object and more dependent on our interpretation of it in postmodern theory, and it is certainly true that today there is more awareness of the problems and limitations in viewing the so-called objective nature of objects, as exemplified by logical positivism, than there was 20 or 30 years ago.

For example, Mieke Bal (1996:580) considers the paradigm of semiotics as rather different in intent from an art historical inquiry. She writes that semiotics is “not conducive to inquiries about attribution, patronage, connoisseurship, economic conditions, studio practices, and the age of wood panels and pigment; nor does it have a stake in reconstructing social relations between artists and the biographies of individuals.” By contributing to the academic study of visual images, semiotics is not directly concerned if the visual images being analyzed are actually by Baburen or van Meegeren, and obviously in this case, a purely visual interpretation of signs in the work does not allow for differentiation between signs of the authentic artist and of the forger van

Meegeren. If connoisseurship is of no consequence, would the semiotic visual inquiry see no difference between the version painted by van Meegeren and that painted by Baburen?

Different paradigms concerning the authenticity of art intersect and are interdependent. If semiotics is able to ignore connoisseurship, both scientific and art historical, then it has to live with the consequences of writing a detailed account of the visual signs of a forgery that only purports to be from the seventeenth century.

The various philosophical paradigms represented by the inquiry into modern and contemporary art are one reason why authenticity and forgery are seldom addressed directly, because the physicality of the work is seen through the construction of the viewer, an interpretation of signs, or his or her mediated response to the work. Authenticity and our interaction with the notion raises a whole host of important and interesting questions in relation to art, such as the artist’s intention, the value ascribed to replicas and copies, the nature of the original work and ersatz versions of it, the degradation and restoration it has suffered, the problems of fakes and forgeries, what to do with perfectly identical digital copies, and the philosophical debates between art historians, restorers, critics, and aestheticians. I return to Dutton’s pertinent question: Authentic compared with what? The cultural context cannot be divorced from the general scope of the question. In the medieval period, materially inauthentic relics were authentic in virtue of the attested miracles they had performed. They were authentic compared to those relics that were inactive. In the contemporary art world, an authentic reinstallation may be disowned by the original artist as not conforming to his or her specifications. The reinstallation is therefore inauthentic when



## Some Final Thoughts and Reflections

compared with the original. A work of art by Bastianini, the portrait *Head of Julius Caesar* in the British Museum, was hailed throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras as one of best examples of ancient carving known; casts were taken to teach students the correct techniques of proportion and style. However, the head had been carved in the nineteenth century by Bastianini. It was considered authentic compared with other, similar portrait busts in the museum, but scientific connoisseurship showed that the work was inauthentic compared with known examples and materials from the ancient world and was therefore a forgery. However, what is especially interesting is that the head was known to have been created by Bastianini at the time of purchase but was so admired that it was purchased as if it had been a Renaissance work. Forgeries by masters of the stature of Dossena and Bastianini may be regarded as admired works of art compared with lesser works, and because of their aesthetic appeal, they are often compared by art historians to Renaissance works and even exhibited with them. The social biography of forgeries creates a complex presence. For example, a much admired Egyptian head in the Louvre, reproduced in many expensive books of ancient Egyptian art and shown on one of the best-selling postcards the Louvre produced

until 2006, when scientific dating of the wood proved that the sculpture could not possibly be ancient Egyptian, has become so admired for more than a generation that its material inauthenticity becomes almost irrelevant. The constructivist approach might well take the view that the participation of this sculpture in its public existence has been validated by its instantiation as an admired work of art from the Amarna period. Forgeries may lie about their origins, but they may not commit a lie about their presence, as suggested earlier in this text.

“Authentic compared to what?” has had a field day in this book, and the analyses presented here will hopefully be of interest to the reader and a spur to more thought devoted to the subject of authenticity and its sphere of interaction with works of art. Many books that discuss contemporary, Renaissance, or ancient art do not mention the subject of authenticity at all.

There is plenty of life and scope in the topic for years to come and many more books to be written to illuminate the goddess of authenticity in all her glory and to reveal the nuances of her existence, as our contemporary world becomes its own past. Others who follow will pass judgment on our cult of authenticity and how we became so obsessed with its discovery that we could never find it.

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## Glossary of Terms

Definitions by the author, except where stated otherwise

**abbozzo:** In painting, blocking in—the first sketching done on the canvas and also the first underpainting. In sculpture, a mass of material that has been carved or manipulated into a rough form of the ultimate work. The word is Italian for “sketch.”

**acrolith:** An ancient Greek sculpture whose head, arms, and feet are made of marble or another stone. At first an acrolith was considered to be a wooden sculpture with marble extremities and later a limestone sculpture with marble features. The word is Greek for “stone-ended.” The adjectival form is *acrolithic*.

**alabastron:** A container for perfumed oil that takes its name from alabaster, the material from which the original Egyptian examples were made. Greek artists adopted the Egyptian alabastron’s form in the 600s B.C.E. but made the vessel in a variety of materials. Other types of Greek vases include the amphora, hydria, kantharos, krater, kyathos, kylix, lekythos, oinochoe, pelike, phiale, pinax, pithos, pyxis, and rhyton.

**altarblock:** A consecrated table at which Mass was read and on which an altarpiece rested

**anastylosis:** Repair of historic fabric using only the original materials employed in its construction in the first place, clearly delineated in any reconstruction from added new parts. Strict adherence to the principles of anastylosis may be desirable, but in the repair of ancient sculptures, they are rarely followed.

**ancona:** A panel or altarpiece

**arriccio:** A coarse plaster or gesso layer laid down on a wall or stone substrate and then covered with a finer *intonaco* layer as preparation for painting. This plaster might be made from gypsum, anhydrite, or calcium carbonates in the form of chalk or crushed limestone. Pozzolanic mortars made of complex decayed volcanic materials make strong *arriccio* layers. Lime mortars are made from calcined lime forming calcium hydroxide, which is then carbonated to reform calcium carbonate. *Arriccio* is much used in fresco production.

## Glossary of Terms

- artist's replica:** A work made by the artist or someone sanctioned by the artist, as a replacement for a version of the original, and using the same specifications. May be qualified as "editioned" (Tate Papers 2012)
- astrazione cromatica:** In large areas of loss, where the original can no longer be reconstructed, the colors surrounding the loss dictate the color scheme. With the technique of astrazione cromatica, the loss becomes a single tone made up of multilayered strokes of color.
- authentic work:** Preservation of the original without falsifications added through restoration or additions of new parts or paint
- authenticated replica:** A work certified as having been made by the artist or someone sanctioned by the artist, as a replacement for, or as a version of the original, and using the same specifications (Tate Papers 2012)
- autographed originals:** A series of usually limited copies of an original work of art that are signed directly by the artist to distinguish between original copies and later reproductions
- bambagia:** Textile waste of cotton or wool
- barbe:** A raised lip of gesso left when frame moldings that were originally attached to a panel and were therefore gessoed at the same time are removed. The lip is created by the accumulation of gesso in the angle between the flat surface and the molding.
- batten:** A length of wood attached to the back of a panel, partly to keep it flat and as support
- blind stamp:** In fine art, an impression of a signature, logo, or other marking that is embossed without ink onto a print and that distinguishes the artist, editor, publisher, or someone else
- block signature:** Also called a plate signature, the artist's signature printed along with the rest of a print, etching, engraving, or other reproduction rather than being made by the artist directly on each image after it is created. The artist signs once, and the signature is reproduced on all subsequent examples or copies of the image. Prints not signed in the block but signed with (false) signatures on paper become essentially worthless in the trade.
- bole:** An iron oxide clay used as an underlayer for gold leaf in water gilding. Bole can be reddish brown or greenish. The clay is slightly reflective and helps deepen the color of the gold leaf, especially if any fine breaks were created in the gilding.
- braccio:** A varied unit of length. The Florentine *braccio* was a cloth measure of 58.4 cm.
- brass:** An alloy of copper and zinc. Zinc content is usually under 20 percent in ancient alloys, but a whole range of compositions are possible. The zinc content is less than 28 percent if the alloy is made by the cementation of zinc ores and copper ores in co-smelting. The authenticity of ancient copper alloys containing much zinc is often problematic.
- bronze:** An alloy of copper and tin, used for thousands of years. Normally tin contents in bronze are less than 12 percent, but when a number of special alloys are also used, tin contents can be 21 to 28 percent. The higher tin alloys are brittle.
- catalogue raisonné:** The definitive publication of an artist's known works together with all documentary and historical references and evidence, sales inventories, ownerships, picture sizes, media, restorations, and assessments of authenticity. For some artists, the definitive version has yet to be written. For others, the publication may include spurious works, often deleted or revised in later catalogs.

## Glossary of Terms

- chapelet:** A rod or other solid material, such as a nail or piece of broken bronze, used to hold the core material (qv) steady inside a lost wax casting. See also “indirect casting.”
- chiaroscuro:** Variation of light and shade in drawings or paintings, particularly associated with Leonardo da Vinci.
- ciborium:** A canopy, usually of stone, over the altar on columns
- cinquecento:** The sixteenth century in Italian art and literature
- conservation:** The art and science of the care of objects without necessarily involving restoration of them. Conservation may involve documentation, investigation, cleaning, repairing, joining, mending, supporting, stabilizing, and making decisions about old restorations, additions, repaintings, or recoatings. Terms differ in different countries. The conservation professional in Europe might be called the restorer-conservator or simply the restorer. In old European designations, the conservator was in fact the curator, not the conservator as we understand the term.
- copy:** A work of art made by a person other than the artist of the original that is not supposed to be deceptive. To function as such, a copy must present itself as not being the original. As Gilles Deleuze says, a copy has nothing to do with a simulacrum in that it leaves the privilege of the original intact.
- core material:** A mixture of clay and dung or of clay, sand, and other minerals shaped into the interior space of a metal casting so that it can be removed later, creating a hollow casting. The core material may be a plaster-like mixture that can be poured into a wax shape or a clay and mineral mixture, which is less fluid. Cores must be baked completely dry before metal is cast.
- craquelure:** A fine network of interlaced cracks caused by shrinkage of either paint or substrate. Craquelure commonly afflicts glazed ceramics and varnished paintings. The type of craquelure can be related to the type of support. Frequently fractal in morphology, craquelure may be of assistance in authorship or authenticity studies.
- cultural significance:** The aesthetic, historic, scientific, social, or symbolic values of art objects or places for past, present, and future generations
- delamination:** The separation of one layer of a surface of material from an underlying layer or substrate
- direct casting:** Casting metal into a mold to directly take the shape of that mold. In direct casting—as opposed to indirect casting (qv)—the original is destroyed. Also, a model made in wax may be directly invested in a mold, with the wax burned out and metal poured in.
- droit moral:** In France, the legal holder of succession of an artist’s works—often a descendant of the artist and often the final authority on the artist’s oeuvre. If a supposed work sent to France for this appraisal and is rejected by the *droit moral*, the work may be destroyed as a fake.
- duplicate:** An inference for only one replica or copy of a single object (Tate Papers 2012)
- duecento:** The thirteenth century C.E. in Italy.
- editioned replica:** One of several numbered items made by the artist or by someone sanctioned by the artist (Tate Papers n.d.)
- emulation:** The intention to re-create the essence of a work (Tate Papers 2012)
- exhibition copy:** Work made by someone other than the artist, as a public substitute for the original, according to the artist’s specifications or sanctioned by the artist or his or her descendants

## Glossary of Terms

**fabrication:** The act of making a work from raw or starting materials

**facsimile:** An exact copy or a faithful likeness of the original work (Tate Papers 2012)

**fake and related terms:** A *forgery* is a false work of art sold to deceive the buyer. A forgery is not the same as a *fake*. For example, a play may have a backdrop of fake Monets, but there is no intention to deceive a buyer. If these fake Monets were passed off as real Monets, they would be regarded as forged Monets. According to some, a fake is designed to steal the identity, place, and status of the original it simulates, so this term might cause confusion. A *copy* is made by a person other than the artist of the original and is not supposed to be deceptive. To function as such, a copy must present itself as not being the original. As Deleuze says, a copy has nothing to do with a simulacrum in that it leaves the privilege of the original intact. A *replica* is a body double of an original, usually made by the same artist or under his or her close supervision. It is endowed with the same artistic qualities as the original and is implicitly certified as a replica by its author. The creators of a replica do not lie about its origin; it is like a “second original.” A *pastiche* is a work in the manner of another artist that may incorporate more or less intact borrowings from different originals. An *imitation* has an intent to mystify. In contrast to the copy, replica, or pastiche, the imitation belongs to the family of simulacra because it serves to undermine the viewer’s capacity to discriminate between the imitation and the real. A *reproduction* of a work of art can involve any process, now usually digital, that creates an exact copy of the original but often merely by a photographic process. Here a copy and a reproduction might involve similar intents.

**fresco or buon fresco:** The art of laying pigments on a wall prepared with a lime-based substrate that sets, entrapping the pigment as the lime mortar carbonates, producing an enduring painted surface. Fresco is one of the most important techniques for wall paintings.

**gesso grosso:** A coarse layer of gesso, which can be anhydrite, gypsum, calcite, or lime, over wood or another substrate, over which *gesso sottile* is then applied

**gesso sottile:** A fine layer of gesso, which can be either a lime plaster or a gypsum plaster, used as the final coating for wall paintings or paintings on rough wood before the application of the pigment layer

**glair:** egg white whipped to a froth and then left to stand until the froth has subsided. Glair is used as pigment and paint medium.

**ground:** The support layer used for painting. Fourteenth-century Italian panels always had white gesso grounds. The gesso was usually made from gypsum and glue but could be made from chalk and glue or size.

**harder line etching:** Etching directly into a copper plate with dilute acids, with the depressed areas taking up more ink on printing and therefore appearing dark

**heritage:** The worldwide artistic, tangible, and nontangible inheritance deemed worthy of trying to keep for the next generation. It encompasses an ever-widening array of things.

**imitation:** The preservation of art by trying to produce an exact copy of an original or by more roughly attempting to reproduce the style of the original

**indirect casting:** A process that usually involves taking molds from an original model and filling them with a wax shell, which is then packed with core material. On removal from the mold, the wax model is invested for

## Glossary of Terms

casting, with the wax being melted out and replaced by metal. The internal core may have to be held in place by *chapelets*, or core pins. This process makes possible multiple casts from same model.

**inherent vice:** A preexisting condition of chemical or physical instability in an art object that may result in further decay. *Inherent instability* is a similar term. What is inherent comes from within the structure or materials used to fabricate the work of art.

**imitation:** An artwork that has an intent to mystify. In contrast to the copy, the replica, or the pastiche, the imitation belongs to the family of simulacra because it means to undermine the viewer's capacity to discriminate between the imitation and the real.

**imprimatura:** In painting, either a colored ground, usually of an earth color such as sienna, umber, or ocher, or an initial layer of color on the ground itself. It provides a transparent, toned ground that allows light falling onto the painting to reflect through the paint layers. The *imprimatura* provides an overall tonal optical unity in a painting and is also useful in the initial stages of the work, since it helps the painter establish value relations from dark to light. It is most useful in the classical approach of indirect painting, where the drawing and underpainting are established ahead of time and allowed to dry.

**intonaco:** The final layer of fine gesso or lime applied to the surface of a wall painting or fresco before the final paint layer is applied. In the case of fresco, the final pigment or pigment underlayer might already be within this layer.

**justification du tirage:** An official document that accompanies graphic works of art and gives specific information, such as the year of printing or the size of the edition. If it is missing, authenticity is very doubtful.

**lithography:** Originally, drawing or etching an image into a coating of wax or an oily substance applied to a plate of lithographic stone, used to transfer ink to a blank sheet of paper to produce a printed image

**neutro:** Toning of losses with watercolors, mainly using sepia, ocher, and natural or burnt umbers

**original:** A work made, ordered, certified, or otherwise sanctioned by the artist (Tate Papers 2012)

**original condition:** A supposed earlier state of an artifact, usually representing the period after it was made. The term can also mean the condition in which something was found, such as fresh from burial, or its condition after a ritual killing, which makes it a potentially difficult term to use in all contexts.

**pastiche:** a work of art made in the manner of another artist that may incorporate more or less intact borrowings from different originals

**patina:** The accretions of time on an object, which may in fact represent corrosion or deterioration but are seen as desirable facets of events that have occurred in an object's life. Patina on bronze is kept while patina on lead objects is often removed. Controversies about paintings and their patinas continue.

**pentimento:** Original alteration made by an artist and then covered over or altered. It is often revealed by infrared or X-ray examination or during the cleaning of old inpainting or altered layers of paint.

**pouncing:** The method of forming visible traces of an outline of a work of art, usually involving a muslin bag filled with fine soot which is then pounced along a series of holes in the paper, leaving marks on the plaster or paper or linen which is then used as a guide for the whole outline.

- pozzolana:** A lime mortar incorporating volcanic fragments, ash, or other materials that result in a very strong or impervious mortar or plaster
- preventive conservation:** Acts of care that attempt to preserve whole collections or objects by control of the environment or conditions without the use of heavily interventive actions on objects themselves. Preventive conservation now predominates the profession in many respects as the desire to preserve buildings and whole collections is recognized as increasingly important.
- predella:** A long horizontal structure supporting the main panels of an altarpiece. It is sometimes damaged or missing after many years.
- preservation:** Essentially the same as conservation, but possibly with the connotation that the artifact or work of art is going to be kept in its present state for perpetuity, such as constitutions kept in sealed glass cases under nitrogen or another inert gas. Historic preservation is used in building conservation. It is most of the time really restoration rather than preservation.
- quattrocento:** The fifteenth century in Italian art and literature
- realization:** An idea or proposal made concrete (Tate Papers 2012)
- reassembled work:** Work originally made by an artist and then put back together using the original components
- reconstruction:** Work originally made by the artist and then reassembled using original and newly made components (Tate Papers 2012). The term may imply that an object or building has been made new by rebuilding with no regard for the preservation of authenticity.
- reintegration:** Producing a new vision of an artwork by repainting missing parts or filling in missing areas to match the original to a greater or lesser extent
- relining:** Adhering a new canvas to the back of the original with glue, wax, mastic, or another product. Wax resin relining followed by applying hot irons to the back of the canvas often results in damage to the impasto or paint structure. In the worst examples, paint might flake off and the whole work becomes damaged.
- remake:** Work originally made by an artist and then remade using new materials
- replica:** An artwork made by someone other than the original artist, although possibly under license as a public substitute for the original (Tate Papers 2012). In general terms, some objects or artworks may be preserved only via close or direct replicas of the original, with the original being damaged, lost, or no longer in existence.
- replicas in casting:** Bronze casts from the same wax or clay model. A replica has to be distinguished from the variant and the aftercast. A variant is a bronze that is similar to another but is cast from an independently fashioned model. Variant may range from a second form by the original sculptor to a fake. In either case, new models have to be made. With an aftercast there is no new model. An already extant bronze is used as a model for a necessarily indirect cast. Note that an aftercast is always an indirect cast, while two directly cast bronzes can be only variants.
- repoussé:** Metal sheet work in which the design is impressed from the front and subsequently depressed relative to the unworked surfaces. The technique is often facilitated by scribing from the back and then resting the work on a bed of hard wax or pitch and hammering out the form from the front.



## Glossary of Terms

- reproduction:** work made by someone other than the artist, resembling the appearance of the original superficially, but not necessarily its materials or techniques (Tate Papers 2012). def.]; an exact copy of an original, often made using a digital or photographic process. A copy and a reproduction might involve similar intents.
- restoration:** Adding material to an original work to complete it or to improve its completeness. In a worst case scenario, restoration may involve the addition of parts or paint with no evidence that they were used on the original work. In the best case scenario, restoration or restored parts are visually differentiated from the original using not the eye but special equipment, particularly with fine paintings where the reintegrated parts mesh perfectly with the original painting or parts.
- retouching:** The painting in of missing or damaged areas with new paint, usually in a different media than the original work
- reworking:** Action taken, possibly at a later date, on an existing artwork by an artist or by sanctioned workers, to correct a defect (Tate Papers 2012)
- rifiorire:** A general Italian term for an over-painted work
- rigatino or tratteggio:** Color matching done in watercolors with short, vertical strokes. The losses are visible only from close-up.
- Ruskinque:** Describing the cult of the ruin as a preserved image of the past, usually in terms of ruined structures in a rural setting, preserved as such
- secco:** Pigment applied to fresco but in a different media. It is not fixed into the plaster by the fresco technique but is essentially painted on and therefore liable to loss.
- seicento:** The seventeenth century in Italian art and literature.
- selezione cromatica:** Color matching done in varnish colors with short strokes. These strokes follow the dynamic movement of the original.
- sfumato:** A painting technique, introduced by Leonardo da Vinci, in which the brush is held fan shaped and a series of fine lines of varying density are painted to give the illusion of depth. Michelangelo used the technique in the Sistine Chapel paintings.
- sgraffito:** Paint over gold leaf, or slip over clay, that is then scraped away to make a design. The words means “scratched” in Italian.
- shell gold:** Powdered gold or brass alloy used as a paint, so named because it was originally held in a shell. Imitation shell gold can be made from a copper–zinc alloy with about 30 percent zinc content in the form of fine powder or leaf fragments.
- silver point:** Fine lines made with a silver stylus, often in advance of more detailed drawing
- simulation:** An attempt at close representation in order to study a specific problem or aspect of the artist’s practice (Tate Papers 2012)
- soft ground etching:** An etching prepared from a plate covered with a thin, soft, tacky material. Soft ground etching has been used since the late eighteenth century to produce drawings with very fine textures. A printing plate is spread with the soft ground (often containing resin, wax, and/or grease) and then covered with drawing paper. As the artist draws the image, the pressure causes the tacky ground to adhere to the paper and thus expose the metal plate. Once the paper is removed, the plate is etched with a weak acid.
- substitute:** A work that can take the place of another but is not necessarily made from the same materials. This may also be said of a surrogate, which represents the absent work.

- strappo:** The detachment of a fresco (qv) from its original support. It may be viewed as necessary but is usually now considered undesirable, as it seriously interferes with the authenticity of the original. It also may drastically alter the appearance of the original if difficulties occur in the transfer.
- sustainable conservation:** Conservation efforts that can be continued into the future without a heavy expenditure of manpower and materials
- tecnica a velatura:** A painting technique that employs covering pure colors with tinted varnishes or glazes to produce the desired chromaticity. It was commonly used with fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italian works on panel.
- tempera:** Egg yolk used as a medium for painting. The yolk can be mixed directly with pigment or diluted with water or other substances.
- terminus ante quem:** the date before which something could not be used. The terminus post quem is the date after which the technique was known to have been introduced.
- thermoluminescent dating:** A method of dating that relies on the gradual accumulation of trapped electrons in ceramics and other materials that have been heated to reset their thermoluminescence to zero during firing. Some electrons are trapped in the lattice of the ceramics. On heating, these give off light energy, which can be measured. The amount of light is equivalent to certain periods of time, so that the date of an object can be calculated within certain error margins. The technique cannot be easily carried out on artifacts that are X-rayed or heated, or on samples exposed to ambient light.
- transfer:** A conservation technique—now rarely performed—in which a work on panel is transferred to canvas. The painting is adhered to a facing layer and then stripped away from the wood. Laid onto new canvas, the paint layer is firmly adhered in place. Warm water is used to remove the facing from the front. Small missing areas can then be retouched. Some paintings have been badly damaged in the process of being transferred from panel to canvas. Others have been saved from total loss when the wood was in danger of collapse. Once a universal fashion, transfer is now widely deprecated.
- tratteggio:** A technique of inpainting missing areas with a series of fine lines, which match the color of the painted area but are visually easily distinguished from it. The technique is advocated in Italian restoration practice to avoid visually deceptive inpainting. It is rarely used in the United States or Great Britain.
- trecento:** The fourteenth century in Italy
- triptych:** an altarpiece of three panels, probably derived from ancient Egyptian three-panel paintings and adopted especially for religious works in the Renaissance
- true nature:** A term initially applied to original material, whose “true nature” needed to be protected. But it is difficult to determine the “true nature” of some works of art currently and in the past.
- underdrawing:** The first drawing on a gessoed panel, usually in charcoal or black ink. Underdrawing can often be imaged with infrared reflectography.
- value:** A many-sided attribute of an art object that can be analyzed or stated in a number of different ways, from value as a historical document to value as function, form, effect, or perceived attributes to value invested in an object for nontangible or cultural reasons
- verdaccio:** Black, white, and yellow pigments combined to make a dull greenish brown, often used to model shadows in flesh tones

## Glossary of Terms

**water gilding:** Use of glue, gum, or egg to hold gold layers to a bole or gesso support

**woodblock printing:** Preparing a woodblock as a relief matrix, with the areas to show in “white” cut away with a knife, chisel, or sandpaper, leaving the areas to show in “black” at the original surface level. The block is cut along the grain of the wood. It

is necessary only to ink the block and bring it into firm and even contact with the paper to achieve an acceptable print. The content prints in a mirror image, a complication when text is involved. The art of carving the woodblock is technically known as xylography, though the term is rarely used in English.

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## Index

- Abramović, Marina, 401–402  
 Absolute anti-intentionalism, 81  
 Accidental intertextuality, 29–30  
 Achievable equilibrium, 22  
 Action type hypothesis (ATH), 127  
 Adorno, Theodor, 49, 50, 69  
 Aesthetic agency, 75  
 Aesthetic authenticity, 67, **68**, 200  
 Aesthetic criterion, 148  
 Aesthetic effect, reversibility of, 6  
 Aesthetic expression, 75  
 Aesthetic integrity, 8  
 Aesthetic reconstruction, 195  
 Aesthetic restoration, 334, 336–338  
 African art, 21, 59, 60, 67, 134, 168, **217**, 224, 241–242, 256–257, **257**, 416. *See also* Ethnography  
*After Walker Evans* (Levine), 85  
 Agency, 61–70  
*Age of Bronze* (Rodin), 151, 362  
 Age-value, 13, 78  
 Aging. *See also* Inherent vice  
     artificial, forgeries and, 90–91  
     authenticity and, 89  
     cleaning and, 23  
     desirable aspects of, 90  
     restoration and, 327–328  
 Agnano Polyptych, 350  
 Agoracritus of Paros, 297  
 Aitken, Henry, 74  
 Albacini, Carlo, 318  
 Alcamenes, 297  
 Aldrovandi, Ulisse, 316–317  
 Alexander the Great, 167, 202, 203, 401  
 Allington, Edward, 188–189  
     *Roman from Greek in America 1987*, 188  
 Allographic arts, 123  
*Along the Riverbank* (Dong), 263–264  
 Alpern, Merry, 410  
 Altamira cave paintings, 221  
 Altarpieces, 289–290  
 Altered paintings, 344  
 Amarna torso, 176, **177**  
 Amenemhet III, 165, **166**  
 Anasazi, 218–220, **219**  
 Anastylis, 5–6, 98, 125  
 Andre, Carl, 390, 391  
     *Twenty-Ninth Copper Cardinal*, **389**, 391  
*Angel of the Annunciation* (Dossena), 286, **288**  
*Annunciation, The* (Martini), 286, **289**

## Index

- Antinous, 169
- Antirealist absolute intentionalism, 81
- Antisthenes, 400
- Aphaea pedimental sculptures, 196–198
- Aphrodite of the Gardens*, 297
- Apollo Belvedere, 188
- Apollo Branchidae, 189
- Apollo Ismenios, 189
- Apostle Matthew* (Michelangelo), 311
- Apostolic Palace of the Vatican, 23
- Apoxyomenos* (Lysippos), **187**, 187–188
- Appadurai, Arjun, 84, 197, 351
- Appeal for reference and characterization, 75
- Appropriated images, exhibition of, 409–410
- Appropriation, 85–87, 138, 141, 152, **159**, 165–172, **172**, 205–206, 220–221, 240, 299, 352, 381–384, 403–404
- Archaeological past, authenticities of, 206–207
- Aristides of Thebes, 20
- Aristogeiton, 167, 184
- Aristotle, 48, 126, 191
- Arius Didymus, 190
- Arnold, Matthew  
*Dover Beach*, 361
- Arp, Jean, 396
- Arseneau, Gary, **365**
- Art, craft *vs.*, 147–149
- Art and Its Objects* (Wollheim), 121
- Art: Fake or Fortune?* (television program), 4
- Artistic connoisseurship, scientific *vs.*, 3–4. *See also* Connoisseurship
- Artistic creation, 18
- Artist's intention, conservation and, 7
- Artist's Shit* (Manzoni), 150–151
- Artist's speaking, 75
- Artist's telling, 75
- Artist's voice, 392–395
- Arts and Crafts movement, 108
- Art-value, 13
- Aslanian, Oxan, 175, **176**
- Asmus, John, 302
- Assistants, in creation of paintings, 341
- As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* (Massey), 408
- Astrazione cromatica*, 26
- Athenian Agora, 184
- Athens Charter for Restoration of Historical Documents, 96, 102, 125
- Audience, intention and, 80–81
- Austen, Jane  
*Northanger Abbey*, 133–134
- Australian Aboriginal art, 251–252, 269–271, **271**
- Authentication, 57–61, 250
- Authentic cleaning, 20–24, **22–24**
- Authenticity
- aesthetic, 67, **68**, 200
  - agency and, 61–70
  - aging and, 89
  - aims and, 38–39
  - in anthropological context, 65
  - appreciation of, 91–93
  - archaeology and, 206–207
  - in art-culture system, 40–41, **41**
  - authentication and, 57–61, 250
  - certificates of, 60, 375, 391–392
  - Chinese art and, 257–261
  - conceptual, 66, **68**
  - conceptualization of, 384–387, **385**, **386**
  - contemporary, 32–34
  - as contested, 65, **66**
  - context and, 38
  - contextual, 232–235
  - contingent nature of, 73–82, **76**, **79**
  - criticisms of, 37–39
  - cult of, 35–36
  - cultural considerations with, 99, 137–138
  - as culturally-dependent, 416
  - defined, 61
  - delusions of, 101–103
  - denial of, 387–390
  - “destruction art” and, 70
  - digital reality and, 411–413
  - early debates on, 103–109, **107**
  - Egyptian art and, 165–168, **166**, **167**

## Index

- emergence of concept, 187  
 emulation and, 420  
 ephemeral art and, 70  
 ethnography and, 73, 224–229, 232–238, 241  
 as ever-expanding field, 374–378  
 exact reintegration and, 8–9  
 examples of use of word, 36  
 exhibition of, 70–73, **72**, **73**  
 expressive, 62  
 faithfulness and, 37–39  
 fakes and, 83–84, 89  
 fields of, 150–151  
 as fragmented, 65, **66**  
 Greek, 183–191  
 identity maintenance and, 42, **43**  
 indistinguishability and, 151–160, **152**, **153**,  
     **155**, **157**, **159**  
 inherent vice and, 33–34, 67  
 intangible, 157  
 intention and, 73–82, **76**, **79**, 157, 180–183,  
     **182**, 384  
 interpretation and, 65, 99  
 in literature, 37  
 material, 66–67, **68**, **73**, 77, 200, 336  
 medieval, 274–275  
 neurological reactions and, 91  
 nominal, 62  
 normativity and, 68–69  
 olfactory, 280  
 original artist and, 39  
 original form and substance in, 37  
 originality and, 138  
 overpainting and, 31–32  
 patina and, 31–32  
 as performative, 65–66, **66**, 416  
 in philosophy, 37, 46–48  
 in postmodernism, 64–65  
 provenance and, 62, 249, 278, 388, 390  
 reconstruction and, 96–100, **98**, **100**  
 reenactment, 410–411  
 referential, 67, 69–70  
 rehabilitation and, 136–137  
 in Renaissance, 296–299  
 restoration and, 3, 8–9, 64, 189, 331–332,  
     417–418  
 in RIP triangle, 41–42, **42**, 108  
 Roman, 183–191, **185**, **187**  
 in Sartre, 48  
 in self-destructive art, 399–400  
 singularity and, 138  
 singularization and, 250  
 in software-based art, 398–399  
 spolia and, 168–169  
 stylistic mimicry and, 88–89  
 subject, 69  
 as subjective concept, 58  
 subversion of, 88–89  
 surreal, 243–246, **244**, **245**  
 survival and, 40–43, **41–44**  
 as term, 415–416  
*translatio* and, 275–277, 278–279  
 valorization and, 2  
 value and, 12–13, 15  
 withdrawal of, 390–392  
*Authenticity Is Not Art* (Chettiar), 61  
 Auto-destructive art, 33, 374, 376, 399–400, **400**  
 Autographic arts, 123  
 Avrami, Erica, 14  
  
 Baas, Maarten  
     *Smoke* series, 387  
     *Where There's Smoke*, 387  
*Bacchanalia* (Titian), 357  
*Bacchanal of the Andrians* (Titian), 357  
 Bacchus (Dresden-Getty), 202–204, **203**  
*Bacchus and Ariadne* (Titian), 338–340, **339**, 357  
 Background reintegration, 8  
 Bacon, Francis, 410  
 Baiae, 184  
 Bailly, David  
     *Vanitas Still Life with a Portrait of a Young  
     Painter*, 28, 78–80, **79**  
     *Vanitas with Self-Portrait*, 78  
 Baj, Enrico, 150

## Index

- Bakkila, Jacob, 413
- Bal, Mieke, 356, 379, 422
- Balanced meaning-loss, 5
- Baldicinni, Filippo, 306
- Bandinelli, Bartolomeo, 311, 314
- Banks, Joseph, 236
- Barassi, Sebastiano, 13, 27
- Barberini Venus, 358
- Barcilon, Pinin Brambilla, 330, 331
- Barezzi, Stefano, 330
- Baroque  
     Catholic Church and, 355–356  
     instantiations, 356–359  
     restorations, 356–357
- Barthes, Roland, 30
- Bartres, Leopoldo, 215
- Barye, Alfred, 363
- Basilica di Santa Croce, **23**, **24**, 26
- Bastianini, Giovanni, 347, 367, 368–370  
     *Bust of Giovanna Albizzi*, **369**  
     *Bust of Giovanna Tornabuoni*, 368  
     *Head of Julius Caesar*, 423  
     *Lucrezia Donati*, 142, **143**
- Batoni, Pompeo, 310
- Battle of the Sea-Gods* (Mantegna), 92–93
- Baudrillard, Jean, 84–85
- Beck, James, 9, 122, 321, 322, 331
- Bellini, Gentile, 29
- Bellini, Giovanni, 338  
     *Feast of the Gods*, 339
- Bellori, Gian Pietro, 357
- Bellotti, Michelangelo, 330
- Beltracchi, Wolfgang, 377, 378
- Beltrami, Luca, 105
- Belvedere Torso, 308
- Bender, Thomas, 413
- Benivieni, Girolamo, 367, 370
- Benjamin, Walter, 51–52, 55
- Berenson, Bernard, 348–349
- Bergantiños, Jose Carlos, 377
- Bernini, Giovanni Lorenzo, 308–309, 357
- Betjeman, Sir John, 117, 118
- Bicycle Wheel* (Duchamp), 152, 379, 381, 382, 383
- Bidlo, Mike  
     *Not Duchamp (Bicycle Wheel 1913)*, 383
- Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, 39
- Biro, Paul, 87
- Blaker, Hugh, 300–302
- Bodyspacemotionthings* (Morris), 411
- Boethus Herm of Dionysus, 306
- Boito, Camillo, 105–106
- Bologna, Giovanni di, 366
- Bondone, Giotto di, 26
- Borchardt, Ludwig, 171–172, 174–175
- Bords de la Seine à Argenteuil (attrib. Monet), 4
- Boreux, Charles, 173–174
- Bosch, Hieronymus, 305
- Boschini, Marco, 307
- Bosse, Abraham, 305–306
- Bossi, Giuseppe, 333
- Bottle Rack* (Duchamp), 379
- Bourdon, David, 405–406
- Bouts, Dieric, 340
- Brancacci Chapel, 21–22, 320, **320**, **321**
- Brancusi, Constantin, 396, 410
- Brandi, Cesare, 10, 25, 26, 136
- Brecht, George  
     *Relocation*, 392
- Breughel the Elder, Jan, 341  
     *Virgin and Child in Flower Garland with Angels*, **343**
- Brillo Boxes* (Warhol), 375, 389
- Brisley, Stuart, 380
- Bronze Age, 162–163
- Broodthaers, Marcel  
     *Department of Eagles*, 404
- Bruce, Fiona, 4
- Budge, Sir E. A. Wallis, 82
- Buildings in Need* (Mills), 117–118
- Bulul*, 134
- Bulul* guardian figurine, **245**
- Buoninsegna, Duccio di, 350

## Index

- Burden, Chris  
*Metropolis II*, 8  
*Shoot*, 401
- Burra Charter, 254
- Burrup, Eddie, 269–271, **271**
- Bust of Giovanna Albizzi* (Bastianini), **369**
- Bust of Giovanna Tornabuoni* (Bastianini), 368
- Byres, James, 360
- Cabinets of curiosities, 356
- Caesar, Julius, 164
- Cahill, James, 263, 264
- Calvaert, Denis, 298
- Calvel, Patrice, 110
- Canova, Antonio, 359
- Capasso, Luigi, 87
- Capitoline Museum, 205
- Caple, Christopher, 4, 5, 6, 8
- Carpeaux, Jean-Baptiste, 363
- Carroll, Noël, 130
- Cartier-Bresson, Henri, 409–410
- Castelfranco, Giorgio da, 305
- Castelli, Leo, 159–160
- Categories, 16–17, 340–347, **341–343, 345, 346**
- Catholic Church, 355–356
- Causes, in Aristotle, 191
- Cavaceppi, Bartolomeo, 34, 309, 358–359
- Cavalcaselle, Giovanni, 142, 334
- Cellini, Benvenuto, 367
- Centre Pompidou, 61
- Ceres of Cambridge, 359
- Certificates of authenticity, 60, 375, 391–392
- Chagall, Marc, 60–61
- Chairman Mao* (Warhol), 390
- Changed paintings, 344
- Characterization, appeal for, 75
- Charles III, 356–357
- Charters, on conservation, 2–3, 96–97, 99–100, 102–103, 125
- Chartres Cathedral, 2, 96, 109–117, **114, 115**
- Chemical deceit, 325
- Chettiar, Rm.Shanmugam, 61
- Chinese art, 257–269, **262, 267**, 421
- Chinese bronzes, 264–268, **267**
- Chirico, Giorgio de, 344
- Chi wara*, 168
- Christo, 374, 405–406  
*Running Fence*, 405
- Christo, Jeanne-Claude, 405–406
- Chromatic selection, 26
- Chrysoloras, Manuel, 274
- Cicero, 164
- Cimabue, **23, 24, 26**
- Cione, Nardo di  
*Saint John the Baptist with Saint John the Evangelist and Saint James*, 344–347
- Clark, Larry, 410
- Clark, Sir Kenneth, 366, 367
- Claudel, Camille, 363
- Claudius Marcellus, 163
- Clavir, Miriam, 223
- Cleaning  
 achievable equilibrium and, 22  
 aging and, 23  
 authentic, 20–24, **22–24**  
 complete, 334–335  
 cultural considerations with, 21  
 ethnography and, 23, 240, **240**, 240–241  
 forgery and, 23–24  
 original unity and, 22  
 overcleaning, 31–32  
 partial, 9, 24, 334–335  
 restoration and, 9  
 selective, 9, 24, 334–335  
 of Sistine Chapel, 2, 9, 319–320  
 total, 9, 24, 335
- Cleopatra's Needle, **170**
- Clercq, Alfred, 173
- Cognitive principle, in restoration, **127**
- Cohen, Leonard, 80–81
- Cole, Herbert M., 256
- Coleman, James  
*INITIALS*, 408
- Collaboration, paintings from, 341–342

## Index

- Compensation for loss, in restoration, 11, 32, 125, 193, 337  
 Complete cleaning, 334–335  
 Conceptual art, 81, 188–189, 375, 380–387. *See also*  
     Modern art  
 Conceptual authenticity, 66, **68**  
 Conditionalist intentionalism, 81–82  
 Condivi, Ascanio, 298  
 Connoisseurship. *See also* Scientific connoisseurship  
     in ancient world, 163–164  
     art *vs.* science in, 3–4  
 Conservation  
     aims of, 8  
     anastylosis concept in, 5–6, 98, 125  
     artist's intention and, 7  
     charters on, 2–3, 96–97, 99–100, 102–103, 125  
     concepts in, 4–12  
     defined, 6  
     dynamics, 43, **43**  
     ethnography and, 226–227  
     inherent vice concept in, 7–8  
     installation art and, 406  
     intention and, 397–398  
     minimal intervention concepts in, 4–15  
     minimalist, 195  
     restoration as, 334, 337  
     restoration *vs.*, 8  
     retreatability concept in, 6–7, 125  
     reversability concept in, 6–7, 125  
     as subject of study, 360–361  
     true nature concept in, 6  
     visual discernibility in, 7  
*Construction in Space: Two Cones* (Gabo), **54, 55**. *See also* Gabo, Naum  
*Construction of Value in the Ancient World, The*  
     (Papadopoulos & Urton, eds.), 15  
*Contemporary Theory of Conservation* (Muñoz-Viñas),  
     1  
 Content appropriation, 167  
 Contested materiality, 395–399  
 Context, authenticity and, 38  
 Contextual authenticity, 232–235  
 Conti, Alessandro, 288, 289, 294, 334, 336  
 Contingent properties, 63–64  
 Cooke, John  
     *Discussion on the Piltdown Skull*, **214**  
 Copies. *See also* Replica  
     faithful, 343–344  
     virtue of, 364–367  
 Copy criticism, 188  
 Cornacchini, Agostino, 310  
 Cornet, Joseph, 247  
 Corot, Jean-Baptiste Camille, 344  
 “Correction,” 132  
 Cotsen, Lloyd, 148  
 Cotte, Pascal, 300, 302  
 Council of Trent, 329, 357  
 Counter-Reformation, 357  
 Courtauld Institute of Art, 144–145  
*Covered Bridge, A* (Rilko), 92  
 Coypel, Charles-Antoine, **341**  
 Craft, art *vs.*, 147–149  
 Craquelure, 90  
 Creation, artistic, 18  
 Creative restorations, 308–309  
 Creativity, intention and, 75  
 Creed, Martin  
     *Work No. 227*, 384–385  
 Crozier, William, 327  
*Crucifix* (Cimabue), **23, 24, 26**  
 Cult of authenticity, 35–36  
 Cultural context, restoration and, 8  
 Cultural significance, value and, 14  
 Currie, Gregory, 127, 129, 155–156  
 Curtis, Edward, 241  
 Cynics, 401  
 Daddi, Bernardo  
     *Virgin Mary with Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Paul*, 344, **345, 346**  
 da Fiesole, Mino da, 142, **143**  
 Dalí, Salvador, 389  
 Danto, Arthur, 18, 40, 152, 156–157, 158, 252–253, 373, 375, 380, 382–383, 389

## Index

- Davies, Martin, 353
- Davies, W. V., 82
- da Vinci, Leonardo  
*Lady with an Ermine*, 419–420  
*Last Supper*, 329–334, **332**  
*Mona Lisa*, 135, 136, 299–304, **301**, **303**, 379
- Davis, Douglas, 412–413
- Dawson, Charles, 215
- de Andrea, John  
*Dying Gaul 1984*, 205
- Declaration of San Antonio, 101–102
- De Clercq, Rafael, 130–131, 132, 133
- Deconstruction, 30, 195
- Dedolomitization, 208–209
- Degas, Edgar, 47  
*La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze*, **139**, 139–141
- de Kooning, William, 159, 384
- Delegated performance art, 402, 403
- Della Porta, Guglielmo, 317, 318
- Deneux, Henri, 117  
*Dense Forests and Layered Peaks* (Zhang), 262–263  
*Department of Eagles* (Broodthaers), 404
- Derrida, Jacques, 30
- Design appropriation, 167–168
- “Destruction art,” 70
- de Tilly, Noël, 408, 409
- Diachrony, 87, 393
- Diaries, of anthropologists, 227–228
- Dickie, George, 18, 380
- di Giorgio, Francesco, 154
- Digital reality, 411–413  
*Ding*, 132–133
- Dingli, Paolo, 175
- Diogenes, 400, 401
- Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 183
- Dionysus (Museo Nazionale Romano Palazzo), 205  
*Discussion on the Piltdown Skull* (Cooke), **214**
- Distel, Herbert  
*City Reliquary*, 404  
*Museum of Drawers*, 404  
*Salon De Fleurus*, 404
- Dixon, Maynard, 378
- Documentation, 39
- Doehne, Eric, 209
- Domenichino, 357
- Domestication, 250
- Dong Qichang, 263
- Dong Yuan, 263, 264
- Dossena, Alceo, 286–288, **287**, **288**, **290**, 347
- Dossi, Dosso, 338  
*Dover Beach* (Arnold), 361  
*Drinking and Singing at the Foot of a Precipitous Mountain* (Tong), **262**
- Dualism, normative, 149
- Duchamp, Marcel, 159, 344, 379, 383–384  
*Bicycle Wheel*, 152, 379, 381, 382, 383  
*Bottle Rack*, 379  
*Fountain*, **152**, 379, 380, 383, 384  
*L.H.O.O.Q.*, 379  
*L.H.O.O.Q., rasée*, 379
- Duquesnoy, François, 357
- Durack, Elizabeth, 269–271, **271**
- Dürer, Albrecht, 92–93, 299  
“Dust paintings,” 403
- Dutton, Denis, 61, 62, 134, 147, 150, 161, 249, 422
- Duveen, Joseph, 348  
*Dying Gaul*, 205  
*Dying Gaul, 1984* (de Andrea), 205
- Dykstra, Steven W., 75–76
- “East Croker” (Eliot), 118–119
- Eastlake, Sir Charles, 21
- Eco, Umberto, 69
- Efficient cause, 191
- Eggert, Paul, 319, 324, 325
- Eggleston, William, 412
- Egypt, 71–72, 82, **83**, 84, 162, 165–178, **166**, **167**, **170**, **172**, **176**, **177**
- Ehecatl, 216, **217**
- Eighteenth Century, 359–360
- Ejigboye, Yesufu, 248  
*Elevatio*, 275, 276, 278

## Index

- Elgin Marbles, 359, 360
- Eliot, T. S., 118–119
- Ellis, George, 256
- Elmham, Thomas, 274–275
- Emulation(s)
- authenticity and, 420
  - copies and, 158
  - defined, 186
  - Egyptian art and, 165, 170, 171
  - of forgeries, 421
  - forgeries *vs.*, 184–185
  - Levine and, 85, **86**
  - originality and, 56–57
  - in Renaissance, 188, 304–307
  - Renaissance and, 304–307
  - study copies and, 343
- Ennigaldi-Nanna, 70–71, 72
- Ensor, James
- Entry of Christ Into Brussels*, 8
  - Entry of Christ Into Brussels, The* (Ensor), 8
- Ephemeral art, 70
- Epiphanius, 274
- Equilibrium, achievable, 22
- Erased de Kooning Drawing* (Rauschenberg), 384, **385**
- Ernst, Max, 36, 378
- Essential properties, 63–64
- Este, Alfonso d', 338
- Ethics
- with relics, 283
  - relics and, 283
  - of restoration, 11–12, 14, 97, 336–337, 338
  - reversibility and, 49, 125
  - self-destructive art and, 399
- Ethnography. *See also* African art
- authentic, 238
  - authenticity and, 73, 224–229, 232–238, 241
  - cleaning and, 23, 240, **240**, 240–241
  - conservation and, 226–227
  - contextual authenticity and, 232–235
  - critics of, 229–231
  - defined, 223
  - disputed authenticity and, 235–238
  - fakes and, 239
  - historical contexts and, 239–243
  - intention and, 74, 240
  - museum displays and, 242–243
  - philosophical, 238–239, 249–255
  - repatriation and, 230, 232–233, 236
  - scientific rationalism *vs.*, 233–234
  - surreal authenticity and, 243–246, **244**, **245**
  - as term, 238
- Etruscan terra-cotta warriors, 12–13
- Ettinger, Bracha, 87
- Evans, Sir Arthur, 178, **179**
- Evans, Walker, 18, 85, **86**, 409, 410
- Exact reintegration, 8–9
- Exhibitions
- of appropriated images, 409–410
  - narratives of, 404–405
- Expressive authenticity, 62
- Eye Body* (Schneemann), 401
- Faenza, Antonio da, 289
- Failing, Patricia, 140
- Fakes. *See also* Forgery(ies)
- accepted, 2
  - aesthetic value of, 2
  - in ancient world, 163
  - authenticity and, 83–84, 89
  - Egyptian, 169–178, **170**, **172**, **176**, **177**
  - ethnography and, 239
  - forgeries *vs.*, 87
  - intentionality and, 82–91, **83**, **86**, **90**
  - literary, 134
  - medieval art and, 286–288, **287**, **288**
  - as percentage of art sold, 421
  - production criteria for, **90**
  - restorations as, 2
- Fakhry, Ahmed, 174
- False signature, 344
- Faraday, Michael, 362
- Farnese, Alessandro, 316
- Farnese Herakles, 316–318, **317**



## Index

- Fasoli, Alberto, 286, 287  
*Feast of the Gods* (Bellini), 339  
 Feldman, Ronald, 321  
 Fenger, Ludvig, **46**  
 Fictionalist intentionalism, 81  
 Filliou, Robert  
     *For Duchamp*, 383  
 Final cause, 191  
 Florence Torso, 185  
 Fluxus, 383, 392  
*For Duchamp* (Filliou), 383  
 Foresi, Alessandro, 142  
 Forgery(ies). *See also* Fakes  
     African art and, 256–257, **257**  
     aging and, 90–91  
     Chinese art and, 257–259  
     cleaning and, 23–24  
     in contemporary art market, 378  
     context and, 89  
     defined, 154  
     emulations *vs.*, 184–185  
     fakes *vs.*, 87  
     of Greenhalgh family, 176–178, **177**  
     of Hebborn, 34  
     as inevitable, 420  
     intention and, 352–353, 369–370  
     inventive, 141  
     *La Tiare de Saitapharnès*, 180–183, **182**  
     in medieval period, 275  
     in modern art, 377  
     with modern materials only, 347  
     performance and, 416–417  
     *pia fraus* and, 165, 275, 276, **277**, 281, **281**  
     problems of, 139–142  
     provenance and, 181  
     referential, 141  
     religious fraud and, 165, 275, 276, **277**, 281, **281**  
     restoration and, 25, 34  
     snobbery and, 122  
     as term, 415–416  
     value and, 16, 421  
 Forli, Melozzo da, 353  
 Form, 46–48  
 Formal cause, 191  
 Foucault, Michel, 78, 381–382, 387  
*Fountain* (Duchamp), **152**, 379, 380, 383, 384  
*Four Quarters* (Eliot), 118–119  
 Fragmentary sculpture, 195–196, 356  
*Fragment from Homage to New York*, 400  
 Framing, 27–28  
 France, 60–61  
*Francesco Sassetti and His Son Teodoro* (Ghirlandaio),  
     353  
 Francis I of France, 307, 314  
 Fratin, Christophe, 363  
 Fredis, Felice de, 310  
 Freeman, Edward, 104  
 Frémiet, Emmanuel, 363  
 French Revolution, 20, 224, 358  
 Freppa, Giovanni, 367  
 Frick, Helen Clay, 286  
 Frontal polar cortex (FPC), 91  
 Fujimura, Shinichi, 213–214  
 Functional aesthetic quality, 148  
 Functional reintegration, 8  
*Furta sacra*, 225, 230, 273, 275–278, **277**, 284  
 Furtwängler, Adolf, 181–182  
 Future Femme  
     *Show Me More*, 409  
 Gabo, Naum, 7, 33, 53–54, **54**, **55**, 67, 126  
 Gadamer, Hans-George, 352  
 Gaius Petronius, 164  
 “gallery varnish,” 21  
 Gallorani, Cecilia, 419  
*Galvanized Wall* (Judd), 390–391  
 Gao Lian, 265–266  
 Geary, Patrick J., 273, 275, 278  
 Gessate, Antonio da, 333–334  
 Getty Herakles, 198–200, **199**  
 Getty Kouros, 142, 162, **207**, 207–213  
 Getty Museum. *See* J. Paul Getty Museum  
 Ghirlandaio, Domenico  
     *Portrait of a Young Lady*, 350, 351, **351**

## Index

- Giambologna  
     *God Mars*, 126–127  
 Giordano, Luca, 298, 357  
 Giorgione, 18  
 Giotto, 337  
 Giovanni, Benvenuto di  
     *Madonna and Child with Saints Michael, Caterina  
     d'Alessandria, and an Angel*, 350  
 Giovanni, Matteo di, 353  
 Giunti, Umberto, 154, 353–354  
 Glanville, Helen, 334, 336, 338  
 Glykon, 318  
 Glyptothek, 196  
*God Mars* (Giambologna), 126–127  
 “God Save the Queen” (Sex Pistols), 80–81  
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 318  
 Goldin, Nan, 410  
 Goldsworthy, Andy, 50  
 Goller, Christian, 89  
 Gombrich, Ernst, 154, 324, 377  
*Good Feelings in Good Times* (Ondák), 403  
 Goodman, Nelson, 123, 154, 155, 206  
 Gordon, Douglas  
     *Play Dead: Real Time*, 408–409  
 Göring, Hermann, 142, 146  
 Grand Midland Hotel, 117–120, **119**  
 Great Pyramid, 169  
 Great Sphinx, 71–72  
 Greek artwork, **29**, 31, 45–46, 56, 158, 162–164,  
     180, 183–191, **187**, 195–196, **200**, **207**,  
     207–213, **210**, 288, 306, **309**  
 Greenberg, Clement, 395–396  
 Greenhalgh productions, 176–178, **177**  
*Grey Area (Brown Versions)* (Wilson), 173  
 Grindr (smartphone app), 409  
 Guan Tong, **262**  
 Guevara, Felipe de, 305  
 Guggenheim Museum, 70  
  
 Haakanson, Sven, 232  
 Hadra, 166  
 Hadrian, 169  
  
 Hain, Guy, 362–363  
 Hallett, Christopher, 163  
 Hamilton, Andy, 80  
 Hamilton, Ann, 405  
 Hamilton, Richard  
     *Readymade Shadows*, 383  
 Harmodios, 166–167  
*Hartford Wash; Washing Tracks, Maintenance Inside  
 (Ukeles)*, 402  
 Hawass, Zahi, 172  
*Headless Mannequins of the Attendees of the Berlin  
 Conference of 1884–85* (Shonibare), 272  
*Head of Julius Caesar* (Bastianini), 423  
 Hebborn, Eric, 34, 89, 91, 306, 348, 370  
     *Roman Harbour Scene*, 183–184  
 Hedley, Gerry, 24  
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 46, 47, 361  
 Heidegger, Martin, 48–51, 135, 136, 138, 352, 396,  
     417  
 Heisenberg, Werner, 336  
 Heraclitus, 190  
 Herakles  
     Farnese, 316–318, **317**  
     Getty, 198–200, **199**  
     Lansdowne, 204–205  
 Herder, Johann, Gotfried, 238–239  
 Hermes, 184  
 Herodotus, 169  
 Herz, Norman, 208  
 Heteroglossia, 27  
 Hewett, Edgar Lee, 219  
 Hick, Darren, 141  
 Hirst, Damien, 377  
 Historical value, 13  
 Hobbes, Thomas, 190  
 Holbein the Younger, Hans, 31  
*Homage to New York* (Tinguely), 50, 399, **400**  
 Homer  
     *Iliad*, 181  
 Hopper, Dennis, 390  
 @Horse ebooks, 413  
 Houlberg, Marilyn, 247–248

## Index

- House, John, 4
- Hoving, Thomas, 163, 207–208, 282
- Howard, Seymour, 304, 335
- Hsing-jang t'ieh*, 260–261
- Hsu, Andrew, 128–129
- Huddleston, Andrew, 17–18
- Hugford, Ignazio, 294
- Hultén, Karl Gunnar Vougt Pontus, **388**, 388–389
- Hume, David, 36
- Hyper-restoration, 25
- Ibejis*, 248, **248**
- Ideal, Platonic, 44–46
- Identity maintenance, 42, **43**
- Ifugao people, **245**
- Igbo people, 375
- Igorot people, 245
- Iliad* (Homer), 181
- Illusionism, 46–48
- Imitation, 188, 343–344, 357
- Indistinguishability, 151–160, **152**, **153**, **155**, **157**, **159**, 412
- Individualizing restoration, 126, **127**
- Industrially manufactured reproductions, 347
- Inherent creative spirit, intention and, 75
- Inherent vice, 7–8, 28, 33–34, 67
- INITIALS* (Coleman), 408
- Innocent XII, **28**
- Installation art, 405–407
- Instance multiplicity hypothesis (IMH), 127
- Instantiations, Baroque, 356–359
- Intangible authenticity, 157
- Integral replication, 195
- Integral restoration, 9, 123
- Intention, 51–57
  - in absolute anti-intentionalism, 81
  - aesthetic agency and, 75
  - aesthetic expression and, 75
  - age-value and, 78
  - in antirealist intentionalism, 81
  - and appeal for reference and characterization, 75
  - artist's speaking and, 75
  - artist's telling and, 75
  - audience and, 80–81
  - authenticity and, 73–82, **76**, **79**, 157, 180–183, **182**, 384
  - in conditionalist intentionalism, 81–82
  - conservation and, 397–398
  - creativity and, 75
  - defined, 76
  - ethnography and, 74, 240
  - fakes and, 82–91, **83**, **86**, **90**
  - in fictionalist intentionalism, 81
  - forgeries and, 352–353, 369–370
  - interpretation and, 392–393
  - meaning *vs.*, 81
  - in moderate fictionalism intentionalism, 81
  - modes of, **76**
  - moral effect and, 75
  - in textualist intentionalism, 81
- Intentional commemorative value, 13
- Internet, 411–413
- Interpretation
  - authenticity and, 65, 99
  - copies and, 158
  - inexhaustibility and, 80
  - intentionalism and, 81
  - intention and, 392–394
  - intertextuality and, 28, 29
  - restoration as, 19–20
- Intertextuality, 27–30, 416
- Intervention, minimal, 4–15
- In the Beginning... (Genesis 1) 1997* (Burrup), **271**
- Inventive forgeries, 141
- Invisible restoration, **335**, 338
- Ionescu, Stephano, 270, 271
- Ironical appropriation, 206
- Islamic rugs, 270–271
- Isleworth Mona Lisa, 300–302
- Iverson, Margaret, 54
- Janssens, Abraham
  - Pomone*, 341
- Januszczak, Waldemar, **23**

## Index

- Japanese Paleolithic, 213–214  
 Jedrzejewska, Hanna, 23  
 Jenkins, Thomas, 358, 360  
 Jesuits, 357  
 Johns, Jasper, 159–160  
 Johnson, Philip, 390  
 Johnson, Samuel, 103  
 Jones, Lloyd, 49  
 Joni, Icilio Frederico, 347–354, **351**, **353**  
 Jordaens, Jacob, 340–341  
 Jourd'heuil, Irene, 113  
*Journey to the Edge of the World—The New Republic of St. Kilda, 1999-2002* (Sinclair), 392  
 J. Paul Getty Museum, 6, 8, 129, **131**, 191–192, 193, **194**, **200**, 200–202, **201**, 202–204, **203**. *See also* Getty Herakles; Getty Kouros  
 Judd, Donald  
     *Galvanized Wall*, 390–391  
 Julius II, Pope, 308, 310  
 Juran, 262–263  
 Justice Panels, 340–341  
  
 Kamitakamori, 213–214  
 Kamoji, Koji  
     *Martwa natura*, 407  
 Kanachos, 189  
 Kant, Emmanuel, 36  
 Kastner, Miriam, 209  
 Keats, Jonathan, 377  
 Keck, Sheldon, 20  
*Keeping of the Keys, The* (Ukeles), 402  
 Kemp, Martin, 302, 331–332  
 Kircher, Athanasius, 171  
 Klein, Yves  
     *The Void*, 384  
     *Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility*, 385  
 Kline, Katy, 405  
 Knaller, Suzanne, 68, 69–70, 160  
 Knossos, 162, 178–180, **179**  
 Koestler, Arthur, 122, 153  
 Kopienkritic, 188  
 Korsmeyer, Caroline, 130  
  
 Kristeller, Paul, 15  
 Kulka, Tomas, 143  
 Kulma people, 254–255  
 Kurin, Richard, 234  
 Kushites, 166–167  
  
*Lady with Ermine* (da Vinci), 419–420  
*Lady with Lap-Dog* (Raphael), 347  
 Laetz, Brian, 16, 17  
 Lamarque, Peter, 17  
 Lanark, 98–99  
 Landi, Neroccio di Bartolomeo de'  
     *Madonna and Child with Saints Mary Magdalene and Sebastian*, 350  
 Landis, Mark, 378  
 Lang, Ulrich, 54  
 Lansdowne Boxer, 204–205  
 Laocoön, 310–316, **312**, **313**  
*La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze* (Degas), **139**, 139–141  
 Lara, Brigído, 215–218, **217**  
*La Saveur des Larmes* (The Flavor of Tears) (Magritte), **57**  
*Last Judgment* (Rubens), 341  
*Last Supper, The* (da Vinci), 329–334, **332**  
*La Tiare de Saïtapharnès*, 180–183, **182**  
 Lawrence, Gavin, 62–63, 87  
 Lazzaroni, Michele, 353  
 Leach, Edmund, 227  
 Lechner, Florian, 111  
 Leda and the Swan, **200**, 200–202, **201**, 205  
 Legros, Pierre II  
     *Saint Stanislas Kostka*, 358  
 Lenain, Thierry, 88  
 Lenoir, Alexander, 358  
 Leopold William of Austria, 307  
*Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (Picasso), **56**  
 Lessing, Alfred, 142  
 Levine, Sherrie, 18, 85–86, **86**, 299, 384  
     *After Walker Evans*, 85  
 Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 30–31  
 LeWitt, Sol, 385, 391

## Index

- L.H.O.O.Q.* (Duchamp), 379  
*L.H.O.O.Q., rasée* (Duchamp), 379  
*Life of the Virgin, The* (Dürer), 299  
 Linde, Ulf, 383  
*Listen to the Sound of the Earth Turning* (Ono), 381  
*Litanies* (Morris), 390  
 Little, James, **255**, 255–256  
 Little Warsaw (art duo), 172  
 Livingston, Paisley, 76–78, 80, 81  
 Locard Exchange Principle, 87  
 Locke, John, 190  
 Lopes, Dominic, 15, 16, 17  
 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 8, 204, 363  
 Loss, compensation for, in restoration, 11, 32, 125, 193, 337  
 Louis XVI furniture, 89  
 Louvre, 19, 20, 173–174, 176–177, 180–183, **182**.  
     *See also Mona Lisa* (da Vinci)  
 Lowenthal, David, 37–39, 60, 109, 197, 229, 237–238  
*Low Rider Art* (Pruitt), 383  
 Lozano-Hemmer, Rafael  
     *33 Questions per Minute*, 398  
 Lübeck, 98  
 Lucan, 169  
*Lucrezia Donati* (Bastianini), 142, **143**  
 Ludovisi Ares, **309**, 309–310, 356  
*Luncheon on the Grass* (Manet), 55, **56**  
*Luncheon on the Grass* (Picasso), 55, 138  
 Lyotard, Jean-François, 87  
 Lysippos, 187, **187**, 187–188, 318  
  
 MacLure, Maggie, 356  
*Madonna and Child* (Dossena), 286, **290**  
*Madonna and Child* (Marcovaldo), **292**  
*Madonna and Child* (Raphael), 123–125  
*Madonna and Child* (van de Weyden), **22**, 25  
*Madonna and Child* (van der Veken), **293**  
*Madonna and Child with Angels* (Joni), 350  
*Madonna and Child with Saint Catherine of Alexandria* (Giunti), 353  
*Madonna and Child with Saints Mary Magdalene and Sebastian* (Landi), 350  
*Madonna and Child with Saints Michael, Caterina d'Alessandri, and an Angel* (Giovanni), 350  
 Madsen, Stephan, 104  
 Maffei, Paolo Alessandro, 310  
 Magi, Filippo, 310  
 Magor, Liz  
     *Time and Mrs. Tibor*, 393  
 Magritte, René, 55–56, 343  
     *La Saveur des Larmes* (The Flavor of Tears), **57**  
     *Not to Be Reproduced*, **153**  
 Maiano, Benedetto da, 368  
 Mailfert, André, 89  
 Maillol, Aristide, 363  
 Maintenance art, 402  
*Maintenance Art Manifesto* (Ukeles), 402  
 Malagan wood carvings, **232**  
 Malanga, Gerard, 389  
 Malinowski, Bronislaw, 227  
 Malvasia, Cesare, 298  
 Mancini, Giulio, 304  
 Mandiberg, Michael, 85, 91  
     *Untitled*, **86**  
 Manet, Édouard  
     *Luncheon on the Grass*, 55, **56**  
 Manishtushu, 162  
 Manitou Springs, 162, 218–220, **219**  
 Mantegna, Andrea  
     *Battle of the Sea-Gods*, 92–93  
 Manufactured reproductions, 347  
 Manuscripts, 133–135  
 Manzoni, Piero, 39, 150  
     *Artist's Shit*, 150–151  
 Maori heads, 235–236, **236**  
 Maori James Little productions, **255**, 255–256  
 Maratta, Carlo, 23, 298  
 Marcovaldo, Coppo di, 289–290  
     *Madonna and Child*, **292**  
 Marcus Aurelius  
     Getty, 191–192, **194**  
     Pergamon, 194–195  
 Margolis, Stanley, 208–209

## Index

- Marilyn x 100* (Warhol), 158  
 Markowitz, Sally, 148–149  
 Martini, Simone, 286  
     *The Annunciation*, 286, **289**  
*Martwa natura* (Kamoji), 407  
 Marx, Karl, 316  
 Maryland Historical Society, 405  
 Mashco-Piro tribe, 229  
 Maspero, Gaston, 173  
 Massey, John  
     *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*,  
     408  
 Massot, Pierre de, 379  
 Master of Berlin, 175, **176**  
 Master of the Mornauer Portrait, 31  
 Master of the Tabernacle Number 35, 350  
 Material authenticity, 66–67, **68**, **73**, 77, 200, 336  
 Material cause, 191  
 Materiality, contested, 395–399  
 Matta-Clark, Gordon, 390  
 Mattusch, Carol, 163  
 Mazza, Giuseppe, 330, 333  
 McClurg, Virginia, 219  
 Mead, Margaret, 227  
 Meaning-loss, balanced, 5  
 Media works, 408–409  
 Medici, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de', 298, 311  
 Medieval art  
     authenticity and, 274–275  
     *elevatio* and, 275, 276, 278  
     fakes and, 286–288, **287**, **288**  
     relics and, 279–286, **281**, **282**, **284**, **285**  
     restoration of, 288–294, **289–293**  
     theft and, 275–278, **277**  
     *translatio* and, 275–277, 278–279  
 Mellor, Doreen, 269  
 Melzi, Francesco, 302  
 Mene, Pierre-Jules, 363  
*Metropolis II* (Burden), 8  
 Metropolitan Museum of Art, 174  
 Metropolitan Torso, 185, 186  
 Metzger, Gustav, 70, 400  
 Michelangelo, 298, 308–309, 310, 313–314, 317,  
     338, 357, 367. *See also* Laocoön; Sistine  
     Chapel  
     *Apostle Michelangelo*, 311  
     *Pietà*, 121, 122–127, **124**, **127**, 192  
     *Sleeping Cupid*, 89  
     *Tondo Doni*, 326–327  
 Michiel, Marcantonio, 305  
 Mignard, Pierre, 298  
 Mikhailov, Boris, 410  
 Milanese, Baldassare del, 89  
 Mills, Keely  
     *Buildings in Need*, 117–118  
 Mina, An Xiao, 413  
 Minimal intervention, 4–15  
 Minimalist conservation, 195  
 Minoans, 178–180, **179**  
 Minoan Snake Goddess, 179–180  
 Minujín, Marta  
     *Reading the News*, 401  
 Mirrors, 266–268, **267**  
 Mis-pi incantation, 85  
 Moderate fictionalist intentionalism, 81  
 Modern art, 7, 32–34, 35–36, 135, 186, 374–377,  
     395. *See also* Conceptual art  
 Modernism, 106–107  
*Mokomokai*, 235–236, **237**  
 Mol, Annemarie, 407  
*Mona Lisa* (da Vinci), 135, 136, 299–304, **301**,  
     **303**, 379  
*Mona Lisa* (in Prado), 300, 302–304, **303**  
*Mona Lisa* (Isleworth), 300–302  
 Mond head, 173–174  
 Mondrian, Piet, 61  
 Monet, Claude, 4  
     *Bords de la Seine à Argenteuil* (attrib.), 4  
 Montorsoli, Giovanni Angelo, 310  
 Montoya, Maria, 241  
*Moon Is the Oldest TV* (Paik), 408  
 Moooi (design company), 387  
 Moral effect, 75  
 Morandi, Giorgio, 410

## Index

- Morelli, Giovanni, 306
- Morris, Robert, 390  
*Bodyspacemotionthings*, 411  
*Litanies*, 390
- Morris, William, 105, 106–107, 108
- Mould, Philip, 4, 347
- Moving cause, 191
- Mowaljarlai, David, 30
- Mozo, Ana Gonzalez, 302
- Mueller, Otto, 89
- Munch, Edvard, 397  
*The Scream*, 397
- Muñoz-Viñas, Salvador, 1, 5, 39, 63, 112, 133,  
 136, 137, 138, 319
- Musée Rodin, 363–364
- Museo Nazionale Romano Palazzo, 205
- Museum of Drawers* (Distel), 404
- Museum of Jurassic Technology, 404–405
- Music, 129
- Nara Document, 99–100, **100**, 101
- Narratives, of museum exhibitions, 404–405
- National Gallery of Art (London), 19, 21
- Native American Graves Protection and  
 Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), 230
- Native Americans, 230–232, 237–238, 240–241, 375
- Nature, true, 6
- Navajo sand paintings, 168
- Ndebele mural paintings, 251
- Nefertiti head, 171–173
- Neighbors, The* (Svenson), 409
- Neutro*, 25
- Newark Museum, 39
- New Lanark, 98–99
- Newness-value, 13
- Newton, Stella Mary, 353
- Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle), 126
- Nikko, Japan, **100**
- Nineteenth Century, 360–362, 367–371
- Ningyo merman, **73**
- Nobili, Ricardo, 163–164
- Nominal authenticity, 62
- Normative dualism, 149
- Normativity, 68–69
- Northanger Abbey* (Austen), 133–134
- Not Duchamp (Bicycle Wheel 1913)* (Bidlo), 383
- Notre Dame, 104–105, 107
- Not to Be Reproduced* (Magritte), **153**
- Object appropriation, 167
- Obligatory intertextuality, 28
- Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (Kircher), 171
- Ohly, Dieter, 196
- Oldenburg, Claes, 86, 343–344  
*The Store*, 86
- Olfactory authenticity, 280
- Ondák, Roman  
*Good Feelings in Good Times*, 403
- One Candle* (Paik), 407
- Ono, Yoko, 374  
*Listen to the Sound of the Earth Turning*, 381
- Optional intertextuality, 28
- Original materiality, 8
- Original unity, 22
- Origin of the Work of Art, The* (Heidegger), 48–49
- Ortiz, Raphael Montanez, 70
- Outsourced performance art, 402, 403
- Overcleaning, 31–32
- Overpainting, 31–32
- Owen, Robert, 98–99
- Paik, Nam June  
*Moon Is The Oldest TV*, 408  
*One Candle*, 407
- Paintings, categories of authentic, 340–347,  
**341–343, 345, 346**
- Paleolithic  
 Japanese, 213–214  
 rock art, 221
- Palmer, Alasdair, 112
- Panofsky, Erwin, 45
- Panza, Giuseppe, 390–391
- Paolozzi, Eduardo, 410, 411
- Papadopoulos, John, 15

## Index

- Papua New Guinea, 254–255  
*Parerga and Paralipomena* (Schopenhauer), 47  
 Partial cleaning, 9, 24, 334–335  
 Pasiteles, 163  
 Pastiches, 141  
 Patina, 10–11, 27, 31–32  
 Paul III, Pope, 357  
 Peabody Museum (Harvard), 217, 218  
 Pelletier, Luc, 113  
 Pelliccioli, Mauro, 330  
 Penny, Nicholas, 322–323  
 Perenyi, Ken, 377–378  
 Performance art, 135, 400–404  
 Pergamon Museum, 194–195  
 Perkins, Frederick, 348  
 Perrault, Gilles, 363  
 Perugino, Pietro, 347  
 Petronius, 167  
 Phantom Springs, 220  
 Pheidias, 297  
 Philip IV, 357  
 Philippot, Paul, 10, 22, 38, 197  
 Phillips, David, 32  
 Philosophical ethnography, 238–239  
 Phoedrus, 164  
*Pia fraus*, 165, 275, 276, 277, 281, **281**  
 Picasso, Pablo, 243  
     *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, **56**  
     *Luncheon on the Grass*, 55, 138  
     *The Tie*, 156–157  
 Picault, Jean-Michel, 20  
 Picault, Robert, 20  
*Pietà* (Michelangelo), 121, 122–127, **124**, **127**, 192  
 Pietro, Cecco di, 350  
 Pietro, Sano di, 350, 353  
 Piltdown Man, **214**, 214–215  
 Pinault, François, 177  
 Pinoncelli, Pierre, 384  
 Piranesi, Giovanni Battista, 141–142  
     *Roman Harbour Scene*, 183–184  
 Platonic Ideal, 44–46, 47, 361  
*Play Dead: Real Time* (Gordon), 408–409  
 Pliny the Elder, 20, 285, 296–297, 310, 314–315  
 Pliny the Younger, 164, 184, 186–187  
 Plutarch, 190–191  
 Podestà, Giovanni Andrea, 357  
 Pollack, Ludwig, 310  
 Pollock, Griselda, 87  
 Pollock, Jackson, 87  
*Pomone* (Janssens), 341  
 Pompey, 164  
 Pon, Lisa, 299  
 Pope-Hennessy, John, 45  
 Pope Innocent XII, **28**  
 Pope Julius II, 308, 310  
 Pope Paul III, 357  
 Porter, James, 15  
*Portrait of Alexander Mornauer*, 31  
*Portrait of a Young Lady* (Joni after Ghirlandaio),  
     350, 351, **351**  
 Postmodernism, 30, 55–56, 64–65, 319, 326, 356,  
     421  
 Pot People, 252–253  
 Poussin, Nicolas, 357  
 Prado *Mona Lisa*, 300, 302–304, **303**  
 Praxiteles, 297  
 Primaticcio, Francesco, 306–307  
*Primo Piano III* (Smith), **392**, 395–396  
 Pritchard, E. E. Evans, 30  
*Procession of Fragments of the True Cross* (Bellini), 29  
*Procuress, The* (van Baburen), 144, **146**  
 Projansky, Bob, 390  
*Prometheus Bound* (Rubens), 341, **342**  
 Properties, essential *vs.* contingent, 63–64  
 Prothogenes, 164  
 Proust, Marcel, 95  
 Provenance  
     appropriation and, 167  
     authenticity and, 62, 249, 278, 388, 390  
     forgery and, 181  
     in production of fakes, 167, 181  
 Pruitt, Rob  
     *Low Rider Art*, 383  
 Purist deconstruction, 195



## Index

- Purist reconstruction, 195  
Purist restoration, 123
- Qian, Pei-Shen, 377  
Qi Baishi, 258  
Queen Tetisheri statue, 82–83, **83**, 84  
Quincy, Quartermère de, 358
- Radnóti, Sándor, 35, 53, 55, 56–57, 134–135, 152–153, 154–155, 156, 158–159, 415  
Raimondi, Marcantonio, 299  
Ram, Giovanni, 305  
Raphael, 23, 335, 339  
*Lady with Lap-Dog*, 347  
*Madonna and Child*, 123–125  
*School of Athens*, 23  
Rauschenberg, Robert, 160, **385**  
*Erased de Kooning Drawing*, 384  
*Reading the News* (Minujín), 401  
Readymades, 379–384  
*Readymade Shadows* (Hamilton), 383  
Reassembly, 8  
Reconstruction  
    authenticity and, 96–100, **98**, **100**  
    purist, 195  
*Red Self-Portrait* (Warhol), 388  
Reenactment, 410–411  
Reference, appeal for, 75  
Referential authenticity, 67, 69–70  
Referential forgeries, 141  
Reff, Theodore, 47  
Reformation, 356, 357  
Rehabilitation, authenticity and, 136–137  
Reims Cathedral, **116**, 116–117  
Reintegration  
    authenticity and, 8–9  
    background, 8  
    exact, 8–9  
    functional, 8  
    in restoration, 8  
    similar, 8  
Relational principle, in restoration, 127, **127**
- Relative art-value, 13  
Relics, 279–286, **281**, **282**, **284**, **285**  
Religious fraud, 165, 275, 276, **277**, 281, **281**  
Reliquaries, 280, 283–284, **284**, **285**  
*Relocation* (Brecht), 392  
Rembrandt, 340, 343  
Renaissance, 15, 295–296  
    authenticity in, 296–299  
    emulations in, 188, 304–307  
    Platonic Ideal and, 45  
    restoration and, 307–309, 319–329, **320–324**  
    value and, 15  
Reni, Guido, 298  
Renoir, Auguste, 363  
Repatriation, 208, 230, 232–233, 236  
Replica, 53, **55**, 55–56, 88, 91, 342–344, 366. *See also* Copies; Fakes; Forgery(ies)  
Representation, 51–57  
*Representation of Difference: Bicycle Wheel* (Scott), 383  
Reproduction of Works of Art for the benefits of Museums of all Countries, 364  
*Republic* (Plato), 44  
Restoration  
    ethics of, 11–12, 14, 97, 336–337, 338  
Restoration(s)  
    aesthetic, 334, 336–338  
    aesthetic appreciation *vs.* historical veracity in, 10  
    aesthetic integrity and, 8  
    aging and, 327–328  
    aims of, 8  
    authenticity and, 3, 8–9, 64, 189, 331–332, 417–418  
    Baroque, 356–357  
    in Brandi, 10  
    categories of, 128–133  
    cleaning and, 9  
    cognitive principle in, **127**  
    compensation for loss in, 11, 32, 125, 193, 337  
    as conservation, 334, 337  
    conservation *vs.*, 8

## Index

- conservative, 104  
 “correction” in, 132  
 creative, 308–309  
 cultural context and, 8  
 damage and, 137  
 defined, 9, 26, 103–104  
 destructive, 104  
 eclectic, 104  
 emergence of term, 103–104  
 ethics of, 11–12, 14, 97, 336–337  
 as fakes, 2  
 forgery and, 25, 34  
 historical, 105, 126–127, **127**  
 hyper-restoration, 25  
 identity and, 334–336, **335**  
 integral, 9, 123  
 as interpretation, 19–20  
 invisible, **335**, 338  
 of *Last Supper*; *The* (da Vinci), 329–334, **332**  
 medieval, 288–294, **289–293**  
 modernism and, 106–107  
 object type and, 8  
 original materiality and, 8  
 patina and, 10–11  
 philological, 105  
 purist, 123  
 reassembly in, 8  
 reintegration in, 8  
 relational principle in, 127, **127**  
 Renaissance, 307–309  
 Roman, contexts of, 191–196, **194**  
 of Sistine Chapel, 319–329, **320–324**  
 as subject of study, 360–361  
 value and, 12–19  
 visible, 334, **335**, 337, 338  
 visual discernibility and, 25–27  
 Retreatability, 6–7, 125  
 Reversibility, 6–7, 49, 125  
 Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 148  
 Riace bronzes, 189–190  
 Riario, Raffaele, 298  
 Richardson, Mary, 63  
 Richardson the Elder, Jonathan, 307  
 Richartz-Museum, 4  
 Richter, Virginia, 58  
 Riegl, Alois, 11, 12, 13, 78, 95, 109  
 Rifaud, Jean-Jacques, 171  
 Riley, Catherine, 149  
 Rilko, Jim  
     *A Covered Bridge*, 92  
     *Son of a Covered Bridge*, 92  
 RIP triangle, 41–42, **42**, 108  
*Ritratto Virile* (Giunti), 353  
 Robley, Horatio, 235  
 Rock art, Paleolithic, 221  
 Rockefeller, Nelson, 226  
 Rodin, Auguste, 362–364  
     *Age of Bronze*, 151, 362  
     *The Thinker*, 362–363, **365**  
*Rokeby Venus*. See *Toilet of Venus*, *The* (Velázquez)  
 Roman Empire, 163–165, 169, 183–191, **185**, **187**,  
     191–196, **194**. See also Greek artwork  
*Roman from Greek in America 1987* (Allington), 188  
*Roman Harbour Scene* (Piranesi), 183–184  
 Roth, Dieter, 33  
 Rothko, Mark, 375  
 Rothstein, Edward, 404  
 Rouchomowsky, Israël, 182, **182**  
 Rousseau, J. J., 239  
 Rowe, Mark, 133  
 Royal Museum for Central Africa, 224  
 Royal Ontario Museum, 363  
 Rubens, Peter Paul, 357  
     *Last Judgment*, 341  
     *Prometheus Bound*, 341, **342**  
     *Virgin and Child in Flower Garland with Angels*,  
         **343**  
 Rubenstein, Helena, 226  
 Rubino, Alfonso, 302  
 Rudier, Bernard, 362–363  
 Rudier, Georges, 362–363  
 Rugs, Islamic, 270–271  
*Running Fence* (Christo), 405  
 Ruskin, John, 104, 105, 107–108

## Index

- Sacchi, Andrea, 298
- Sacred theft, 225, 230, 273, 275–278, 277, 284
- Sagoff, Mark, 122–123, 125–126, 128–129, 191
- Saint John the Baptist with Saint John the Evangelist and Saint James* (Cione), 344–347
- Saint Stanislas Kostka* (Legros), 358
- Saint Yrieix, 282–283
- Saint Zita, 282, **282**
- Salai, Andrea, 302
- Salon De Fleurus* (Distel), 404
- San Antonio Declaration, 101–102
- Sand paintings, 168, 375
- Sangallo, Giuliano da, 310, 312
- Sarto, Andrea del, 298
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, 48
- Satyricon* (Gaius Petronius), 164
- Schaefer, Iris, 4
- Schneemann, Carolee  
*Eye Body*, 401
- School of Athens* (Raphael), 23
- Schopenhauer, Arthur, 46, 47, 48, 361
- Schwartz, Arturo, 379
- Scientific connoisseurship, 140–141  
advantages of, 145  
artistic *vs.*, 3–4  
defined, 3  
with Getty Kouros, 208–209
- Scott, George Gilbert, 104
- Scream, The* (Munch), 397
- Scroll paintings, 260, 261–264, **262**
- Seeley, Nigel J., 108
- Seguier, John, 21
- Sehgal, Tino, 374, 410  
*This Is New*, 81  
*This Is Propaganda*, 403  
*This Objective of That Object*, 81
- Selective cleaning, 9, 334–335
- Selezione cromatica*, 26
- Self-destructive art, 33, 374, 376, 399–400, **400**
- Self-portraits, 340, **341**
- Semantic criterion, 148
- Seneca the Elder, 163
- Series, works produced in, 343
- Sesostris III, 177–178
- Settignano, Desiderio da, 367, 368
- Seuphor, Michel, 61  
*17Hs* (Smith), 395
- Sex Pistols, 80–81
- Sforza, Ludovico, 419
- Sfumato, 323–324
- Shadow Monsters* (Worthington), 398
- Shepperd, Alfred, 220–221
- Shiner, Larry, 15
- Shonibare, Yinka, 272  
*Headless Mannequins of the Attendees of the Berlin Conference of 1884–85*, 272
- Shoot* (Burden), 401
- Show Me More* (Future Femme), 409
- Sieber, Roy, 256
- Siegel, Jeanne, 85
- Siegelaub, Seth, 390
- Siena, Guido da, 294
- Signature, false, 344
- Similar reintegration, 8
- Simon-Whelan, Joe, 388
- Sinclair, Ross  
*Journey to the Edge of the World—The New Republic of St. Kilda, 1999–2002*, 392
- Singularization, 250
- Sistine Chapel, 2, 9, 319–329, **320–324**
- Sleeping Cupid* (Michelangelo), 89
- Smith David, 395–396  
*Primo Piano III*, **392**, 395–396  
*17Hs*, 395
- Smithson, Robert  
*Spiral Jetty*, 130
- Smoke* series (Baas), 387
- Snobbery, 122
- Snyders, Frans, 341
- Sobel, Jonathan, 412
- Social Life of Things, The* (Appadurai), 84
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), 108
- Socrates, 400

## Index

- Software-based art, 398–399  
 Songye mask, 257, **257**  
*Son of a Covered Bridge* (Rilko), 92  
 Spain, 171  
*Spinario* (Vignola), 307  
*Spiral Jetty* (Smithson), 130  
 Spolia, authenticity and, 168–169  
 Stanza della Segnatura, 23  
 Stecker, Robert, 18  
 Stierlin, Henri, 172  
 St. Louis Art Museum, 217  
 Stone, Richard, 174  
 Stonehenge II, 162, 220–221  
*Store, The* (Oldenburg), 86  
*Store of Claes Oldenburg, The* (Sturtevant), 86  
 Strawson, Peter, 141–142  
 Stubblebine, James H., 350  
 Studio replicas, 343–344  
 Study copies, 343  
 Sturtevant, Elaine, 186, 343–344, 382, 384, 409  
     *The Store of Claes Oldenburg*, 86  
 Sturtevant, Sherrie, 85, 86–87  
 Stylistic mimicry, 88–89  
 Subject authenticity, 69  
 Suetonius, 304  
 Sultanganj Buddha, 39  
 Sun K'uang, 260  
*Surmoulage*, 366  
 Surreal authenticity, 243–246, **244**, **245**  
 Survival, authenticity and, 40–43, **41–44**  
 Susini, Giovanni Francesco, 309  
 Svenson, Arne  
     *The Neighbors*, 409  
 Taranto Kore, 212  
 Tate Gallery, 53, 150–151, 243–244  
*Tempera grassa*, 330  
*Tempest, The* (Giorgione), 18  
*Temples among Streams and Hills* (attrib. Juran), 263  
 Teniers the Younger, David, 307  
 Terra-cotta warriors, Etruscan, 12–13  
 Tetisheri statue, 173  
 Textualist intentionalism, 81  
 Theft, sacred, 225, 230, 273, 275–278, **277**, 284  
 Theoretical object, 379  
 Theseus's ship, 190–191  
*Thinker; The* (Rodin), 362–363, **365**  
 Thins, Maria, 144  
*33 Questions per Minute* (Lozano-Hemmer), 398  
*This Is New* (Sehgal), 81  
*This Is Propaganda* (Sehgal), 403  
*This Objective of That Object* (Sehgal), 81  
 Thorvaldsen, Bertel, 196–197  
*Three Worthies of Wu* (Zhang), 263  
 Thutmose III, 174  
 Tiberius, 187, 314  
 Tichy, Miroslav, 410  
*Tie, The* (Picasso), 156–157  
 Time, 87  
*Time and Mrs. Tibor* (Magor), 393  
 Time-based media works, 408–409  
 Tinguely, Jean, 33  
     *Homage to New York*, 50, 399, **400**  
 Tinterow, Gary, 140  
 Tintoretto, 298  
 Titian  
     *Bacchanalia*, 357  
     *Bacchanal of the Andrians*, 357  
     *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 338–340, **339**, 357  
     *Worship of Venus*, 357  
*Toilet of Venus, The* (Velázquez), 63, **64**  
 Tomb of Queen Nefertari, 336, **337**  
*Tondo Doni* (Michelangelo), 326–327  
 Total cleaning, 9, 24, 335  
 Totonac ceramics, 215–216, **217**  
 Tourist art, **41**, 60, 134, 218, 239, 243, 245–246  
*Transfer: The Maintenance of the Art Object*  
     (Ukeles), 402  
*Translatio*, 275–277, 278–279  
 Translation, 188  
*Tratteggio*, 7, 26, 32, 328, 337  
 True Cross, 29, 278, 281, **281**  
 True nature, 6  
 Tuduc, Teodor, 270–271

## Index

- Twenty-Ninth Copper Cardinal* (Andre), **389**, 391  
 Twitter, 413
- Uecker, Günther, 406
- Ukeles, Mierle Laderman  
*Hartford Wash; Washing Tracks, Maintenance*  
*Inside*, 402  
*The Keeping of the Keys*, 402  
*Maintenance Art Manifesto*, 402  
*Transfer: The Maintenance of the Art Object*, 402
- Ukraine, 180–183, **182**
- Uncertainty principle, 336
- Unfinished paintings, completed by another,  
 340–341
- Uniqueness, 85
- Untitled* (Mandiberg), **86**
- Uppark House, **107**, 108–109, 120
- Urbino, Raffaello Sanzio da, 298
- Urton, Gary, 15
- Use-value, 13
- Ushabtis*, 170–171, **172**, 173
- Utrecht, Adriaen van, 341
- Value(s)  
 aesthetic, 18–19  
 age, 13, 78  
 art, 13  
 artistic, 19  
 authenticity and, 12–13, 15  
 cultural significance and, 14  
 defined, 14  
 forgeries and, 16, 421  
 historical, 13  
 intentional commemorative, 13  
 modern art and, 376  
 newness, 13  
 relative art, 13  
 Renaissance and, 15  
 restoration and, 12–19  
 use, 13
- van Baburen, Dirck, 145, 154  
*The Procuress*, 144, **146**
- van der Veken, Jef, 25, 130–131, **293**, 294, 336
- van der Weyden, Rogier, 25, 130, 336, 343  
*Madonna and Child*, **22**
- van de Wetering, Ernst, 397
- Vanitas Still Life with a Portrait of a Young Painter*  
 (Bailly), 28, 78–80, **79**
- Vanitas with Self-Portrait* (Bailly), 78
- van Meegeren, Han, 121, 137, 142, 144–147, 153,  
 158, 421
- Vanni, Giovan Battista, 357
- van Wegen, Rik, 397
- Varotari, Alessandro, 357
- Vasari, Giorgio, 298, 299
- Vatican, 23. *See also Pietà* (Michelangelo)
- Velázquez, Diego  
*The Toilet of Venus*, 63, **64**
- Venice, 82, 149
- Venice Charter for the Conservation and Resto-  
 ration of Monuments and Sites, 96–97, 99
- Vermeer, Johannes, 137, 142, 143–144, 144–147,  
 153  
*View of Delft*, 77
- Verona, Altichiero da, 349
- Veronese, Paolo, 298–299, 357
- Vico, Enea, 305
- Victorious Youth*, **29**
- View of Delft* (Vermeer), 77
- Vignola, Giacomo Barozzi da, 307  
*Spinario*, 307
- Villefosse, Heron de, 181, 182
- Villiers, Caroline, 5
- Viola, Bill, 408
- Viollet-le-Duc, Eugène, 104, 107
- Virgin and Child in Flower Garland with Angels*  
 (Rubens & Breughel the Elder), **343**
- Virgin Mary with Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint*  
*Paul* (Daddi), 344, **345**, **346**
- Visible restoration, 334, **335**, 337, 338
- Visual discernibility  
 in conservation, 7  
 in restoration, 25–27
- Visual indiscernibility, in conservation, 7

## Index

- Voice, of artist, 392–395  
 Voice appropriation, 167–168  
*Void, The* (Klein), 384  
 Volterra, Daniele da, 329
- Wady Gabbanat el-Qurud, 174  
 Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew, 306  
 Walton, Kendall, 16  
 Wang Hsi-chih, 260–261  
 Wang Shimin, 263  
 Wantage, Lady Harriet Sarah, 350  
 Warhol, Andy, 186, 343, 377, 387–390  
     *Brillo Boxes*, 375, 389  
     *Chairman Mao*, 390  
     *Marilyn x 100*, 158  
     *Red Self-Portrait*, 388  
 Warsaw, 97, **98**  
 Watrin, Luc, 177–178  
 Waugh, Evelyn, 178  
 Weddell, William, 358  
 Weiner, Lawrence, 390  
 Wells, H. G., **107**  
 Westerman, Floyd, 230  
*Where There's Smoke* (Baas), 387  
 Wildenstein Institute, 4, 59, 176  
 Wildung, Dietrich, 177  
 Wilson, Fred, 405  
     *Grey Area (Brown Versions)*, 173  
 Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, 45–46, 359  
 Wollheim, Richard, 18, 121, 132, 158, 377, 379  
 Wolterstorff, Nicholas, 15–16
- Wood, Christopher, 284–285  
 Woodblock printing, 52–53  
 Woods-Marsden, Joanna, 300, 302, 327  
 Woolley, Sir Leonard, 70  
*Words from Abroad* (Adorno), 69  
*Work No. 227* (Creed), 384–385  
 World Heritage Convention, 97, 98, 101  
*Worship of Venus, The* (Titian), 357  
 Worthington, Philip  
     *Shadow Masters*, 398  
 Wyld, Martin, 417
- Xerxes I, 166–167  
 X-ray, 43, 208–209, 246, 252, 282, 289, 290,  
     340, 369
- Yaka figure, 246–247, 252  
 Yoruba people, 248, **248**, 252  
*Young Woman with Unicorn*, 347
- Zampezzi, Battista, 307  
 Zapotec ceramics, 216–218  
 Zembok, Udo, 111  
 Zeus (Getty), **210**, 210–211  
 Zeuxis, 164  
 Zevio, Aldighieri, da, 349  
 Zhang Daqian, 261–264, **262**  
 Zhao Zuo, 263  
*Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility* (Klein),  
     385  
 Zuni, 231

# Art: Authenticity, Restoration, Forgery



**T**his book presents a detailed account of authenticity in the visual arts from the Palaeolithic to the postmodern. The restoration of works of art can alter the perception of authenticity, and may result in the creation of fakes and forgeries. These interactions set the stage for the subject of this book, which initially examines the conservation perspective, then continues with a detailed discussion of what “authenticity” means, and the philosophical background. The book discusses several case studies where the ideas of conceptual, aesthetic, and material authenticity can be incorporated into an informative discourse about art from the ancient to the contemporary, illuminating concerns relating to restoration and art forgery.

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