

THE VALUE OF FORGERIES:
A MEANINGFUL TOOL OF ART HISTORICAL STUDY

by

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Abstract

Forgeries, in contrast to authentic works of art, have often been assigned a marginal status and therefore have generally been neglected as valuable tools of study. This thesis offers a new perspective of forgeries, one that explores their beneficial role in three distinct fields of study: connoisseurship, the scientific analysis of art works, and the art market. An understanding of the traditional practices of connoisseurship provides a basis from which to suggest how forgeries may be utilized by the connoisseur. A survey of the various scientific techniques of analysis allows one to consider how the methods of the forger parallel the process by which authentic art works are created. Lastly, the production and sale of forgeries are intimately related to the conditions that influence the state of the art market. Therefore, forgeries may be appreciated for the valuable insights they offer to the study of art history.

Keywords: Forgeries, Connoisseurship, Morelli, Berenson, Friedlander, Scientific Analysis of Art, Van Meegeren, Art Market, Riopelle.

Epigraph

It is the misfortune of fakes that they are almost always defined by what they are not,
instead of being valued for what they are.

-Mark Jones,
The British Museum

Dedication

To Jason:
For his ongoing love, support and friendship.

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Chapter One

An Introduction to Forgeries

In 1972, the Cleveland Museum of Art purchased a panel painting, St. Catherine, by Matthias Grünewald (d. 1528) for \$1,000,000.¹ For several years, the masterpiece of this German Renaissance painter was proudly displayed on the museum walls for thousands of patrons to enjoy. However, after undergoing scientific examination, the work was deemed to be a forgery and subsequently removed.² The St. Catherine panel has since been discovered to be the work of Christian Goller, an artist and skilled restorer who lives in lower Bavaria, near Munich.³ Originally commissioned for a particular client who purchased it for \$2,000,⁴ it was later sold to a German dealer for \$24,000 and eventually offered to the Cleveland Museum for \$1,000,000.⁵ At some point during these transactions, the piece obviously changed its status from an innocent imitation to an alleged authentic work by the master Grünewald. In a recent interview in the Nova documentary, "The Fine Art of Faking It," Goller stated that, "Whoever calls me a forger is lying. I only paint in the style of Old Masters. I add patina and crackle for decoration. You can't call that a forgery... I think copies make art accessible. Everybody can afford to hang a Grünewald in his house."⁶ In the documentary, Goller demonstrated how he had

¹ Thomas Hoving, False Impressions: The Hunt for Big Time Art Fakes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996) 247.

² Hoving, 247. Specifically, processed chalk was found in the base coat of the painting rather than natural chalk which would be characteristic of the supposed time of production. Additionally, no silver was found in the pigments, which normally would have been present. Silver was a component used in pigments until the 1850's. "The Fine Art of Faking It," Nova, narr. Richard Dreyfuss, writ. and Dir. Denisse Dilanni, PBS, 1991.

³ Hoving, 246. Goller based the St. Catherine panel on a drawing in a book that was a study for a work that supposedly was lost in a ship wreck. The painting was his interpretation of what the painting may have looked like. Nova, 1991.

⁴ John Conklin, Art Crime (Westport: Praeger, 1994) 70.

⁵ "The Fine Art of Faking It," Nova, narr. Richard Dreyfuss, writ. and dir. Denisse Dilanni, PBS, 1991.

⁶ Conklin, 70.

produced the St. Catherine, disclosing his various techniques of trickery, and offering insights into the world of forgery.⁷

Naturally, the discovery of the Cleveland art forgery was alarming. Similarly, other forgeries have surfaced in reputable public and private art collections, causing uproars. The individuals responsible for the phony acquisitions are often overcome with embarrassment. Who could be proud of spending tremendous sums of money on fraudulent art? Such errors in judgment create a loss of confidence in the skills of connoisseurship which form a basis for the accepted conventions of art historical progress. Forgeries that maintain their identity as authentic works of art are highly problematic as they misinform this progress as well as misrepresent the achievements of artists.⁸ As a source of misinformation, forgeries rightly possess a negative connotation. However, this thesis will challenge the more traditional approach to studying forgeries, which usually focuses on their detection while rejecting these works as valuable tools of study. The shocking reality is that the authenticity of approximately fifty percent of the art in public and private collections is problematic.⁹ Rather than trying to cover up their existence by destroying them or locking them away in a museum vault, never to be seen again, forgeries should be viewed as pieces of artistic evidence, in contrast to their more common categorization as criminal evidence.

In this thesis I intend to illustrate the art historical value of studying forgeries. Chapter one of this work will provide a foundation from which to explore and analyze forgeries. To this end, this section will offer an historical basis from which

⁷ Nova, 1991.

⁸ Dennis Dutton, "Artistic Crimes," The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art ed. Dennis Dutton (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1983) 181. Dutton further suggests that "reference to origins is a necessary constituent of the concept of a work of art." Thus, it is clear to see how forgeries pose difficulties for the art historian as well as the general public with respect to the question of origin. 182.

⁹ Jon Huer, The Great Art Hoax: Essays in the Comedy and Insanity of Collectible Art (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press, 1990) 7.

the concept of forgeries has developed. In addition, a clear definition of forgeries will be introduced so as to provide a framework from which to approach the complexities of these works. Chapter one will further consider the notion of value and its relation to art, and how this concept of value has generally influenced the production of forged works. Finally, the nature of art collecting will be addressed as a necessary component to understanding how forged works enter the realm of authentic art.

An exploration of the contributions of forgeries in three distinct fields of study, techniques of connoisseurship, the application of scientific technologies to works of art, and the art market will be addressed in this thesis. Chapter two will explore the notion that forgeries provide experts with material which aids in the development of their skills as connoisseurs. The reality of forgeries forces the connoisseur to develop rigid systems of classification, which ultimately ground a more accurate account of an artist's style and *oeuvre*. Utilized in a comparative manner, the forgeries become a tool by which to understand authentic works. The art world relies on connoisseurs to help clarify the trajectory of art historical progress which is otherwise distorted by the infiltration of forgeries into the realm of authentic art.

Chapter three will explore the various advanced technologies that have been developed in order to authenticate works of art. These scientific tests, such as x-radiography, have enabled art experts to elucidate the techniques and materials utilized by artists from various time periods, which otherwise may have never been discovered.¹⁰ Furthermore, the application of such technologies enhance one's understanding of the working methods and thought processes of artists as well as

¹⁰ Hubert Von Sonnenburg, Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Aspects of Connoisseurship v. 1 Paintings: Problems and Issues (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995) 138.

forgers. Ultimately the scientific study of forgeries advances one's knowledge of the production of authentic works.

Chapter four will suggest that forgeries offer insights into the art market. Forgeries maintain and enhance the value of art and the status of artists as they manifest themselves in accordance with the demands of art consumers. Inquiries will be conducted into the nature and incidence of forgeries over time. Such a process may reveal much about the artistic and sociological impulses from which they derive.

Chapter five will provide concluding thoughts in regard to this analysis of forgeries within the above categorizations.

Throughout the various sections of this paper, specific examples and case studies will be used to illustrate the benefits of forgeries as described above. The goal of this work is to offer a new perspective on forgeries that perhaps may lessen the stigma associated with these phenomena.

A Foundation for Forgeries

The problem of art forgeries not only affects contemporary society, but has also influenced the course of art history for centuries. It is, therefore, important to have an understanding of forgeries as rooted in particular historical contexts, which over time can exist under new circumstances and take on alternative meanings. Forgery, in general, incorporates elements of imitation and copying. Yet, there has been a long tradition of these practices as the principal method of artistic training.¹¹ This is evident in the tendency of Roman artists to copy Greek works.¹² The practices of imitation and copying were later displayed in the workshops of the Old Masters where a uniformity of style was the goal. In the case of Peter Paul Rubens' (1577-1640) studio, while his students were copying his style, Rubens himself was

¹¹ Susan Tallman, "Faking It," Art in America 78.11 (1990): 79.

¹² Hoving, 30.

busy studying and copying the works of the Italian masters, such as Titian (c. 1490-1576) and Raphael (1483-1520), so that he could learn from their techniques of pictorial representation.¹³ Rubens' workshop was considered a commercial enterprise in which the master collaborated with his apprentices who were regarded as extensions of his hand.¹⁴ Masters were permitted to sell studio productions as their own. Rubens often added no more than the finishing touches to a painting, although he adjusted the prices of his pieces based on the extent of his involvement in their production. Problems of mis-attribution frequently have arisen with works of this nature as it is often impossible to distinguish the hand of the master from that of his students. Furthermore, masters often produced several exact copies of the same work in their workshops which further confuses the status of each piece: which one did the master do, which one did his students do? While these works are obviously not forgeries, removed from their original contexts, they have the potential to become so through various means of manipulation.

Imitation and copying can be seen as "the sincerest form of flattery."¹⁵ Furthermore, it may be perceived as a way of popularizing a style.¹⁶ More importantly, however, it is a sign of artistic expertise on the part of the imitator. Many famous artists are known to have copied various artistic styles. Michelangelo (1473-1564) carved a sleeping cupid in such a manner that it appeared to be an authentic Roman "antique."¹⁷ As such works were desirable at this time, Michelangelo sent the piece to Rome to be sold. The statue was given to a dealer

¹³Christopher White, Peter Paul Rubens: Man and Artist (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) 16.

¹⁴H. Ruhemann, ed. Genuine and False: Copies, Imitations, Forgeries (London: Max Parrish & Co., Ltd., 1948) 12.

¹⁵J.M. Van Bemmelen, "Foreword," Aspects of Art Forgery: Criminology Symposium (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962) VI.

¹⁶Ruhemann, 12.

¹⁷Aubrey Menen, Art & Money: An Irreverent History (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1980) 141.

who buried it in a vineyard so that it would have a convincing appearance of age.¹⁸ Finally, it was sold as an authentic antique for 200 gold ducats.¹⁹ For Michelangelo, the process of his creation was an exercise which proved his talents equaled those of the Romans, and ultimately, the Greeks. However, one sees the danger of an innocent imitation changing contexts through intentional deceit, thus creating a new and distorted history for itself. Maurice de Vlaminck (1876-1958), for the sake of amusement, painted a picture in the style of Paul Cezanne (1839-1906) which was later given a forged signature and put on the market as an authentic work.²⁰ A further twist arose due to fraudulent behavior on the part of Cezanne who later claimed the piece to be one of his own.²¹ Claude Monet's (1840-1926) early works imitated the style of Edouard Manet (1832-1883). As well, one cannot overlook the similarities between the cubist works of Pablo Picasso (1881-1974) and Georges Braque (1882-1963); they are often indistinguishable unless a signature is identified.²² While these examples show that imitation is a common practice among well-known artists, it also demonstrates how such works can later be classified as forgeries. Furthermore, it is clear how forgeries have become natural extensions of the legitimate process of imitation and copying. The definition and various types of forgeries will be discussed forthwith in order that the reader will have an understanding of their broad scope.

¹⁸ Menen, 141.

¹⁹ Menen, 142.

²⁰ Lawrence Jeppson, Fascinating Tales of Great Art Forgeries (New York: Weybright & Talley, 1970) 299.

²¹ Jeppson, 299. Certain behaviors by other artists such as Picasso and De Chirico have also been classified as fraudulent. They have been known to reject genuine works that they no longer liked. As well, they often knowingly signed their names to forged works. George Savage, "Uncovering the Forger's Methods," Studio International 174.893 (1967): 178.

²² Alice Beckett, Fakes: Forgery and the Art World (London: Richard Cohen Books, 1995) 123.

Forgeries: A Definition

It is necessary to develop a clear definition of the term "forgery." To this end, it will be helpful to clarify the differences between forgeries, fakes and reproductions, their opposite being authentic or genuine works, or those being of undisputed origin. A forgery implies fabrication from the start.²³ For example, the process of taking a piece of paper, scribbling an image on it, signing Andy Warhol's (1928-1987) name to it, and offering it as such constitutes the exercise of making a forgery. However, a fake refers to a genuine object that has been altered in order to enhance its value, such as a large, awkward painting from the late Renaissance or Baroque period whose canvas has been cut down into various fragments in order to create more interesting and marketable pieces for a significant profit.²⁴ Reproductions are copies or imitations produced with honorable intentions, such as the famous art works often seen being copied by students in museums.²⁵ The essential feature of an art forgery, and the one that will be applicable throughout this work, is its intention to deceive. Forgeries are deceptive because they are presented as the work of a different artist or that of another artistic period. Legally, art forgery is considered to be a form of fraud.²⁶ In understanding that the necessary component of an art forgery is deceit,

²³ Beckett, 37.

²⁴ Otto Kurz, Fakes: A Handbook For Collectors and Students (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1948) 43. Other types of works that frequently undergo such manipulations are large family portraits that can easily be cut up into single portraits which are more desirable.

²⁵ George Savage, Forgeries, Fakes and Reproductions: A Handbook For The Art Dealer and Collector (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963) 1. In various scholarly texts, the terms fake and forgery are used interchangeably. However, the author will remain consistent in her use of these words and the appropriate connotations associated with their use, as defined in the main text.

²⁶ Detective Neil Stokes, Personal Interview, 18 July 1997. For many reasons, crimes of this nature are difficult to prosecute and thus art forgeries continue to be prevalent. First, it is difficult to prove intent. Individuals who create forgeries can always claim that their pieces are innocent copies that someone else passed off as authentic works. Or, they may state that it is not their fault if the individuals who purchased their pieces did not research them properly. It will always be the clients' word against the forger's. However, Otto Kurz argues that, "The artist who spends his life creating works of art in the style of a bygone epoch and remains immaculately unaware of the fact that wicked dealers may sell his creations as antiques, is a myth." (Conklin, 65) Furthermore, it is unlikely that any witnesses can directly link the forgeries to the forgers, that is unless someone has seen them actually produce the fraudulent works and forge signatures on them, which would surely qualify as having an 'intent to deceive.' Art crimes, such as forgery, are often not considered by the police as high priority crimes, and

one must also recognize that there are many types of forgeries which are characterized by this feature. This chapter will now address the various categories of forgeries which will be discussed throughout this work.

Forgeries: A Categorization

The first and most obvious type of forgery is an exact copy of an already existing art work. The difficulty with a forgery of this nature is that if the location of the original work is known, it is easy to dismiss the copy as such. However, some works, by sheer nature of their fame, will inevitably be forged. Such is the case with Leonardo da Vinci's (1452-1519) Mona Lisa.²⁷ When the painting was stolen in 1911 from the Louvre, numerous copies were made.²⁸ It has been suggested that the Mona Lisa which hangs in the gallery is not the original, but rather, one of the copies, although documentation by the Louvre proves otherwise.²⁹ As part of a complex scheme, it is thought that the forgeries were offered to various individuals in the United States who were told that the picture in the Louvre was a reproduction, while the one before them was the real Mona Lisa.³⁰ While some people may have been fooled by such a plot, in general, forgeries of this kind find a limited market.

thus plea bargains are opted over lengthy, expensive trials. Additionally, dealers and clients often do not wish to partake in such proceedings. Such involvement will affect the reputation of the dealer who knowingly, or unknowingly, sold fraudulent works of art. It will bring shame upon the client who foolishly sought a bargain and ended up with a forgery. It is unfortunate that the many factors discussed above, produce a low conviction rate of art forgers, which ultimately makes it difficult to curb the amount of forgeries which circulate in the art market. Stokes, Personal Interview, 18 July, 1997.

²⁷Many copies of the Mona Lisa exist in collections around the world: the Tours Museum has two copies; the Prado has a copy that is thought to be by a pupil of Leonardo; as well, the Walter's Art Gallery has a version from the 16th-century and the William D. Vernon Collection in New York has a copy that has been valued at two and a half million dollars, as the painting is believed to have been part of Marie Antoinette's private collection. As well, there are two copies in collections in England. John Fitzmaurice Mills and John M. Mansfield, The Genuine Article (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1979) 140. Several of these copies are illustrated on pg. 139.

²⁸ Hoving, 85.

²⁹ Hoving, 85.

³⁰ David L. Goodrich, Art Fakes in America (New York: The Viking Press, 1973) 56.

Another type of forgery involves the addition or alteration of a signature. Many scenarios may exist which are ideal for such changes. A painting by an unknown artist that has stylistic features similar to a more prominent artist can easily be disguised as such. Through the addition of a signature, if the work is unsigned, or the changing of an existing signature, the painting can convincingly represent a work of a famous artist.³¹ A landscape by Lucien Pissarro, the son of the famous Impressionist Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), was seen displayed in a gallery window masquerading as a work of his father.³² Lucien's signature was removed from the piece and Camille's was added, in hopes of a profitable sale.³³ One art dealer had numerous paintings stored in the back of his gallery space, and whenever a request came in for a painting by a certain artist, he chose the piece that most closely resembled the style of the artist, and proceeded to sign the piece with the appropriate name.³⁴ Because such manipulations commonly occur, it is wise not to place too much emphasis on the signature as the basis for a painting's attribution. Forgers can run into problems when they add signatures of artists who normally did not sign their works,³⁵ which was true of most Dutch painters, or when a signature is carelessly misspelled as evidenced in a forged work by Camille Pissarro, who, outraged by its presence, wrote: "I am conducting a campaign here against forgers who are peddling fake paintings and gouaches...signed with my name, forged of course, and misspelt."³⁶ In one unusual case, the manipulation of signatures allowed one person to realize an appreciable profit. After commissioning a copy of a work by Jan Steen

³¹ Kurz, 44.

³² Robert Wraight, *The Art Game Again* (London: Leslie Frewin, 1974) 112.

³³ Wraight, 112.

³⁴ Wraight, 113. Clients were amazed that the dealer always seemed to know exactly where and from whom to obtain the requested works. All the dealer needed was a few days drying time for the signature which he added to the works.

³⁵ One collector placed so much emphasis on signatures that he only collected works that were signed. His collection contains several drawings by artists that are known never to have signed their works, which ultimately suggests their spurious nature. Wraight, 111.

³⁶ Kurz, 65.

(c.1626-1679), the individual had the copyist paint his own name over the forged signature. The painting, which was headed for the U.S., was at that time subject to a twenty percent import tax.³⁷ An anonymous letter warned the customs officials that a certain Dutch painting was coming through the borders with an unknown painter's name superimposed on it. The painting was stopped and examined just as planned, and the top signature was removed to reveal that of Jan Steen. The painting was authenticated, and although the owner had to pay the import tax, he sold the painting for \$50,000 within days.³⁸

While falsification of a work of art can be achieved through the alterations of signatures, one can also misrepresent a work of a lesser artist, perhaps a pupil, as the work of a master, to an inexperienced and ill-informed collector without having to make any formal artistic changes to the piece. Instead, the authentication of a work may be forged through the use of falsified rubber stamps and seals of galleries, museums and art experts, as well as fabricated sales invoices.³⁹ David Stein, a Frenchman and prolific forger of modern drawings in the 1960's and 1970's, whose wife helped him sell his forgeries out of his New York gallery, met his downfall when he erred in falsifying the documentation for one of his forgeries.⁴⁰ Stein informed a client that authentication papers for the newly purchased work were with a dealer in Paris.⁴¹ He would therefore have to write and request the documents be sent to him in New York. Stein forged the papers himself with the use of a falsified rubber stamp from a well-known Paris art expert and delivered them to his client only two days after the supposed request, not allowing adequate time for mail to travel

³⁷ Jeppson, 294.

³⁸ Jeppson, 295.

³⁹ Conklin, 76. Falsified letters from collectors or dealers which express interest in certain artworks can help give further credit to the fraudulent pieces.

⁴⁰ Anne-Marie Stein, as told to George Carpozi, Jr., Three Picassos Before Breakfast: Memoirs of an Art Forger's Wife (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1973) 146.

⁴¹ Stein, 147.

between the two countries.⁴² (This was before the days of the fax machine and Federal Express.) Suspicion arose regarding the authenticity of the documents, and, after fleeing from the police, Stein was finally taken under custody and charged accordingly.⁴³

In addition to a change of signature, other alterations to a work of art may constitute a forgery. An unfinished work can be completed under the guise of the original artist. Eric Hebborn, a well-known forger of old master drawings, whose work was purchased by such important institutions as the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., and the British Museum, finished a fragment of a studio painting by Francesco Bassano (c. 1535-92) called The Animals Entering the Ark.⁴⁴ A painting that undergoes changes that are unrelated to restoration work, may also be considered a forgery. An example of this would be the painting Mrs. Payne by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92).⁴⁵ At some point, the painting experienced a major compositional change, mainly the removing of Mrs. Payne from the painting, leaving only her two daughters in the composition. She was replaced by additional vegetation and clouds.⁴⁶ The interpretation of the piece is greatly affected by such manipulation of Reynold's original conception of the work; the title character of the painting is no longer present.

One of the more common types of forgeries is known as a *pastiche*. Essentially, a *pastiche* is a composite of various features that are characteristic of a

⁴² Stein, 146-7. Stein easily obtained the stamp of the expert Andre Pacitti. He went to a printing shop that produced such stamps and posed as Pacitti, claiming that he was on a business trip to New York and had accidentally misplaced his stamp. Stein showed the printer an imprint of the stamp on the back of a photograph of an authentic Chagall, and a duplicate stamp was promptly made.

⁴³ Stein, 165.

⁴⁴ Eric Hebborn, The Art Forger's Handbook (London: Cassel, 1997) 124-31. Hebborn based his completion of the painting on a similarly titled work by Bassano which hangs in the Prado. The completed work was never sold as an authentic piece, however.

⁴⁵ John Fitzmaurice Mills and John M. Mansfield, The Genuine Article (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1979) 134. This is illustrated on page 135: *Sir Joshua Reynolds' painting of Mrs. Payne and her two daughters, after the removal of over-painting, The same portrait with Mrs. Payne painted out.*

⁴⁶ Fitzmaurice and Mansfield, 134.

certain artist. As Alice Beckett explains, a *pastiche* creates "the illusion of the new painting being related to other work and helping to place it apparently authentically within a certain period of that artist's *oeuvre*."⁴⁷ This type of forgery often successfully infiltrates the art market because it is easily recognizable and thus accepted as the work of the intended artist. A *pastiche* may also be a composite that incorporates features from more than one artist, such as is demonstrated in an unknown work that was presented as a rare 15th-century double portrait which used as its sources a work by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), Portrait of a Woman and one attributed to Piero del Pollaiuolo (1443-1496), Profile of a Woman.⁴⁸ David Stein produced hundreds of *pastiches* of modern masters such as Marc Chagall (1889-1985) and Picasso. In order to determine what types of forgeries to produce, Stein would tour the local galleries to evaluate the demand for certain works.⁴⁹ Working in the manner of these desired artists, Stein created variations on particular themes that the artists had commonly used. For example, in his Chagall drawings, Stein incorporated the famous clowns and lovers which were tell-tale signs of Chagall's works.⁵⁰ Forgeries that are consistent with certain styles or themes of specific artists, will more likely be accepted as genuine, due to these similarities. The artists that Stein forged often did not catalogue or sign all of their works.⁵¹ This factor makes it difficult to keep track of the artists' many compositional variations of particular subjects and provides opportunities for forgers, such as Stein, to introduce new pieces into the market without raising suspicion. However, contemporary artists carefully

⁴⁷ Beckett, 38.

⁴⁸ Hebborn, 123. These are illustrated in: The Art Forger's Handbook, plate 40: *A pastiche of unknown origin copying from unrelated pictures, attempting to be a rare double portrait of the 15th-century. The sources have been identified as:* plate 41: Sandro Botticelli, Portrait of a Woman, oil on panel, Palazzo Pitti, Florence and Plate 42: Attributed to Piero del Pollaiuolo, Profile of a Woman, tempera and oil on panel, Museo Poldi-Pezzoli, Milan.

⁴⁹ Conklin, 73.

⁵⁰ An example of one of Stein's Chagall forgeries is illustrated in: Anee-Marie Stein, Three Picassos Before Breakfast as told to George Carpozi, Jr. (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1973), plate 10: *Fake Chagall sold to A. Lublin*.

⁵¹ Beckett, 38.

document their works with the help of the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian to deter forgers.⁵² It seems logical for a forger to create a piece that closely relates to the stylistic features of the intended artist. A Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) forgery that resembles a Rembrandt (1606-1669) would not achieve any status as an authentic work. Hence, the success of the *pastiche*.

One may create a convincing forgery that does not obviously correspond to the accepted conventions of that artist's style or content. The last category of fraudulent art consists of what will be termed an original forgery.⁵³ An original forgery is a forgery that is not based on any historical models, like the *pastiche*, but rather is a fabrication which is completely unique in nature and is, therefore, original. Han van Meegeren is one such forger who succeeded in creating a series of forgeries that fall into this category. Van Meegeren, a 20th-century Dutch artist, had his first experience with forging when he secretly decided to paint a duplicate of his gold-medal painting that had sold for a high price, and sell the copy as the original for an additional profit. For Van Meegeren, "art was as good as the buyer believed it to be."⁵⁴ Later in his career, Van Meegeren forged several paintings by Johannes Vermeer of Delft (1632-1675) the great master known for his quaint Dutch interiors.⁵⁵ Rather than producing pieces that were similar to other known works by

⁵² Jeppson, 313.

⁵³ One may also consider the notion of original copies. Susie Ray is Britain's leading copyist who specializes in Impressionist works. She stamps the back of her copies with 'Susie Ray Original,' so as not to deceive anyone. Her works may be considered as legitimate forgeries. She is often asked to copy works by owners who are faced with high insurance premiums so that they can place their paintings in a vault for safe keeping. Others know that they could never afford the original work and thus turn to Ray to help satisfy their artistic wishes. Even so, Ray's copies do not come cheap at 5,000 pounds or more. Some clients hope to gain status through the commissioning of works that purport to be originals. Ray believes that copying means reaching a wider audience, whether they be her own copies, or reproductions in art books or on posters. Susie Ray's works, although clearly marked as copies, may over time become problematic. What will happen when one of her works gets relined with a new canvas, or perhaps changes owners? No one can say for sure, but the possibility exists that her works may no longer be recognizable as copies. Beckett, 118-129.

⁵⁴ Richard Newnham, The Guinness Book of Fakes, Frauds and Forgeries (Middlesex: Guinness Publishing, 1991) 137.

⁵⁵ Conklin, 72.

Vermeer, Van Meegeren chose to create an entire new *genre* of Vermeer's art. Much thought had gone into Van Meegeren's choice of artist and subject. There exists a gap of about ten years between Vermeer's earliest works and those of his mature style, where nothing is known about his whereabouts or his paintings. Various art historians had speculated that Vermeer had spent some of these years in Italy where he was influenced by the works of Caravaggio (1571-1610).⁵⁶ Very few religious works existed in the Protestant region of northern Europe at this time, and only one work of this nature had been attributed to Vermeer.⁵⁷ This piece, Christ in the House of Martha and Mary, is unlike any other work by Vermeer and reflects Caravaggio's style.⁵⁸ This painting is generally accepted as an authentic early work of Vermeer. This piece stimulated further theories by art historians, mainly Dr. Abraham Bredius, that Vermeer may have belonged to a secret society for which he had created a group of religious paintings to which the Christ with Martha and Mary belonged. Van Meegeren created the missing religious works in Vermeer's *oeuvre* that the historians were anxious to discover. Van Meegeren chose various religious subjects. The first and most famous of these, Christ at Emmaus is a highly emotional and dramatic scene and it was also one of Caravaggio's most famous representations.⁵⁹ Thus, the Christ at Emmaus would surely be linked to Vermeer's "missing" Italianate period.⁶⁰ Incorporating a style that somewhat evoked the features of the Christ with Martha and Mary, Van Meegeren fooled the art world with his originality and creative skills

⁵⁶ Hoving, 170.

⁵⁷ Lord Kilbracken, Van Meegeren: Master Forger (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967): 18.

⁵⁸ This work is illustrated in: Stuart J. Fleming, Authenticity in Art: The Scientific Detection of Forgery (London: The Institute of Physics, 1975), colour plate 9: Christ in the House of Martha and Mary, attributed to Vermeer and believed to be his earliest extant work, circa 1654, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁵⁹ Caravaggio's Disciples at Emmaus is illustrated in: P. B. Coremans, Van Meegeren's Faked Vermeers and De Hooghs: A Scientific Examination (London: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1949), plate 39.

⁶⁰ Hoving, 170-173. This work is illustrated in: Coremans, plate 1: Disciples at Emmaus, Vermeer style.

of forgery. Van Meegeren's forgeries are original insofar as they do not generally reflect Vermeer's known works from a thematic and aesthetic point of view.⁶¹

Another kind of original forgery is one where not only the art works are false but the existence of the artist is completely fictional. In one case, a group of works by an unknown artist were shown in an exhibit in 1929, organized by Brian Howard, under the guise of "Bruno Hat," supposedly a German abstract painter. At the opening of the show, Brian had his brother-in-law parade in a wheelchair as Hat, while greeting visitors in a heavy German accent. In the introduction of the exhibition's catalogue, a friend of Brian's, posing as an art critic, hailed Hat as "the first signal of the coming world movement towards the creation of Pure Form," thereby legitimizing Hat's works, such as his Still Life With Pears, on another level.⁶² Though Hat was eventually exposed as Brian Howard, this group of forgeries was truly original in nature.

In addition to creating the works of a phony artist, forgers may also produce the artifacts of a non-existent civilization, forming an entire new culture of people. For example, in 1928, bogus excavations in Switzerland yielded evidence of *L'age de la Corne*, or the Horn Age. The inventors of the Horn Age postulated that before the Bronze Age and the Stone Age, civilized people must have used tools made of horns and bone, hence, the Horn Age.⁶³ Having established a system of categorization of forgeries, one can now begin to consider how notions of value have influenced their production.

⁶¹ Alfred Lessing presents an interesting debate regarding the degree of originality present in the Van Meegeren forgeries in his articles "What is Wrong with a Forgery" Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 23.4 (1965).

⁶² Beckett, 39.

⁶³ Kurz, 302-3.

Value: A Conceptual Understanding

The notion of value has a variety of determinants. These determinants, that include monetary, aesthetic and historical/cultural value, are interrelated, and to the extent that they influence an individual or collective perception of a work, are meaningful subjects of academic inquiry. Moreover, it is only after one acknowledges the sources of value that one can understand the methodologies, motivations and inspirations of the forger. To these ends, in the following sub-sections, I will examine the determinants of value as a necessary component to this thesis.

The Emergence of the Artist's Identity and Its Connection to Value

The forging of art is a phenomenon that is directly linked to the identity of an artist and the subsequent value of the artist's work.⁶⁴ The recognition of an artist's identity, or the cult of the artist, is a concept that re-emerged in the modern world.⁶⁵ Previous to the Renaissance's awareness of and emphasis on the artist as an individual, the art of the Middle Ages, which was mainly comprised of religious objects, was primarily seen as functional, such as the statues of the virgin and child which devoted Christians often prayed to for spiritual guidance.⁶⁶ Such works of art were significant not for their maker, but rather were admired for their religious content. Artists in the Middle Ages were considered to be craftsmen whose individual talents were not highly regarded. However, in the Renaissance, a spirit of individualism helped artists to improve their social position as well as to acquire greater economic wealth. Furthermore, some of these artists claimed as their own a certain "genius" of divine origin. It was in the Renaissance and Baroque periods that

⁶⁴ Huer, 45.

⁶⁵ Conklin, 18.

⁶⁶ Thomas Wurttenberger, "Criminological and Criminal-Law Problems of the Forging of Paintings," Aspects of Art Forgery: Criminology Symposium (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962) 16.

the artist's signature developed into a sign of unique artistic achievements, and subsequently, the determinant of the monetary value of artistic works.⁶⁷ The signature has, therefore, become a major component in the process of forging.⁶⁸

The Value of Art: A Cultural Construction

Assessing the value of art is a complex task that may be considered from a variety of perspectives. It must first be recognized that value is a cultural construction. Serious art collectors do not wantonly purchase their works. Collectors consider current trends in the art market that are demonstrated in such places as auction houses. The popularity and desirability of certain artists can be traced through an increase or decrease in their current auction value. The auction world will be considered in detail in a later chapter of this work where certain trends will be analyzed in order to render insights regarding forging patterns. Value is also influenced by art critics. Favorable reviews of exhibitions and retrospectives by prominent critics can pave the way to success for up-and-coming artists while they can also rejuvenate interest in artists who have fallen out of the spotlight over the years. Conversely, negative publicity can be detrimental to the success of an artist. Art consumers rely heavily on art critics to offer guidance throughout the course of their purchases. One may equate the influential role of art critics with that of movie or book reviewers. Lastly, it may be held that acquisitions by museums and private collections have an effect on the value of art.⁶⁹ Art that attains museum status or has

⁶⁷ Wurtenberger, 16-17.

⁶⁸ While the identity of an artist is clearly an important factor in determining the value of a work of art, this is not always the case. Consider non-western art such as Tribal, Pre-Columbian and Native American art for example. Such works of art are highly valued despite their often anonymous nature. Thus, absence of identity does not always result in an absence of value. This anonymity often makes works of this nature an easy target for forgers; one cannot easily be accused of forging another artist's work. In particular, Pre-Columbian forgeries are hard to detect. Some scientific tests do not work on the type of clay found in certain regions from which the objects are supposed to derive. In addition, no complete catalogue of Pre-Columbian art exists; the existence of such a catalogue would provide a means of comparison for newly discovered works. Conklin, 76.

⁶⁹ Conklin, 7-8.

warranted the attention of a prestigious private collector will realize an increase in value and will spark heightened interest in the market.⁷⁰ While these influences are all extrinsic to the work of art itself, it will be evident that art's intrinsic qualities play a substantial role in determining a work's value.

The Value of Art: Monetary Worth

In understanding that the value of art is culturally constructed, it is important to recognize exactly what kind of value is determined institutionally. These fluctuations in value seem to be of an economic nature. Monetary worth is not, however, the only determinant of value. Works of art also possess aesthetic as well historical/cultural value, both of which can have an effect on their monetary worth. These elements will be elaborated upon in the following section. The economic value of works of art, by western standards, are primarily based on the attribution of the work. Once artists have established themselves and gained recognition on the basis of their art works, their reputation alone carries weight in the art community. It then becomes the name of the artist that makes an art work famous, and not the other way around.⁷¹ Thus, it is expected that when a work is exposed as a forgery, its monetary value will drop significantly. Consider for example Van Meegeren's forgery Christ at Emmaus. As an authentic Vermeer, the piece sold in 1937 for \$250,000, a large sum of money at that time. Now, as a forgery, the Christ at Emmaus is thought to be worth no more than five dollars.⁷²

In addition to attribution, other factors affect the monetary value of art. The reputations of artists contribute greatly to the value of their works. Well-established artists whose works have continuously been sought after will generate higher prices than the works of unknown artists. Late in his career, Picasso was aware that the

⁷⁰ Huer, 43.

⁷¹ Huer, 51.

⁷² Huer, 46. However, this work's fame as a forgery assigns a new value to the piece.

nature of the works he produced was secondary to his name and reputation when he signed a napkin for a young artist at a restaurant and said, "Don't let it go too cheap."⁷³ On the other hand, while the identity of an artist justifies worth, worth is often seen to confirm identity. Such is the case in regard to a forged Picasso that was sent to Picasso himself for authentication.⁷⁴ Unsure of its origin, Picasso inquired about its price. Upon hearing that the piece was purchased for \$100,000, Picasso said, "Well, if he paid that much, it must be real."⁷⁵

Another factor which affects economic value is the nature of the art work itself. This may include the scarcity of the type of work by that particular artist, or perhaps the unusual nature of the chosen subject matter. For example, in a recent sale of Impressionist and Modern Art at Sotheby's in London, a drawing by Van Gogh called La Moisson en Provence, sold for 8,801,500 pounds or \$14,720,690 us: a world auction record for a work on paper by the artist.⁷⁶ The drawing is of a landscape outside Arles and was executed by Van Gogh in 1888. Works of this nature appear infrequently on the market and, therefore, create a heightened sense of interest on the part of potential buyers. Particularly in this case, the drawing, executed in pencil, reed pen and brown ink, as well as watercolour and gouache, is rare in comparison to the scope of Van Gogh's more well-known works.⁷⁷ This piece, which illustrates Van Gogh's talents as a draughtsman, exemplifies how the scarcity of a particular type of work can generate an exceptional price.

While the medium used is important, as evidenced in the Van Gogh drawing, so too are the overall materials used. Relics made of gold or silver that are adorned

⁷³ Conklin, 18.

⁷⁴ Clifford Irving, Fake! The Story of Elmyr de Hory the Greatest Art Forger of Our Time (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969) 227.

⁷⁵ Irving, 227. It is quite disconcerting to think that an artist such a Picasso would not be able to distinguish his own work from that of a forger.

⁷⁶ Sotheby's Catalogue Impressionist and Modern Art Post Sale Report and Sale Results, London 24 and 25 June 1997.

⁷⁷ Sotheby's Preview July 1997.

with precious jewels are appraised not only in terms of their spiritual/social significance, but also the value of their materials. Other factors such as the size of a piece, its age and its condition can significantly alter the value of a piece. For example, Sotheby's auction of "Important Canadian Art" in Toronto, in May of 1997, sold a Paul Peel (1860-1892) painting, Before the Bath for \$130,000 cdn. Many copies of this work were executed by Peel, one of which was sold in 1995 for \$450,000 cdn. Peel often copied his own work because it sold so well. The discrepancy in price for these identical works stems from the poor condition and smaller size of the one sold in May 1997 as compared to the other more costly version. Thus, it is clear how such factors, even on these similar works, can produce significant variations in price. Peel's Before the Bath, which was sold in May in Toronto, was purchased in February of 1997 at an estate sale in Paris for the sum of 95,000 francs, or \$22,000 cdn.⁷⁸ This difference in price in relation to the amount the painting was sold for at auction, illustrates another determinant of value. Since Peel is Canadian, the demand for his works is greater in Canada than in France,⁷⁹ as evidenced in the low value placed on the very same work by the Paris art community. Certain works are best sold in specific markets where substantial interest is displayed, in accordance with the laws of supply and demand.⁸⁰ Thus, Canadian works of art warrant their own auction in Toronto, as the demand for these works is, for the most part, centralized in Canada.⁸¹ It would not be prudent to include Canadian works of art in sales across the world in such places as New York or London because few

⁷⁸ Deirdre Kelly, "Looking for the Real Paul Peel," The Globe and Mail 20 May 1997: D1.

⁷⁹ While this is generally true for most Canadian artists, this is not always the case. One exception is Jean-Paul Riopelle, a French-Canadian artist. There is a tremendously strong market for his works in France and the rest of Europe.

⁸⁰ Milton Esterow, "Buyers, Sellers and Forgeries: The Strange New Art Market," Harper's Magazine June 1967: 84.

⁸¹ With regard to the market for Peels in Canada, Hugh Hildesley, the Sotheby's auctioneer at the Toronto sale of "Important Canadian Art" commented: "When you get lucky you can pick up Peels in Europe for little money and bring them to Canada and sell them for a great deal more. This is the centre of the Canadian market... His fame now rests on his Canadian character." Kelly, D1.

buyers would be willing to pay the large sums of money that are normally offered by Canadian consumers.⁸²

A sound provenance also aids in establishing the authenticity of a work of art, which as previously noted, is one factor that determines its value. It is the policy of Sotheby's, as well as other prominent auction houses, to screen their consignments such that if a work's history of ownership can not be upheld, the work will not go to sale.⁸³ Lastly, the total amount of works produced by an artist will play a role in defining their economic value: the fewer the works, the more valuable they will be considered. No more than thirty-five works have been attributed to Vermeer, which by virtue of their rarity have been considered priceless. Often, collectors fear that the discovery of new works by artists that they own may result in their decrease in value, as the market becomes diluted. After settling his estate, Mark Rothko's (1903-1973) family worried that "Rothko's market might suffer as a result of litigation and the resultant public knowledge that 798 of his pictures were available."⁸⁴ If the works are not scarce, such as in the case of prints, lithographs and etchings, which are produced in series of editions, the art works are not as costly because of their more widespread availability. For example, there is a noticeable difference in value between two works of Chagall, executed in different mediums, but appraised in the same year. While a hand colored etching La Lutte Avec Ange, numbered 87/100, was estimated at \$1,500 to \$2,000 us. in a 1996 Sotheby's auction⁸⁵ one of Chagall's watercolors, Chevre et Coq Rouge, was estimated to be worth 45,000 to 55,000 pounds.⁸⁶ The

⁸² Canadian corporations and other private collectors in Canada are encouraged to buy Canadian art due to certain applicable statutory tax provisions present in the Income Tax Act. R.S.C. 1985, c. 1 as amended.

⁸³ Goodrich, 57. Before the Sotheby's auction of "Important Canadian Art" in Toronto, rumors had been circulating that Peel's Before the Bath was fake. However, a Sotheby's consultant assured the public that, "We feel quite confident that Before the Bath is not a fake. If it were a fake, Sotheby's would not be selling it. That's not our position to sell fake paintings." Kelly, D1.

⁸⁴ Huer, 49-50.

⁸⁵ Sotheby's Catalogue, 19th and 20th-Century Prints, (New York: November 7 and 8, 1996) lot 165.

⁸⁶ Sotheby's Catalogue, Impressionist and Modern Art Part II, (London: 25 June 1996) lot 230.

aforementioned factors which cause economic fluctuations in the value of art, which in theory are applicable only to authentic works of art, also influence the monetary value of forgeries, as these works, when considered genuine, are dispersed among authentic works, and treated as such. Therefore, these factors are taken into account by the forger who shrewdly chooses what to forge, as will be explored in more detail in chapter four. An understanding of this framework in relation to value is necessary in order to properly comprehend the tactics of a successful forger. These strategies will be addressed in chapter three of this thesis.

The Value of Art: Aesthetic Worth

From an economic standpoint, forgeries are not worthy in the eyes of most collectors. However, from an aesthetic perspective, a different opinion may surface. The aesthetic value of a forgery or an authentic work is formed as a result of the overall effect of and/or emotional response to the work. This response results from the work's formal properties and/or subject matter. Forgeries that achieve the same status as authentic works of art, often do so because of their artistic merits. Two works of art that are virtually identical in every way, shape and form, such that no distinctions can readily be made between them, must stimulate the same aesthetic response and hence the same degree of aesthetic pleasure.⁸⁷ Even though one is authentic and the other a forgery, each piece initially offers the same aesthetic experience to the viewer, and, therefore, possesses a certain value in this regard.

John Berger cites as a widespread view in the art world that "It is authentic and therefore it is beautiful."⁸⁸ One can infer from this statement that if a work is not authentic, it cannot be beautiful. Such a view, in my opinion, is misinformed, as it is only after the forgery has been exposed as such that the viewer has a changed opinion

⁸⁷ Mark Sagoff, "The Aesthetic Status of Forgeries," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 35.2 (1976): 177.

⁸⁸ John Berger, Ways of Seeing (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1977) 21.

of the piece. This alternative view of the forgery is one that occurs by virtue of the viewers' assumption that the painting is supposed to illicit a different response now that its status has changed. While the viewers may not be able to recognize the differences between the forgery and the authentic work, they believe that they can learn to perceive these apparent visual distinctions.⁸⁹ However, Alfred Lessing, in his article, "What is Wrong With a Forgery" argues that the knowledge of a work of art as a forgery should not affect the viewer's aesthetic experience of the piece. Lessing recognizes that,

The fact that the work of art is a forgery is an item of information about it on a level with such information as how old the artist was when he created it, the political situation in the time and place it was created, the price it originally fetched, the kind of materials used in it, the stylistic influences discernible in it... and so on. All such information belongs to areas of interest peripheral at best to the work of art as aesthetic object, areas such as biography, history of art, sociology and psychology.⁹⁰

According to Nelson Goodman, "There can be no aesthetic difference without a perceptual difference."⁹¹ Thus, depending on how one interprets information in regard to the forgery, its aesthetic value will vary. These interpretations may be influenced by social/cultural factors.

John Hoaglund offers another understanding of the aesthetic value of a forgery that is an exact copy of an original work: "we look through the copy, so to speak, at the original; our judgments, though made at the copy, are made of the original in the knowledge that the copy faithfully renders it... Its function as a copy is

⁸⁹ Anthony Ralls, "The Uniqueness and Reproducibility of a Work of Art: A Critique of Goodman's Theory," The Philosophical Quarterly 22.86 (1972): 2.

⁹⁰ Alfred Lessing, "What is Wrong with a Forgery," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 23.4 (1965): 463-4.

⁹¹ Thomas R. Foster and Luise H. Morton, "Goodman, Forgery and the Aesthetic," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 49.2 (1991): 156.

to mirror the uniqueness of aesthetic value of the original."⁹² Thus, the forgery may be appreciated and valued for its aesthetic qualities, not because of its own uniqueness, but rather for its ability to emulate the same aesthetic response as the original work of art.

It is clear that while the aesthetic qualities of a work of art are not primary to its monetary worth, some collectors seem to value art for its aesthetic pleasure rather than its financial reward. This is apparent in the reaction of one collector who even after being informed that his two Renoir watercolors were forgeries by the infamous Elmyr de Hory, chose to keep the works on display stating,

I've had ten years of pleasure from my Renoirs- or Renoirs-by-Elmyr, call them what you will- and I'll have twenty more years if I'm lucky. Then I'll give them to my two sons and tell them, 'These are things of beauty. Enjoy them for what they are, not for the signature which they bear or what someone else tells you they are or aren't.'⁹³

If a work's aesthetic value were essential, there would be no need to properly attribute works of art.⁹⁴ Yet, as previously stated, according to western ideologies, it is the identity of the artist that is the determining factor of the monetary value of art. This is further illustrated in the fact that authentic works that display inferior aesthetic qualities are generally appraised at higher values than forgeries that are regarded, to the extent that such judgment is possible, as artistically superior to them.⁹⁵ In addition to the aesthetic and monetary values of art, works may possess an historical or cultural value which can further influence their worth, as described below.

⁹² John Hoaglund, "Originality and Aesthetic Value," British Journal of Aesthetics 16 (1976): 49-50.

⁹³ Irving, 231.

⁹⁴ Huer, 51.

⁹⁵ Lessing, 463.

The Value of Art: Historical/Cultural Importance

When one purchases art, one also acquires a piece of history.⁹⁶ Art reflects the history of individual achievements and their circumstances of creation, as expressed by Paul Bator who states, "...the art of a society is both a manifestation and a mirror of its culture..."⁹⁷ In a sense, by owning art, one owns part of the artists themselves. But what about a forgery; does it own the same history? A forgery that superficially is indistinguishable from its original source is lacking in one important quality which Walter Benjamin takes up in a now famous essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Although this essay has been challenged, in the context of this thesis, it is useful to consider Benjamin's concept of the "aura," as related to art works. While it is difficult to define the exact definition of "aura," it has commonly been associated with authentic or original works of art. Benjamin suggests that such works have an "aura" which projects onto the viewer a sense of the work's historical importance as a product of its maker.⁹⁸ As copies, or in this case, forgeries, lack the original's presence in time and space, this "aura" would not in theory apply to forged works.⁹⁹ This is because forgeries claim to be works of art that never truly existed as signs of their makers and products of their environments. While it is true that forgeries are not authentic products of the artists and cultures from which they supposedly derive, they are manifestations of their contemporary contexts, and thus an "aura" of a different level may be assigned to them.

The "aura" that projects from forgeries is one of infamy for having fooled the art experts. This "aura" was certainly apparent to one owner of an Elmyr de Hory

⁹⁶ Conklin goes on to suggest that "Art collectors see their possessions as extensions of their selves, as a way to measure and present themselves to the world... Possessions become a way for people to differentiate themselves from others and assure themselves of their uniqueness." Thus, it is clear that many art collectors have strong personal connections to their art works. Conklin, 22.

⁹⁷ Conklin, 16.

⁹⁸ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt (London: Fontana, 1973) 236.

⁹⁹ Conklin, 51.

forgery of an Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920) who said he would never give the work up for anything, and wanted the art dealer who sold him the piece to sign the back of the painting stating that it was an "original and genuine Modigliani fake by Elmyr de Hory."¹⁰⁰ The owner of the forgery knew that his work would now take on a new status and be valued not for its monetary worth or even its aesthetic merit, but rather as the product of a talented forger who has attained his own status now that he has been exposed. Every work of art has a story to it, and this is even more true in the case of forgeries which fascinate and intrigue the public. The mysterious circumstances surrounding forgeries creates an "aura" in the same way that authentic works project an air of artistic genius onto the viewer.

Many forgers, after their arrests, became so famous that they had legitimate shows of their works. For example, David Stein was extremely successful, promoting himself as a "master forger."¹⁰¹ Producing works in the style of artists such as Braque, Paul Klee (1870-1940), Joan Miro (1893-1983) and Henri Matisse (1869-1954), but signing them with his name, offered Stein a legitimate career as an artist.¹⁰² As well, Van Meegeren, whose Vermeer forgeries marked him as one of the greatest forgers of all time, held a retrospective of his legitimate works in 1974. Organized by Van Meegeren's daughter, eighteen works originally intended for the show were not displayed because they were thought possibly to be forgeries.¹⁰³ Ironically, the forger, who used to imitate others, is now being copied himself.

¹⁰⁰ Irving, 232. An Example of one of de Hory's Modigliani fakes is illustrated in colour plate 2: Amedeo Modigliani, *Portrait de Jeanne Hebuterne*. Painted by Elmyr in 1964 and sold the following year to *Algur Hurtle Meadows*.

¹⁰¹ Stein, 90. An invitation to one of Stein's New York exhibitions is illustrated in plate 33.

¹⁰² Stein, 180. Although never classified as a forger like Stein, Michael Bidlo, a New York artist in the late 1980's, similarly painted skewed copies of such artists as Picasso and Mondrian. Bidlo views his appropriations as "extending the boundaries of what is accepted as art." He further acknowledges that by producing such works, he seeks to devalue the original works of art. Conklin, 51-2.

¹⁰³ "Forging Ahead," *Art News* 73 (1974): 106-7.

The Nature of Collecting

If one understands what motivates collecting, one can comprehend why forging has proved to be a profitable enterprise. Simply stated, if people did not collect art, there would be no incentive to forge. While people collect art for a variety of reasons, including for investment purposes, one motivation, which is particularly relevant to this thesis, is collecting for the purpose of attaining status.¹⁰⁴ Institutions achieve recognition for owning important works, and thus attract patrons from around the world. Individual collectors are perceived as belonging to an elite social class and are accorded prestige by an admiring, and often envious, public. Originally, collecting began in the Renaissance with the *Kunst* and *Wunderkammers*, or Cabinets of Curiosities. In order to be considered a gentleman, one had to collect objects that could enrich and enhance his knowledge of the world. In addition, the owning of these various wonders provided the owner with a certain status which others could only hope to emulate through the forming of their own collection of curiosities.¹⁰⁵ Such is the modern phenomenon of art collecting. Those who own art are accorded prestige and status in their communities and across the world. Collectors whose primary interest is gaining status are often willing to pay large sums of money for big-name artists, regardless of the quality of the art work. Alternatively, there are those collectors who, as part of the *nouveau riche*, are constantly trying to prove their worth by demonstrating that they are cultured through the acquisition of art. Jon Huer, in his book The Great Art Hoax, notes that "Nothing is as handy as art collection for establishing one's instant credit as a cultured elite." Further recognition is given to these individuals who often donate or loan their works to local collections.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Huer, 40

¹⁰⁵ These collections eventually grew to include works of art among the more scientific objects of study.

¹⁰⁶ Huer, 57.

Frequently, the *nouveau riche* are so anxious to attain this status, that they acquire instant collections of art for bargain prices that cannot possibly be authentic works. Algur Meadows is one such collector whose quick search for culture resulted in his great financial loss. Meadows, a Texas oil millionaire, while amassing his fortune, believed that one must, "Negotiate the very best possible price when you buy; second, negotiate the easiest terms for payment; and after that negotiate the lowest interest rate." Applying these business tactics to the purchasing of his art proved to be devastating for Meadows. His entire collection of art turned out to be forgeries produced by the infamous Elmyr de Hory.¹⁰⁷ While at first gaining the recognition he had sought after in his pursuit of culture, Meadows was now made to look like a fool. Forgers depend on such collectors as Meadows who are less interested in researching their potential buys and more concerned with filling in their collections with big-name artists for bargain prices. Such collectors fall easily into the trap of forgers.

This chapter has sought to offer as background, the concepts which formulate a general understanding of art and value as a necessary component in exploring the various benefits that may be obtained through the study of forgeries. In being able to generally conceptualize forgeries and their commonly designated status as inferior in relation to authentic art works, one is prepared to consider an alternative view of forgeries: one which raises their value as important, if not necessary, tools of study.

¹⁰⁷ Huer, 58.

Chapter Two

The Tools of Connoisseurship

When the connoisseur Bernard Berenson was asked how he knew that he was in the presence of an art forgery, he answered that he had a ringing in his ears, he felt sick to his stomach and experienced a moment of depression.¹ While this may have been Berenson's reality, these conditions hardly offer a solid basis for an "expert" opinion. There should be no concern, however, that the connoisseur relies merely on such temporal and physical reactions when studying works of art. The connoisseur, "an expert judge in art, as well as other matters of taste,"² has over time developed various methodologies which form the basis of his expert opinions. Through the methods of observation and comparison, the connoisseur seeks to confirm authenticity, as well as offer anonymous art works a proper place in the history of art. The methodologies of the connoisseur develop in light of the state of knowledge and technology at the time during which he works.³ As well, the extent to which the connoisseur utilizes his resources reflects the nature of his methodological ideologies. This chapter will explore the various tools of connoisseurship with a particular focus on the practices of Giovanni Morelli (1816-1891), Bernard Berenson (1865-1959) and Max J. Friedlander (1867-1958). The methodologies of these prominent connoisseurs will provide a framework from which to recognize the use of forgeries as a basis for determining authorship and/or authenticity. The relevance of forgeries as a tool for the connoisseur may only become apparent after an intimate understanding of the expert's reliance on the more traditional tools of his trade, and their application. Specifically, documentation, tradition and the work of art itself, as well as the connoisseur's use of photographs and his dependence on memory, will be

¹Hoving, 19-20.

²David Alan Brown, Berenson and the Connoisseurship of Italian Painting (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1979) 31.

³Brown, 16.

discussed in relation to each connoisseur, where applicable. Additionally, an understanding of the working methods of the connoisseur allows me to posit the notion of the forger as the connoisseur: a categorization which offers a new perspective on the role of the forger.

As a secondary effect of this study, the extent to which Morelli, Berenson and Friedlander emphasize certain resources and criteria over others in their individual assessments of works of art, permits one to formulate contrasting opinions as to which methods of connoisseurship are more trustworthy in determining a work's authorship and/or authenticity. Thus, throughout this chapter, I wish to highlight the tendencies of the chosen connoisseurs in relation to one another so as to develop a comparative analysis of their working methods. An understanding of the methods of connoisseurship is a necessary component to any analysis of forgeries. Thus, this study in connoisseurship is another effort to shed a positive light on forgeries by illustrating the potential benefits of applying these works in a number of contexts.

The Role of the Connoisseur

The connoisseur, whose goal is to establish authorship and/or authenticity, must devise a system of study in which to foster his opinions. When such systems are utilized by the connoisseur, he succeeds in establishing a work's author as well as its period and place of production. Various clues exist in the art work. The connoisseur may consider a signature, the style, paraphernalia such as furniture or the costume, as well as the subject of the work.⁴ These elements offer essential, yet generalized information regarding the origin of a piece. As Berenson explains, connoisseurship is "the comparison of works of art with a view of determining their reciprocal

⁴David Wistow, Eye Spy: A do-it-yourself Guide to Quality in Art (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1985) 5.

relations."⁵ This task poses various difficulties for the connoisseur. Often, the complexities of a particular work may prevent him from positing a definitive judgment. It is necessary to explore the nature of these problems, as well as the overall importance that this process of labeling, overseen by the connoisseur, has been assigned.

One is aware of the complexities associated with the process of attribution. The terminology specified in all Sotheby's catalogues offers proof of this condition. Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516), attributed to Giovanni Bellini, studio of..., circle of..., style of..., manner of... and after Giovanni Bellini are all terms which the experts have outlined for the potential buyer so that no confusion arises as to the status of a piece.⁶ Such categorizations reflect the nature of the production of art works at certain periods in time. Many 15th and 16th-century masters, such as Rubens, in order to meet the demands of the rising market, hired assistants not only to mix paints and clean brushes for them, but to actually contribute to the production of the art works themselves. Thus, in these workshop environments, the master himself might only execute a small portion of the actual product.⁷ It is this phenomenon which poses difficulties for the connoisseur who must distinguish between the hand of the master and that of his assistants.

In addition to the complications associated with workshop productions, the prevalence of forgeries has proven that the connoisseur is not infallible. Many errors in judgment have been documented, such as the infamous authentication of the Han van Meegeren forgeries.⁸ This incident, as well as any wrongful attribution, brings into question the trustworthiness and motivation of the connoisseur. There has

⁵Bernard Berenson, The Study and Criticism of Italian Art vol. 2 (London: George Bell and Sons, 1902) 122.

⁶Sotheby's Catalogue. Old Master Drawings and Fine Frames, London, 16 and 17 April, 1997. Please see Explanation of Cataloguing Terms.

⁷Wistow, 18.

⁸Art Crime, 72-73.

always been a close association between connoisseurship and the art market. Thus, it is possible that the connoisseur's judgments may be financially motivated.⁹ Berenson is one such figure who is known, on occasion, to have dishonestly authenticated art works for the dealer Joseph Duveen.¹⁰ It is evident that one's perception of art works is controlled by the process of labeling; often the attribution process is a means to an end, a way of securing an investment.¹¹ Consequently, unattributed works are commonly believed to be inferior to those pieces produced by famous artists.

The connoisseur is aware of his role in defining the history of art. However, it must be recognized that no attribution is ever final, as recently witnessed in the ongoing debate as to whether The Polish Rider is, or is not by Rembrandt.¹² As new scientific technologies develop, the connoisseur's capabilities for studying and authenticating art works expand, which may result in changes to previous attributions. Notwithstanding the above concerns, the connoisseur has developed rigid methodologies which, when consistently and successfully applied, validate his attributions and determinations.

Documentation and Tradition

As discussed above, the connoisseur's job is one of great complexity. As a result, he must consult all of the relevant materials to assist in his endeavors. Documentation and tradition are two such resources that provide the connoisseur with vital information pertaining to the status of an art work. The extent of documentation on a specific work of art may range from sales receipts to inventories

⁹Hayden B.J. Maginnis, "The Role of Perceptual Learning in Connoisseurship: Morelli, Berenson and Beyond" Art History 13.1 (1990): 104.

¹⁰Brown, 25 and 26.

¹¹Wistow, 17.

¹²Carol Vogel, "The Masterpiece is by the Master" Globe and Mail 8 November 1997: E6. The Rembrandt Research Project, which consists of various Dutch Scholars who, for 28 years have been examining all the Rembrandts in collections around the world, has confirmed, for now, that The Polish Rider is indeed by the master.

to agreements between employers and artists.¹³ As well, details regarding the provenance of a work may be derived from the use of such documents. The provenance, or history of ownership of an art work, is a strong determinant of authenticity. Often through such documentation or records, the work of art can be traced all the way back to the artist's studio, which provides the most convincing evidence as to the status of the piece. A lack of provenance raises suspicion in regards to the origin of the work. For example, Otto Wacker, who forged thirty-three Van Goghs claimed that the original owner of the pieces was from Russia.¹⁴ However, after a thorough investigation, it was discovered that no paintings by Van Gogh had ever been sold to a Russian.¹⁵ This testimony, introduced in Wacker's trial in April of 1932, offered proof that all thirty-three works were forgeries.¹⁶

Tradition, which encompasses early scholarship on an artist, as well as recorded references with respect to existing art works by the artist, is also an asset to the connoisseur.¹⁷ Such references may be found in exhibition or auction catalogues as well as personal correspondences of the artist. For example, it is commonly known that Van Gogh regularly made specific references to his art works in his letters to his brother Theo. Thus, these correspondences are often consulted by the connoisseur when doubts are raised concerning the status of one of Van Gogh's pieces.

Morelli, Berenson and Friedlander all recognize the value of documentation and tradition, yet they strongly caution against the use of such materials as the primary means of assessing art works. Morelli feared that mistakes in the

¹³Max J. Friedlander, *On Art and Connoisseurship* trans. Tancred Borenius (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1942) 163.

¹⁴Walter Feilchenfeldt, "Van Gogh Fakes: The Wacker Affair with an illustrated catalogue of the forgeries" *Simiolus*, 19.4 (1989): 294.

¹⁵Feilchenfeldt, 292.

¹⁶Feilchenfeldt, 294.

¹⁷Berenson, 117. Vasari's *Lives* is typically considered the essential traditional source for the connoisseur.

interpretation of such resources could potentially lead to misattributions.¹⁸ Therefore, opinions derived from the above sources must be substantiated by other means. Berenson and Friedlander warn that these materials, though seemingly authentic, can easily be forged. In addition, problems surface where an authentic document describes a commissioned work that, in fact, was never executed. If a forger creates a work to which the document corresponds, the forged work becomes validated by the trusted document. As well, a descriptive document may seemingly relate to a number of art works executed by various artists by virtue of their shared subject matter.¹⁹ If the documents for these pieces have been lost, the difficulty arises in determining to which produced work the document applies.²⁰ The complex nature of interpreting such evidence is best summarized by Berenson who states that "the document always needs to be confirmed by connoisseurship."²¹

Berenson and Friedlander are also skeptical of tradition. The trustworthiness of the author must always be considered.²² As well, greater weight is attributed to scholarly writings produced at the approximate time in which the artist lived and worked. A tradition that is contemporary to the artist's life is more likely to be based on factual accounts than one that is produced many years after the memory of contact with the artist has diminished. The regional derivation of the source is also significant in that such writings that originate in the artist's place of production inherently offer a more precise account of his *oeuvre* than a tradition distanced from

¹⁸John Murdoch, "Attribution and the Claim to Objectivity," International Journal of Cultural Property 2.2 (1993): 328-9. Specifically, Morelli cites an incident in which an archivist, finding documentary evidence, wrongly attributes a fresco by Perugino to Fra Diamante.

¹⁹Berenson, 111-113.

²⁰William George Constable, Art History and Connoisseurship (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1938) 35.

²¹Berenson, 116.

²²Berenson, 117. Berenson explains that Vasari, when writing about his rivals, did not hesitate to say the worst of them, while when considering his friends, his words were only praiseworthy. Thus, Berenson advises that Vasari's statements "are never to be received without bearing in mind, on the one hand, his parochialism of spirit, and, on the other, the venality of his pen." 118.

the artist.²³ The relevance of documentation and tradition should not be underestimated. Documentation and tradition are useful tools which aid in the study of works of art. As described above, both resources must be subject to scrutiny and considered with caution. Thus, the expert opinions formed on the basis of the connoisseur's documentary findings, must first be supported with more conclusive evidence. The following section will explore the work of art as the most compelling tool for the connoisseur.

The Work of Art Itself

"All that remains of an event in general history is the account of it in document or tradition; but in art, the work or art itself is the event, and the only adequate source of information about the event..."²⁴ This statement by Berenson illustrates the notion of the work of art as the most important tool of connoisseurship. Berenson was not alone in this opinion. Morelli and Friedlander similarly emphasize the significance of the art work alone in providing the most convincing evidence as to the status of a work. Within the art work lies many clues as to its origins. An analysis of the relevant features of an art work, such as the detail, the overall impression and the quality, which are valuable indices to the connoisseur, offers a framework with which to understand the various tools of connoisseurship as utilized by Morelli, Berenson and Friedlander.

²³Berenson, 116. Berenson offers the example of a tradition of Delacroix originating in Florence in 1894 as compared to a tradition deriving from Paris, closer to the time in which Delacroix worked.

²⁴Berenson, 120. In regard to this statement, Berenson comments in a footnote that "This arises from the fact that words are incapable of arousing in the reader's mind the precise visual image in the writer's." Thus, it is evident how descriptive contracts for artworks can confusingly correspond to a number of different works of art.

The Detail

The Italian Giovanni Morelli, considered to be the founder of the "scientific" method of connoisseurship, has been the source of much scholarship. Morelli's theories of connoisseurship as applied to works of the Italian Renaissance first came to light between 1874 and 1876 in a series of articles published in German under the pseudonym Ivan Lermolieff, an unknown Russian scholar.²⁵ Morelli's practices, though intriguing and without precedent, were deemed controversial and inadequate by some of his contemporaries.²⁶ Nonetheless, Morelli's scientific method continues to fascinate and be a source of interest and debate among current art historians, as marked by a recent conference in Bergamo, Italy, dedicated exclusively to this innovative connoisseur.²⁷ The following exploration of Morelli's scientific method seeks to offer an understanding of his practices and his reliance on the work of art itself.

Trained as a physician, with a particular interest in comparative anatomy, Morelli witnessed the emergence of modern scientific practice and its ascendancy over the humanities while working in the latter half of the 19th-century.²⁸ Morelli's approach to connoisseurship was rooted in the careful observation of the detail, which for him provided a "definitive system of study".²⁹ According to Morelli, it is the identity of form, as observed in the details of a painting, that indicates the identity

²⁵Carlo Ginzburg, "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method" History Workshop 9 (1980): 7. Ivan Lermolieff is a Russianized anagram of Morelli. As well, the translator of the articles, Johannes Schwarze, is another play on Morelli's name.

²⁶Carol Gibson-Wood, Studies in the Theory of Connoisseurship from Vasari to Morelli (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988) 217. Gibson-Wood explains that much opposition came from those scholars whose construction of art history was based on principles of taste or beauty.

²⁷Jaynie Anderson, "The Morelli Conference in Bergamo." Burlington Magazine 129 (1987): 596. This conference took place the first week of June, 1987. An exhibit at the Academia Carrara was organized in conjunction with the conference. Two volumes of studies on Morelli were published as well.

²⁸Jack J. Spector, "The Method of Morelli and its Relation to Freudian Psychoanalysis" Diogenes 66 (1969) 74.

²⁹Richard Wollheim, On Art and the Mind: Essay and Lectures (London: Allen Lane, 1973) 186

of authorship.³⁰ These fundamental forms, or *grundformen* as termed by Morelli, must be carefully considered so as to determine the extent to which they verify the author of a work. Morelli distinguishes between forms that are driven by forces of school or tradition with those that are true markers of an artist's identity. The conventional execution of forms cannot be relied upon to distinguish an artist's work from that of his pupil or copyist. Instead, the connoisseur must focus his attention on various forms in the painting that are typically viewed as "trifles," where conventional pressures, such as the influence of the patron, are relaxed. For Morelli, such trifles include the depiction of the hand and ear, to which the artist relaxes his attention and thus devotes little effort. Specifically, Morelli looked at such details as the shape of the ear lobes, the finger nails and the ball of the thumbs.³¹ When executing such insignificant details, the artist works in a habitual manner and does not concentrate on perfecting or particularizing forms.³² It is by virtue of such tendencies, that the artist's personal instinct appears in its purest form, as all artists have their own peculiarities.³³ The existence of such characteristic features often escapes the artist without his or her knowledge. Thus, Morelli's technique has been likened to detective work, where clues, unnoticed by others, are discovered and examined in order to solve a puzzle, in this case, authorship and/or authenticity.³⁴

Morelli's emphasis on the detail derives from his insistence that "the only true record for the connoisseur is the work of art itself."³⁵ Thus, all aspects of a painting, as manifested in its physical properties, should provide the most convincing evidence regarding the work's attribution. This reliance on the work of art alone, served as

³⁰Gibson-Wood, 222.

³¹Wollheim, 181.

³²Edgar Wind, *Art and Anarchy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963) 40.

³³Spector, 64.

³⁴Ginzburg, 8.

³⁵Giovanni Morelli, *Italian Painters: Critical Studies of their Works*, (volume I) *The Borghese and Doria-Pamfili Galleries in Rome*; (volume II) *The Galleries of Munich and Dresden*, trans. Constance Ffoulkes with an introduction by Sir A.H. Layard (London, 1892-3) vol. I, 26-7.

Morelli's primary tool of connoisseurship. Through his focus on the detail, Morelli "substituted concreteness and precision of (scientific) observation for vague feelings and inexact impressions of the entire composition."³⁶ Morelli further maintained that "the forms in general, and more especially those of the hand and ear, aid us in distinguishing the works of a master from those of his imitators, and control the judgment which subjective impressions might lead us to pronounce."³⁷ Such judgments based on subjective impressions, as favored by, for example, Friedlander, continue to be a source of guidance for the modern connoisseur. Yet, judgments based on emotion, in Morelli's mind, were not founded upon a precise, controlled and scientific use of evidence, and therefore could not be trustworthy. Accuracy of attribution was attainable, however, through Morelli's systematic use of schematic drawings of hands and ears, as executed by various masters.³⁸ By way of comparison, Morelli utilized these "schedules" to deduce the authorship of unknown works. The characteristic forms of the ears and hands were derived from Morelli's careful observation of undisputed works by the various masters under consideration. The use of reliable, well tested attributions satisfied Morelli's scientific requirement of basing his assessments on properly controlled evidence.³⁹

Similarly interested in Italian painting, the American connoisseur Bernard Berenson derived his methodologies from his careful reading of Morelli's Italian Painters: Critical Studies of Their Works. Berenson, like Morelli, was unconventional in his ideologies, believing that the study of art history was a form of pedantry, unrelated to the enjoyment of art. Thus, Berenson approached the study of an art work with the goal of elucidating its "tangible form rather than its historical

³⁶Spector, 74.

³⁷Morelli, vol. II, 2n.

³⁸These are illustrated in: Carlo Ginzburg, "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes" History Workshop 9 (1980), pg. 7: *Ears and Hands by Botticelli*, from Morelli's Italian Painters, pg. 9: *Typical Ears*, from Italian Painters, pg. 12: *Typical Hands*, from Italian Painters.

³⁹Wollheim, 180.

function."⁴⁰ Most well known for his partnership with the flamboyant dealer Joseph Duveen, Berenson has left a legacy of connoisseurship which views attribution as a way of understanding the work of art, rather than as a process of labeling.⁴¹ Berenson did not believe that a work of art needed a label in order to be worthy of study.⁴² It was through close observation and comparison of the detail, as first proposed by Morelli, that Berenson developed his methodology for attributing art works.

In his essay "Rudiments of Connoisseurship," written in 1902, Berenson attempts to provide a theoretical justification for Morelli's empirical approach to connoisseurship.⁴³ Intending to increase the intellectual status of connoisseurship, Berenson systematized Morelli's observation of forms into a structured set of criteria that "governs the reliability of different formal features as indicators of authorship."⁴⁴ In essence, Berenson discovered a set of attributional rules that were based on his notions of the "artistic personality," a concept originated by Berenson. The personality of the artist, as understood by Berenson and explained by David Alan Brown, "consists not merely of the traits by which the artist is supposed to give himself away, but of essential qualities as revealed by his entire production." One can relate personality with creativity.⁴⁵

Berenson describes the process by which he determines this "artistic personality" as "the isolation of the characteristics of the known and their confrontation with the unknown." He further states that "to isolate the characteristics of an artist, we take all his works of undoubted authenticity, and we proceed to discover those traits that invariably recur in them, but not in the works of other

⁴⁰Brown, 11.

⁴¹Brown, 29. It was this process of labeling that Berenson understood to be the determining factor of value in regard to a work of art. As Berenson noted, often a work of art, until it was attributed to a specific artist, failed to gain the recognition it deserved.

⁴²Brown, 11.

⁴³Gibson-Wood, 239.

⁴⁴Gibson-Wood, 240.

⁴⁵Brown, 16.

masters."⁴⁶ The connoisseur, in addition to the reoccurrence of forms such as the hands and ears, may also look for trends in the content and color scheme of the work. Having established how to determine the various features of a work which are characteristic of a particular artist, Berenson offers a hierarchical categorization of the details which prove to be the most reliable tests for authorship. As stated by Berenson, the most applicable features are "the ears, the hands, the folds and the landscape." Less applicable elements are "the hair, the eyes, the nose and the mouth." The least applicable aspects of a work are "the cranium, the chin, the structure and movement in the human figure, the architecture, the colour and the chiaroscuro."⁴⁷ Berenson discusses at great length the relevance of each of the above features as indicators of authorship, and highlights various characteristics in relation to certain artists, such as that deep-set eyes point to a work by Da Vinci, while eyes depicted wide apart signal a work by Giorgione (c.1476/8-1510).⁴⁸ Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to highlight the significance or lack thereof of each of the details upon which Berenson focuses his study, he does conveniently provide five controlling principles that demonstrate the extent to which a particular detail is characteristic of a certain artist.⁴⁹ According to Berenson, these details are "not vehicles of expression," "they do not attract attention," "they are not controlled by fashion," "they allow the formation of habit in their execution" and "they escape imitation and copying, either because of the minuteness of the peculiarity, or of the obscurity of the artist."⁵⁰ For example, the form of the cranium is usually closely studied from a model, which

⁴⁶Berenson, 123-124.

⁴⁷Berenson, 144.

⁴⁸Berenson, 128.

⁴⁹ For a detailed account of why Berenson believes these features to be the most reliable tests of authorship in relation to the other details see his "Rudiments of Connoisseurship" in The Study and Criticism of Italian Art vol. 2 (London: George Bell and Sons, 1902) 124-144.

⁵⁰Berenson, 132-133.

renders this feature almost never characteristic.⁵¹ As well, according to Berenson, "the chin, the jaw and the cheek are all too typical and easily copied."⁵²

In addition to his systematic approach to the detail and his emphasis on the "artistic personality," another advancement over Morelli's practices is Berenson's consideration of the possible inconsistencies as well as changes in an artist's style over time.⁵³ Because alternative forms appear as a result of a shift in an artist's habits, the connoisseur must be able to recognize such fluctuations in personality. Frequently, such changes are apparent in works of an artist that span from his early or "immature" style to his late or "mature" style. Monet serves as an excellent example of an artist whose style dramatically changed over time. For example, a work from Monet's early period, such as Camille/Woman in Green Dress of 1866, in few ways corresponds to the characteristic style of Monet's later works, such as seen in his Lady with Parasol of 1886. Thus, the earlier work may not easily be recognizable as that of Monet's if one's understanding of his style is based on a familiarity with his later works. The connoisseur must be aware of these potential fluctuations of an artist's style when observing and comparing the various details in an artist's work. Otherwise, he may fail to properly attribute certain pieces which would subsequently misinform our understanding of a particular artist's *oeuvre*.

It is clear that Morelli and Berenson's utilization of the detail as a tool of connoisseurship is one that offers a strong basis for attribution and/or authenticity. However, as this method requires the connoisseur to isolate the characteristic features from the overall composition of the work, certain problems arise. The connoisseur must recognize that the same forms or details in various contexts may look very different.⁵⁴ Richard Wollheim, in his article, "Giovanni Morelli and the Origins of

⁵¹Berenson, 125.

⁵²Berenson, 132.

⁵³Berenson, 145.

⁵⁴Maginnis, 106.

Scientific Connoisseurship," offers two examples which illustrate the difficulties in perceiving the actual forms of the details. In one image, two parallel lines are superimposed on a background which obscures their actual configuration.⁵⁵ A second image demonstrates how the same row of dots, in two different surroundings, appear remarkably different, even though they are exactly the same.⁵⁶ Thus, if the connoisseur disassociates the various features, the forms will be experienced in a way that would differ from how they are perceived in their pictorial context, resulting in conflicting interpretations of the details.⁵⁷

Two issues arise from this problem. First, it must firmly be established whether the details which serve as a basis for judgment, are congruent forms or similar forms.⁵⁸ For example, did Morelli's schedules of hands and ears serve as a general guide for his observation of details, or were the forms expected to match his diagrams exactly? Depending on the various levels of correspondence, the forms may mistakenly be overlooked as a marker of authorship. While Morelli and Berenson did not specifically comment on the degree of consistency in regard to their observed forms, the connoisseur who wishes to use the detail as his tool must be prepared to formulate a set rules to guide his comparison of forms.

Second, the connoisseur who utilizes this methodology claims to be able to identify the whole (the work) from the part (the detail). Is such a phenomenon really possible? In his Art History and Connoisseurship of 1938, the art historian W.G. Constable states that,

A work of art is not merely an assemblage of parts; its essence lies in the ordered relation of those parts. The first impact of a work of art on the spectator, before he has become occupied with detail, is

⁵⁵This is illustrated in: Richard Wollheim, On Art and the Mind: Essays and Lectures (London: Allen Lane, 1973), pg. 189, fig. 2: *Effect of the Field Upon Contained Figure*.

⁵⁶This is illustrated in: On Art and the Mind, pg. 189, fig 3: *Effect of Surroundings Upon Perceived Length*.

⁵⁷Wollheim, 189.

⁵⁸Wollheim, 188.

of the greatest value for enabling this relation or system of relations to be grasped.⁵⁹

Thus, it would appear that the mere consideration of the detail is not sufficient on its own. As Constable explains, "intensive study of detail in a work of art is liable to spoil the capacity to realise it as a whole, and to mar the power of aesthetic enjoyment."⁶⁰ Thus, the complexities of a work must be studied in their entirety. This view, which seeks to consider the overall impression of a work of art, is held by Friedlander and constitutes another tool of connoisseurship encompassed within the work of art itself.

The Overall Impression

Max J. Friedlander, the German expert in early Netherlandish and German art, and the Head of the Berlin Picture Gallery from 1908 until 1933, was a strong critic of Morelli and his method of connoisseurship.⁶¹ Friedlander was of the opinion that "every true observation concerning any individual work of art may contribute to the better understanding of visual art as a whole, indeed of art activities in general."⁶² According to Friedlander, true observation, which was to focus on the work of art as a whole, was based on intuition. Friedlander states that "inner certainty can only be gained from the impression of the whole; never from an analysis of visual forms."⁶³ As well, Friedlander argued that "an original is in harmony with itself."⁶⁴ An explanation of this "harmony" is offered by Constable who states that the connoisseur must "see as a unity all the separate elements he has distinguished, and to realise them, not as a number of isolated facts fortuitously brought together, but as

⁵⁹Constable, 15.

⁶⁰Constable, 32.

⁶¹"Friedlander, Max Jacob." The Dictionary of Art. 1996 ed.

⁶²Friedlander, 16.

⁶³Friedlander, 173.

⁶⁴Friedlander, 236.

completely interdependent."⁶⁵ This view contrasts with Morelli and Berenson's notion of the observation of details. Friedlander's practices were not uncommon. The German art historian Otto Mundler, who served as the traveling agent for the National Gallery in London from 1855 to 1858, similarly relied upon his intuition and the accidental impression produced by the whole when assessing art works.⁶⁶ As well, in his 1927 essay "An Outline of a Theory of Method," Richard Offner states that attribution is an intuitive act, "being no more than the recognition of a recurring experience, with free variations."⁶⁷

While at first it may appear that Friedlander wishes to disregard the detail completely in his methodology, this is not the case. After his initial intuitive response to the piece, which for him was the most significant part of his methodology, Friedlander carefully grounded his opinion on the close comparison of details in the work, without, however, restricting himself to Morelli's hands and ears.⁶⁸ For Friedlander, the role of the detail was one of secondary importance, but nonetheless helped to substantiate his attributions. Friedlander believed that, like himself, Morelli derived his opinions from the general impression of the work, and only later resorted to the observation of details such as the hands in order to confirm his intuitions.⁶⁹ Even Berenson, who relied heavily on the detail, describes his method as being,

Largely a question of accumulated experience upon
which your spirit sets unconsciously... When I see a picture...
I recognize it at once as being or not being by the master
it is ascribed to; the rest is merely a question of how to
fish out the evidence that will make the conviction as

⁶⁵Constable, 31.

⁶⁶Friedlander, 166.

⁶⁷Richard Offner, Studies in Florentine Painting: The 14th-century (New York: Junius Press, 1927) 135.

⁶⁸Spector, 74.

⁶⁹Gibson-Wood, 234.

plain to others as it is to me.⁷⁰

It is evident that the various tools of connoisseurship, be they the detail or the overall impression of the work, may be utilized at various stages in the attribution process. A combination of these tools, as well as those yet to be discussed, offers the most complete analysis of a work of art.

Quality

A connoisseur's first impression of a work of art is often based on notions of quality, and thus this becomes another tool by which the connoisseur confirms his attributions. Berenson seems to have been the most interested in this aspect of connoisseurship. Morelli scarcely considered quality at all unless such judgments were in regard to the execution of the characteristic forms upon which he focused his attention. According to Wollheim, Morelli makes "no acknowledgment of qualitative judgments that make reference to such things as the inter-relationships between the significant parts of the all-over properties of the work."⁷¹

Berenson, on the other hand, states that the ultimate test of the value of the forms that comprise an artistic personality is that of quality.⁷² For Berenson, "the sense of quality is indubitably the most essential equipment of a would-be connoisseur."⁷³ Berenson's understanding of quality was one which recognized that "an artistic personality includes not only all the artist did in his best moments, but all that his mind conceived in terms of his art, in what ever shape it has been recorded, no matter how inadequate, nor how unsatisfactory."⁷⁴ Thus, Berenson was able to account for inconsistencies in an artist's work by taking note of variations in quality.

⁷⁰Hoving, 20.

⁷¹Wollheim, 193.

⁷²Berenson, 134.

⁷³Berenson, 147.

⁷⁴Brown, 26.

An understanding of these inconsistencies prevented Berenson from unfairly de-attributing works that perhaps reflected a technically weak period in an artist's *oeuvre*. In his book entitled On Quality in Art, Jakob Rosenberg offers a list of criteria for assessing quality in master drawings from the 15th through the 19th century.⁷⁵ Rosenberg states that it is possible to apply his criteria to other forms of art such as painting, with some minor adjustments.⁷⁶ Perhaps it is useful to address some of his criteria so as to get a sense of how the connoisseur assesses levels of quality in works of art. Some of the features on which Rosenberg bases his judgments are, the extent to which the work conveys a sense of balance and spontaneity, a clear distinction of planes and varying levels of expressiveness and consistency.⁷⁷ While these characteristics only offer a glimpse of Rosenberg's criteria, they help to clarify the process by which quality is judged by the connoisseur, as further explained by Rosenberg who states, "If we have gathered sufficient experience in the evaluation of the single great masters as compared to their surroundings, a certain general notion of the nature of great art will gradually develop a standard of judgment which may work even without direct comparison."⁷⁸

Friedlander's approach to quality is remarkably different from Berenson's, whose methods probably correspond closely to those described by Rosenberg. For Friedlander, quality was inherent in aesthetic pleasure, as he states,

The question of level of quality is answered according to the feeling of being convinced, according to the depth of impression, the measure of the sensation of aesthetic pleasure. Depending upon our ability and receptive capacity we reach our conclusion spontaneously and

⁷⁵Jakob Rosenberg, On Quality in Art: Criteria of Excellence, Past and Present (Washington, D.C.: The Trustees of The National Gallery of Art, 1967) 229.

⁷⁶Rosenberg, 229.

⁷⁷Rosenberg, 204.

⁷⁸Rosenberg, 230-231. For an in-depth account of Rosenberg's list of criteria, please see On Quality in Art, p. 204.

interpret the quality accordingly.⁷⁹

Friedlander's perception of quality corresponds to his general views on attribution which are similarly based on emotions or impressions.

In sum, the various tools of connoisseurship which have been explored thus far have all related to the work of art itself. While it is agreed that the work of art provides the most compelling evidence for the connoisseur, other resources can be utilized as well. I have already mentioned the use of tradition and documentation. In the following sections, I will discuss two additional tools that benefit the connoisseur as he tries to establish the authorship and/or authenticity of art works.

Photographs

Photographs have become a standard part of art historical study. Students are introduced to art works by way of textbook images and slides. Without the aid of such photographic reproductions, one's understanding of the art works would be limited as there would be no visual references to correspond to written or spoken descriptions. Photographs are a tool for the connoisseur as well. While the use of photography has become commonplace for the connoisseur, various difficulties necessitate caution when consulting these resources.

According to Berenson, Morelli was the first connoisseur to systematically use photographs in order to assist in his recollection of previously seen works of art.⁸⁰ Morelli often wrote notes on the back of his photographs as a quick reference indicating the significant characteristics of the work.⁸¹ For example, on the back of a Da Vinci photograph, Morelli lists various tendencies in Da Vinci's works, such as

⁷⁹Max J. Friedlander, *Genuine and Counterfeit: Experiences of a Connoisseur* trans. Carl Von Honstett and Lenore Pelham (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1930) 92.

⁸⁰Brown, 44.

⁸¹Giulio Bora, ed. *Mo Giovanni Morelli Collezionista di Disegni* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 1994) 8.

that he never makes eyebrows, his strokes go from left to right, and that he almost always used a greenish tinted paper. Morelli believed that one who cares about art "lives with his photographs."⁸² Berenson, like Morelli, embraced the use of photography, considering it the essential if "uncertain instrument" of modern connoisseurship. Berenson used photography to confirm as well as make attributions.⁸³ Furthermore, Berenson felt that his capacity for study was prolonged with the use of photographs which he came to prefer. The application of photographs enables the connoisseur to compare works that otherwise are too numerous and too distant to study directly. As Berenson said, "Photographs! Photographs! In our work one can never have enough." Though Berenson relied heavily on the use of photographs in his practice, he firmly acknowledged that the reproduction was not a substitute for the actual work.⁸⁴

Friedlander, recognizing the potential for the misuse of photographs, strongly cautioned against their role in the attribution process. According to Friedlander, photographs reduce the amount of interest that normally is devoted to the original work of art, while removing the connoisseur from first hand experience of the piece. The sole purpose of photographs, in Friedlander's mind, was to "strengthen recollection of the original." Photographs should not, however, be used as a basis for judgment as such opinions must always be formed in the presence of the work itself.⁸⁵ Constable maintains that before the use of photographs, intense study was forced upon the connoisseur who had only his memory to rely upon when seeking to recall certain works. However, the connoisseur who approaches a work of art with

⁸²Bora, 8. As well, Morelli comments on features of Da Vinci's characteristic nose and ears and indicates the writing instruments used during the various periods of his production, such as pen or chalk.

⁸³Brown, 44.

⁸⁴Brown, 45.

⁸⁵Friedlander, On Art and Connoisseurship, 199.

the knowledge that a photograph is accessible, will perhaps neglect to carefully scrutinize the piece.⁸⁶

In addition to the issue that the photograph may replace the original as an object of study, other concerns regarding such reproductions must be acknowledged. Photographs skew our perceptions of the art works in a variety of ways. First, they do not accurately portray the scale of works. As well, photographs fail to reproduce the precise texture and color of the pieces which greatly affects one's understanding of the art works. Thus, the photograph can never sufficiently replace the original, as such a substitution is an injustice that fosters a distorted view of the piece. Constable is keenly aware of the extent to which works of art are misrepresented in photographs, stating that "a work known only in a photograph is scarcely known at all."⁸⁷

Despite the various faults of photographic reproductions, if properly utilized by the connoisseur, they offer various benefits which aid in his comparison of art works. More importantly, the photograph serves as a reminder of an image that previously was stored only in the memory of the connoisseur. However, the photograph should be viewed as a supplement to rather than a substitute for memory. Even while consulting such reproductions, the connoisseur continues to rely heavily on his memory. It is this tool which consistently guides the connoisseur throughout his attribution process.

Memory

The connoisseur is often described as "having a good eye."⁸⁸ The training of the connoisseur's eye is closely linked to the function of memory. Thus, the role of

⁸⁶Constable, 14.

⁸⁷Constable, 14.

⁸⁸David Wistow, Eye Spy: A do-it-yourself Guide to Quality in Art (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1985) 4.

memory for the connoisseur is one of utmost importance, as he must be able to make mental comparisons between works that he confronts now with those he has experienced in the past. Morelli, Berenson and Friedlander's methodologies of connoisseurship all depend on concepts of memory. Berenson comments that years of experience and familiarity with an artist's work help create a mental picture of the artist's character.⁸⁹ As well, Friedlander believed that "concepts of visual imagination, gained in pleasurable contemplation and retained by a vigorous visual memory," were the expert's weapon.⁹⁰ An understanding of the various theories of vision is necessary in order to comprehend how memory works, and specifically, how this tool is utilized by the above connoisseurs. I wish to look at two sources, the first being Bishop Berkeley's New Theory of Vision of 1790. Berkeley explains that light from an object enters the eye through the lens and projects an image onto the retina. This image is then passed to the brain which stores it as a memory image, which is understood to be a faded copy of the original experience. The subsequent recognition of forms is possible by simply recalling one's memory of the relevant images to compare to the new visual experience.⁹¹

Berkeley's explanation of vision and memory is one that was understood by Morelli and Berenson. Thus, it becomes clear, in the case of Morelli, why he never considered the relationships between the formal aspects of a work and the details on which he focused his attention. Observing the preferred characteristics of a work, such as the hands and ears, Morelli formed retinal images that he stored in his memory. Consequently, when assessing art works, Morelli simply sought to recall his memory of the specified *grundformen* and compared these images to the forms in the newly encountered art works.⁹² Morelli's recollection of the specific forms had no

⁸⁹Brown, 39.

⁹⁰Friedlander, On Art and Connoisseurship, 176.

⁹¹Maginnis, 107.

⁹²Maginnis, 107.

bearing on the overall composition of the piece. An understanding of Berenson's capacity for remembering art works is best summarized by Thomas Hoving who explains that "in Berenson's monumental brain, no doubt, were stored, like some contemporary hard disk, hundreds of thousands of associations, observations, artistic subtleties, colors, hues... which flooded into his mind the instant he looked at a picture."⁹³

While the above application of memory appeared to work for the connoisseur as a means for recollection, Hayden Maginnis in his essay, "The Role of Perceptual Learning in Connoisseurship," challenges these concepts of memory. According to Maginnis, "the eye is not a camera and the brain is not a photo album."⁹⁴ As well, Maginnis introduces various studies which seemingly prove that when viewing an object, the eye only focuses on a limited number of points, indicating that the eye does not form a complete, static image of the object.⁹⁵ In light of this study, it would be impossible for the connoisseur to store any distinct images in his memory to be used for purposes of comparison. How is one to view Maginnis' findings when the connoisseurs themselves attest to the validity of the capacity for memory? While Maginnis may be suggesting that memory is a faulty tool, his argument is irrelevant in the context of this study as it focuses on the contemporary perspectives of the 19th and early 20th-century connoisseurs. A second source, David Kay's Memory: What it is and How to Improve it of 1889, would seem to validate the concepts of memory as understood by Morelli, Berenson and Friedlander.

Kay's explanation of the function of memory is one which reflects the connoisseur's traditional use of this tool for recollection. Certain conditions must

⁹³Hoving, 20.

⁹⁴Maginnis, 107-109.

⁹⁵Maginnis, 108. Maginnis focuses on two studies, one by Guy Buswell and the other by Alfred Yarbus, which photographically record eye movements when examining objects. These studies suggest that the eye focuses on areas of the object that are regarded as having "high information content." As well, it is believed that the process of vision is influenced by the extent of instruction offered to the subject regarding how to view the object. 110.

exist in order for memory to operate effectively. For example, as Kay states, "the remembrance of anything depends upon the clearness and vividness of the impression originally made by it in the mind, and this on the degree of attention with which it is regarded."⁹⁶ Thus, one must observe well in order to remember well.⁹⁷ It is fair to say that the job of the connoisseur is one which necessarily requires the act of attentive looking, which according to Kay produces a good memory. Berenson specifically states that when viewing an object, he sustained contact with it for long periods of time so that he would "retain a deep impression in his visual memory."⁹⁸

As well, the mind is understood to inherently compare present images with past impressions that are similar in nature, something the connoisseur does on a regular basis when formulating his expert opinions.⁹⁹ Friedlander explains how without even having seen, for example, a Still Life by Frans Hals (c.1581/5-1666), he conjures up an idea which serves as a standard for either his acceptance or rejection of the piece.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, Kay explains that "the more there are of ideas of the same kind in the mind already, the more will there be of similar material for new ideas to be associated with, and the more easily will they be remembered."¹⁰¹ Thus, after years of experienced looking, the connoisseur compiles an extensive mental catalogue of images. The more encounters the connoisseur has with an artist's work, the more readily he remembers each visual impression.

It is often believed that the connoisseur who makes rapid decisions about questions of attribution and authenticity, is basing his judgments on intuition. However, these swift opinions may result from the connoisseur's development of an exceptionally keen memory which enhances his capacity for visual recall and mental

⁹⁶David Kay, Memory: What It is and How to Improve It (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889) 226.

⁹⁷Kay, 224.

⁹⁸Brown, 39.

⁹⁹Kay, 205.

¹⁰⁰Friedlander, On Art and Connoisseurship, 176.

¹⁰¹Kay, 245.

comparison such that his responses seem only capable through intuitive acts.¹⁰² Lastly, Kay states that "anything that excites the mind... makes a lasting impression." The job of the connoisseur, though one of complexity is truly exciting, as attested by Abraham Bredius who upon discovering the first of the now infamous Vermeer forgeries by Han van Meegeren remarked, "It is a wonderful moment in the life of a lover of art when he finds himself suddenly confronted with a hitherto unknown painting by a great master, untouched, on the original canvas, and without any restoration, just as it left the painter's studio."¹⁰³

Despite the attempts by Maginnis to undermine the significance and accuracy of memory as a tool for connoisseurship, Morelli, Berenson and Friedlander all acknowledge their reliance on this personalized resource. Even in a more contemporary context, one notes the continued reliance on memory by the researchers of the Rembrandt Research Project who explain that their work does not merely consist of

the collecting of a stock of visual memories, but also the 'reconstruction' of an individual... One's opinions on authenticity are based a great deal on this reconstructed image of the artist, but every fresh confrontation with paintings seen before causes friction between one's image of the artist and the actual work of his hand. It is as if, time and again, a distortion occurs through one's own mental structure being projected on the imaginary mental structure of the artist.¹⁰⁴

Although these connoisseurs have recognized the work of art as the most important tool of connoisseurship, it seems that without the aid of an acute memory the value of the work of art as an object of study would be diminished. Unless the connoisseur has a developed capacity to process and retain information, he will be unable to render meaningful and accurate analyses. Those who commit themselves to the

¹⁰²Maginnis, 115.

¹⁰³Hoving, 175.

¹⁰⁴David Phillips, *Exhibiting Authenticity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 31.

practices of connoisseurship will automatically inherit an acute memory as the process by which the connoisseur studies art works is one which over time fosters such a development. The potential for memory is just one of many factors that offers support to the expert's use of forgeries, the final tool of connoisseurship to be discussed.

Forgeries

According to Friedlander, "every forgery is a useless, hybrid and miserable thing."¹⁰⁵ It would appear that Friedlander failed to recognize the possible benefits that forgeries offer the connoisseur. An understanding of how forgeries can be applied to the practices of connoisseurship is possible in light of what is known about the traditional methods and tools of the connoisseur. In recalling the connoisseur's reliance on the detail, reproductions, quality and memory in his practices, it will be evident how forgeries can become a tool by which to understand authentic works.

As witnessed in the methodologies of Morelli and Berenson, the connoisseur compares the details in works of art that are similar with respect to such things as artist, period and medium. Forgeries themselves are "works of art that are similar" and thus should be used as a basis for comparison. Offering a specific visual parallel in which to determine authorship and/or authenticity, forgeries may prove more reliable than documentation and tradition. Stylistic nuances of details in forgeries help the connoisseur to better understand the definitive qualities of authentic works. The connoisseur, having firmly established the characteristics of an artist's "personality" or style as demonstrated by Morelli and Berenson, will know exactly what to look for when faced with an unfamiliar work. Aware of what details should be present in the piece, the connoisseur inherently will recognize those qualities of the art work that don't meet the standards of the accepted conventions of the artist's

¹⁰⁵Friedlander, *On Art*, 261.

productions. It is through an exposure of forgeries that these inconsistencies can easily be recognized. Perhaps the following analogy will further clarify the relevance of comparing forgeries to authentic works. Morelli may certainly have associated the details in a work of art with the anatomy of the human body. Thus, for the time being, one can equate the connoisseur's study of forgeries with the doctor's study of a cell. The close observation of a cancerous cell can inform the doctor's understanding of the components of a healthy cell. Certain signs or details exist in the cancerous cell which the doctor learns to recognize when analyzing other supposedly healthy cells. In knowing what features exist in the cancerous cell, the doctor is able to definitively assess the status of other cells as his knowledge of the cancerous cell forms the basis of his understanding of the healthy cell. Thus, by analogy, the cancerous cell parallels the forgery and the healthy cell corresponds to an authentic work.

In discovering the traits or details that reoccur in forgeries, the connoisseur can determine if any parallels exist when comparing the forgery to a supposedly authentic work. For example, it was discovered that in many of the old master drawings by the forger Eric Hebborn, the ink lines appeared to have been shaven back by a razor blade in order to simulate age.¹⁰⁶ For the connoisseur, familiar with this characteristic of Hebborn's known forgeries, this knowledge becomes a tool by which he can easily recognize such forgeries, having been advised of the existence of suspicious works of this nature. Perhaps the forgery can be understood as being utilized in a reverse process by which the forged work is used as a starting point of comparison. The connoisseur may be able to prove that a work is authentic by first establishing that it is not a forgery.

The connoisseur clearly states that he must consider all known works by the specific artist upon which his studies focus. As well, he should consider all known

¹⁰⁶Hoving, 88.

forgeries of the artist. Though it may seem difficult to get access to reproductions of these forgeries, various archives exist with illustrations of all existing authentic works by a particular artist, such as those at the Witt Library in London. Can there not be similar archives which contain reproductions of forged works for the connoisseur to consult? The connoisseur's reliance upon photographs as a tool of connoisseurship has already been established. Thus, the accessibility of reproductions of forgeries will help facilitate their application as comparative tools of study. The reproduction of known forgeries serves not only as an aid to the connoisseur, but also as a warning to the potential collector. In 1930, a catalogue entitled Les Faux Van Gogh was published in Paris for this exact purpose. This publication was motivated by the rise in Van Gogh forgeries which sought to meet the growing demands for his work. Specifically, in 1927 the art dealer Otto Wacker was responsible for the production of thirty-three Van Gogh forgeries which he offered for sale in Berlin. At the conclusion of criminal proceedings, Wacker was found guilty of several counts of fraud. He was sentenced to nineteen months incarceration in addition to having to pay a number of fines.¹⁰⁷ Wacker's forgeries comprise the majority of the aforementioned catalogue.¹⁰⁸

While photographic reproductions help to recall the connoisseur's encounters with both authentic and forged works of art, even without these resources, the connoisseur's capacity to store visual images should allow him to recall his experiences of forgeries as accurately as he recalls images of authentic works. Despite this potential, Friedlander does not see the value in storing impressions of forgeries in his memory as he states,

¹⁰⁷Feilchenfeldt, 292-294.

¹⁰⁸These are illustrated in: Walter Feilchenfeldt, "Van Gogh Fakes: The Wacker Affair" *Simiolus* 19.4 (1989), pg. 290-1, figs. 1 and 2: 33 *Bilder, Angeblich von Van Gogh, Kunst und Künstler* 1928, nr. 3., and pgs. 301-316.

Since the ability of the connoisseur depends upon the intensity of his visual experiences, upon the clarity and distinctiveness of his memories, the professional expert is in danger of crowding the limited capacity of his memory with hybrid images... If he has erred and has not become aware of his error, the false image poisons his pictorial fancy. He then approaches later pieces with a warped standard, so to speak. He will only remain a match for the forgers in the constant struggle with them if he time and again steals and refreshes his judgment by untiring study of undoubtedly genuine masterpieces.¹⁰⁹

It is understandable how Friedlander could view the observation of forgeries as a waste of time and energy as well as recognize the potential for them to "confuse taste and distort standards."¹¹⁰ However, in light of what is known about the various benefits of forgeries, it seems only natural that the connoisseur should wish to retain this visual knowledge as a resource. As well, the existence of forgeries forces the connoisseur to develop a rigid memory as he must at once be able to recognize the various sources of a *pastiche*. Forgeries put the connoisseur to the test. Confronted with an image of, for example, a rare double portrait of the 15th century, would the connoisseur be able to identify the works by Botticelli and Pollaiuolo from which this composite image was derived?¹¹¹ As well, a *pastiche* may be comprised of various elements which all stem from the work of one particular artist. Portrait of a Man, a forgery of a Hans Holbein, is based on two authentic Holbein portraits.¹¹² These sources should easily be recognized by the expert. The memory of these images and their subsequent recall is triggered by the exposure to this forgery. One surely hopes that as an expert, the connoisseur is knowledgeable of these previous works by Holbein, which justify an immediate condemnation of the work. As demonstrated,

¹⁰⁹Friedlander, Genuine and Counterfeit, 52.

¹¹⁰Friedlander, On Art and Connoisseurship, 174

¹¹¹Hebborn, 123. Please see chapter one, note 48 for a reference to this illustration.

¹¹²These are illustrated in: Max J. Friedlander, On Art and Connoisseurship trans. Tancred Borenius (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1942), plate 32: Hans Holbein, Portrait of Antoine, Duke of Lorraine, Berlin, Picture Gallery, plate 33: Hans Holbein, Portrait of a Man, Vienna, Picture Gallery, plate 34: Portrait of a Man, Forgery based on the Holbein portrait at Berlin, plate 32, but utilizing the hands in the Vienna portrait by the same master, plate 33.

forgeries help to reinforce the information that the connoisseur already has at his disposal. As well, the reality of forgeries forces the connoisseur to develop rigid systems of classification such as those devised by Morelli and Berenson, which provide a greater degree of accuracy in determining authorship and/or authenticity.

Lastly, forgeries assist the connoisseur in distinguishing varying levels of quality in art works. Just as the connoisseur looks for various details in the work, so too he must offer qualitative judgments with respect to specific elements as well as the overall composition of the piece. A forgery is often viewed as being a work of minor quality. Thus, through an exposure to such forgeries, an understanding of what a picture of poor quality looks like, inherently helps the connoisseur to develop a standard by which to recognize a work of superior quality. Rosenberg offers two drawings, one an authentic work by Van Gogh and the other a forgery in his style, as a means by which to compare various notions of quality.¹¹³ As analyzed by Rosenberg, the level of quality as displayed in each of these works is so distinct, that the forgery should readily stand out as being the technically inferior drawing. The forgery lacks certainty in structure and space, while its lines appear messy and crude. However, the authentic Van Gogh, with its perfectly expressed, coherent forms, displays a sense of balance and rhythmical order.¹¹⁴ Unless the connoisseur has some comparative basis for his judgments of quality, his opinions will appear unsubstantiated. Thus, forgeries provide the essential material needed by the connoisseur in order to establish a thorough understanding of the various degrees of quality which may exist in art works.

¹¹³These are illustrated in: Jakob Rosenberg, On Quality in Art: Criteria of Excellence, Past and Present (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pg. 202, plate 153: Van Gogh, Wheatfield with Reapers, Arles, pg. 203, plate 154: A forged Van Gogh, Harvest at Arles.

¹¹⁴Rosenberg, 202-203.

In recognizing how the connoisseur can utilize forgeries in his practice, as not to be confused with how the connoisseur detects forgeries, it is interesting to consider the relationship between the forger and the connoisseur.

The Forger as Connoisseur

Through an awareness of the methodologies of the connoisseur, one is informed of the techniques of the forger which are regulated by the requirements of the connoisseur. In essence, the forger himself becomes a connoisseur as he must be knowledgeable of how the work he intends to forge is produced, both technically and stylistically, just like the connoisseur. Keenly aware of the various scientific tests available to examine works of art, the forger creates his works accordingly. As well, the forger must be able to offer a convincing provenance for his work, requiring the connoisseur's familiarity with various forms of documentation and tradition.

In order to produce a forgery that will achieve an authentic status, the forger must be able to accurately reproduce the various details or forms, in their respective mediums, that the connoisseur expects to find in the work of that particular artist. We are familiar with the nature of these forms such as Morelli's hands and ears, which formulate an artist's personality. In addition, the forger must skillfully execute these forms so as to create a sense of harmony within the work. It is crucial that the connoisseur's first impression of the work is one that recognizes the high level of quality inherent in these characteristic features. In having to produce the work to meet both the technical and stylistic standards, the forger may be viewed as knowing the artist's work inside and out, perhaps better than the connoisseur himself, whose understanding comes only by means of observation rather than actual creation. Conservators and experts at the Cleveland Museum of Art undertook the project of copying the Grünewald forgery that they acquired in good faith. In becoming

copyists themselves, the experts gained an understanding of the methods of the forger which subsequently informed their concepts of Grünewald's process of creation.¹¹⁵

The successful forger, in addition to accurately reproducing an artist's style, must know which physical elements should be present in a particular work. Aware of the scientific tests that determine the extent to which such elements exist, including various pigments, oils or varnishes, the forger manipulates his work so as to satisfy the threshold scientific requirements. For example, an analysis of the hardness of the paint, which consists of rubbing alcohol onto the paint surface to see if the layers dissolve, is something the forger anticipates, allowing him to take the necessary precautions to assure that his work passes such a test.

While the forger's main focus is on the actual production of the art work itself, the forger can offer validation of his piece through the fabrication of documents. Certificates of authentication can be falsified by the forger who has an intimate knowledge of their form, and has access to the required materials in which to produce such documents, such as the seal of a particular expert.¹¹⁶ As well, forged works can be described and reproduced in phony publications, or listed in false inventories, two resources which help the connoisseur to verify the provenance of a work. The forger must be aware of the type and extent of documentation and tradition that the connoisseur relies upon in order to be able to convincingly produce these essential forms of evidence to support the status of his piece.

In commenting on a Miro forgery, one expert states,

Everything is wrong with it...the painting was made on a kind of board that Miro never used... the documents to the painting give the work a title, but it was not written on the back of the painting as Miro always did with titled works... the signature was diligently executed, but the handwriting was in a style that Miro used in the twenties, while the style of the painting

¹¹⁵Nova, 1991.

¹¹⁶These seals would of course be falsified.

was copied from one used by the artist in the seventies... the work is plain, the colors flat, the brushstrokes unsteady and the composition feeble...¹¹⁷

While this analysis clearly points out the characteristic flaws of the forgery, it simultaneously informs other forgers of Miro's tendencies so that in subsequent works, the forger can be sure to emulate the connoisseur's expectations.

In sum, the forger and the connoisseur similarly share an intimate knowledge of the creation and formation of art works, yet the forger, who can actually produce the works he studies, has an advantage over the connoisseur. It is fair to equate the forger with the connoisseur, although one must remember that very different results are achieved through the application of their similar knowledge. The connoisseur seeks to distinguish forgeries from authentic works, while the forger uses his resources to prevent the connoisseur from achieving this goal. Through his published studies, one might say that the connoisseur informs the forger who then knows exactly how to deceive the connoisseur. Simultaneously, it can be suggested that the forger informs the connoisseur who keeps track of the various recognizable techniques the forger uses, which now, known to the connoisseur, can be documented and traced.

Friedlander remarks that "academicians enter the museum with ideas; art connoisseurs leave it with ideas. The academicians seek what they expect to find; the art connoisseurs find something of which they knew nothing."¹¹⁸ These reflections conveniently summarize the ongoing task of the connoisseur. The connoisseur, through the various methodologies explored throughout this chapter, seeks to confirm authorship and/or authenticity in art works. These stated objectives are obtained

¹¹⁷Wistow, 23.

¹¹⁸Max J. Friedlander, Reminiscences and Reflections (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society Limited, 1969) 51.

through a heightened scientific awareness, the observation of significant elements and patterns in an art work, and a comparative analysis of the subject work in relation to previously viewed and studied pieces. The connoisseur utilizes various traditional tools in his processes. These tools, among others, include documentation and tradition, the work of art itself, photographic reproductions and concepts of memory. The characteristic qualities of these tools include their assistance in the task of confirming an artistic personality, distinguishing relevant differences and designating origins.

This thesis suggests that forgeries may similarly be added to the arsenal of the connoisseur. Specifically, the study of forgeries permits the connoisseur to develop a sophisticated understanding of an artist's *oeuvre* and his or her process of creation. If the connoisseur recognizes the various techniques of the forger, which include efforts to reproduce the style and personality of the artist as well as documentation which support a provenance, then the connoisseur will have a better understanding of his own tasks. Similarly, a forged work itself may be properly used by the connoisseur as a means of enhancing the probative value of the other tools of his trade. Forgeries offer the connoisseur an alternative view of artistic production. A forgery is significant for what it has achieved, in addition to what it has failed to accomplish.

As well, the forger may be viewed as a connoisseur himself in his demonstration of superior knowledge regarding the technical and stylistic qualities of an art work. While this thesis would not propose that young, aspiring art experts should seek careers as forgers, much can be gained from an awareness of the forger's adept skills and his ability to enter into the creative mind of the artist he forges. Forgeries must not only be studied as a means of detecting other fraudulent art works. Rather, forged pieces can assist the connoisseur in his goal of answering questions relating to authorship and/or authenticity, an additional benefit derived from the study and application of forgeries.

Chapter Three

Forgeries and Scientific Progress: The Process of Art Making and Faking

The connoisseur, faced with the challenge of identifying and authenticating art works, has at his disposal various tools to assist in his practice, including forged works themselves. In this capacity, the forgeries are useful for their immediate aesthetic qualities which the connoisseur is able to compare with unknown works of art. Even through the application of the connoisseur's tools, as outlined in chapter two, the connoisseur is often unable to offer definitive opinions regarding certain art works and inevitably is forced to consult other resources outside of his expertise. The ever-growing interdisciplinary field of archaeometry, in which chemists, physicists, archaeologists, geologists, restorers and art historians collectively examine data obtained from subjecting art works to the most sophisticated scientific techniques of analysis, has provided convincing evidence as to the status of previously questionable pieces.¹ The primary aim of these scientific tests is to determine the authenticity of works of art. However, various subsidiary effects, which enhance the connoisseur's understanding of the art works, result from this process of analysis. While trying to establish the level of genuineness of these pieces, the connoisseur becomes intimately informed of the process by which the art works were created. In understanding the process particular to each artist, the connoisseur accesses the mind of the creator such that the work is perceived as having evolved by way of a meticulous, methodical and laborious set of tasks, each revealed through a variety of scientific tests.

The connoisseur's knowledge of the production of art works has been enhanced as a result of the prominent role science has come to play in the study of

¹John Dornberg, "Artists Who Fake Have Met Their Match in the Laboratory" *Smithsonian* 16.7 (1985): 61. The International Symposium on Archaeometry, which attracts over 250 scholars from around the world and meets every two years, marks the growing interest in this field of study. The next conference will be held at the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest from April 27- May 1, 1998. "International Symposium on Archaeometry." (1997) Online. Available: <http://www.uiuc.edu/unit/ATAM/conf/home.html> (11 July 1997).

art. Thus, in light of the previous chapter, science may come to be viewed as an additional tool of connoisseurship. Yet, the limited access and tremendous cost of such scientific testing ensures the continued practice of connoisseurship. It is important to distinguish a shift in the concept of the connoisseur from its association with the profession in the 19th and early 20th-century. The profession of connoisseur no longer exists in a contemporary context. What does persist, however, is the practice of connoisseurship as developed by Morelli, Berenson and Friedlander. As connoisseurship is a way of looking at and interpreting art, various individuals such as dealers or specialists in auction houses commonly, or rather, inherently, incorporate methods of connoisseurship in their everyday understanding of art. David Phillips cites the example of the Antique Road Show where "week after week, millions of British viewers watch the specialists making judgments which demonstrate how much routine, successful attribution goes on, based only on judgment by simple inspection."² Thus, in referring to the contemporary "expert" as a connoisseur of sorts, I allude to an individual who practices the various methodologies of connoisseurship, rather than an individual belonging to the particular profession.

As well, in rethinking the role of forgeries as a tool through which to understand the creative process of art making, we may find that these works hold clues which offer additional insights into the working methods of the artist. As the success of a forgery depends on the forger's ability to reproduce the exact conditions in which the artist he wishes to forge originally worked, the techniques of the forger inherently communicate the methods of the intended artist. As the goal of this thesis is to extract the various benefits derived from the study of forgeries, this chapter will focus on information derived from their scientific study. As an initial foundation for this investigation, the various processes of scientific analysis will be explored. These

²Phillips, 29.

tests have enhanced the connoisseur's knowledge not only of the techniques of production as utilized in authentic works, but have also revealed the methods of the forger. Such technical insights into the nature and structure of forgeries assist in clarifying the connoisseur's overall understanding of the physical make-up of authentic works.

It may be said that it is due to the existence of forgeries that the connoisseur has a heightened knowledge of the various techniques of artistic production. The connoisseur is forced to accurately establish the conditions which should exist in authentic works in order to inform his/her comparisons of these works with questionable pieces. Thus, in the practice of connoisseurship, the quest for knowledge regarding the various techniques of artistic production is deeply rooted in the methods of the forger. This chapter will focus upon old master works, as such pieces most frequently undergo scientific testing. A case study of the Van Meegeren forgeries will conveniently offer a framework in which to explore the use and role of science in the practice of connoisseurship. Lastly, the problems and limitations of the application of science in the study of art will be addressed.

Scientific Techniques of Analysis as Applied to the Study of Paintings

When the connoisseur has exhausted all of his tools and yet is still unable to definitively determine the authenticity of an art work, he turns to science. Science, as applied to the study of art, seeks to uncover information regarding how a piece was made and from what materials, as well as its symptoms of aging, in an attempt to derive an absolute age for the work.³ A scientific approach to the study of art involving technical equipment, in contrast to Morelli's "scientific" method, first developed around the 1930's.⁴ However, various studies of paint samples were

³Dornberg, 63.

⁴Hubert Von Sonnenburg, Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Aspects of Connoisseurship, vol. 1 (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995) 11.

conducted as early as 1896 by Conrad Wilhelm Roentgen. As well, in subsequent years, x-radiographs of paintings were being utilized and various museums such as the Kunshistorisches Museum in Vienna by 1914 and the Fogg Museum at Harvard by 1925, were systematically conducting studies of art works using this new technology.⁵ There was a growing concern among art communities that the application of such tests would cause damage to the works of art. However, in 1934, it was proven that no damage was caused by the use of x-rays and thus their application to the study of paintings became a standard practice.⁶ In the last fifty years, scientists have continually developed new techniques in which to analyze works of art, while improving on past methods. In the following discussion, I wish to outline a variety of scientific techniques while offering an explanation as to their relevance in the study of authentic and forged works of art.

Before discussing the scientific methods of examination utilized in the study of art works, it is helpful to first consider the general structure of old master paintings, the focus of this chapter, so that one has a clearer understanding as to the nature of the various materials that become the focus of each of the scientific techniques of analysis to be discussed forthwith. This thesis does not permit me to detail all of the existing techniques, thus, one should be aware that I offer only a sampling of the many available methods of examination used to analyze the four main components of a painting. These elements are the support, ground, paint layers and varnish layers.⁷

Wooden panels or canvases stretched on wooden frames are most commonly used as supports for easel paintings. The age and type of the wooden panel can be

⁵Sonnenberg, 12. The Fogg Museum became a leader in this field of study. Their archive of x-radiographs is one of the most important of its kind in the world.

⁶Sonnenberg, 12.

⁷Franz Mairinger and Manfred Schreiner, "Analysis of Supports, Grounds and Pigments" *Art History and Laboratory: Scientific Examination of Easel Paintings* eds. Roger Van Schoute and Helene Verougstraete-Marcq (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1986) 172. These are illustrated on pg. 172, fig. 1: *Structure of Paintings and Penetration Depth of Radiation*.

distinguished as well as the fibres and weaving technique of the canvas. Such information about these materials is useful in determining the authenticity of art works.

In order to paint on the supports, they must first be treated with various materials that provide a smooth foundation on which to apply paint.⁸ Coating the support with this ground layer, as it is called, is necessary for many reasons. The fibers in an untreated canvas soak up the oil from the paint and consequently become brittle.⁹ By applying the grounds to this support, the canvas becomes less porous, not allowing the paint to penetrate the surface. In addition to assuring the permanence of the painting, the ground layer also enhances the brilliance of the colors.¹⁰ On wooden panels, the grounds similarly serve to prevent the paint from being absorbed into the grains of the wood, while conveniently filling in any holes or crevices which may exist. As wood swells when it gets damp, without these preparatory layers, the paint surface would undergo significant damage.¹¹ Often, a thin piece of fabric is applied to the panel surface as an additional foundation.¹² Although the composition of the ground layers varies with respect to the type of support and the preferences of the particular artist, generally, these layers were composed of chalk or plaster of Paris with a liquid binder such as rabbit-skin glue or gelatin.¹³ After this surface has thoroughly dried, it is sanded down in order to yield a perfectly smooth surface, suitable for painting.

The paint layer is comprised of pigments which are colouring materials, usually ground into a powder that are mixed with various binding agents or

⁸Van Schoute and Verougstraete, 173.

⁹Max Doerner, The Materials of the Artist and Their Use in Painting (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962) 8.

¹⁰Doerner, 8.

¹¹Doerner, 34.

¹²Doerner, 39.

¹³Ralph Mayer, The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques (London: Faber and Faber, 1962) 226.

mediums.¹⁴ Pigments are divided according to their origin, either an organic or mineral source.¹⁵ Within these categorizations, further distinctions can be made; mineral pigments may be divided into natural and artificial ones, while organic pigments may derive from animal, vegetable or artificial sources.¹⁶ Various mediums are used to solidify the pigments and bind them to their supports. Oils such as linseed and poppy, were extensively utilized by the old masters, although the use of over thirty different types of oils has been recorded, and in some cases, detailed recipes have been documented, including Leonardo Da Vinci's formula for walnut oil.¹⁷ As well, other agents such as resins, balsams and wax are also suitable mediums for the preparation of pigments.¹⁸

Lastly, in order to protect the finished work against dust or any other pollutants that may damage the piece, the painting is coated with a layer of varnish, of which numerous oil and spirit based kinds are used.¹⁹ The four elements that comprise a painting, the support, ground, paint and varnish, hold many clues as to the status of the art work. It is the job of science to extract evidence from these features in the hope that such data will provide answers regarding the authenticity of the piece.

In understanding the various physical components of a painting, one can begin to consider the various processes, such as dendrochronology, by which these materials may be examined. Dendrochronology is a method which analyzes wood

¹⁴Hilaire Hiler, Notes on the Techniques of Painting (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1934), 84

¹⁵Hiler, 84. For a complete description of pigments and their properties, see Ralph Mayer's The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques, pgs. 41-112.

¹⁶Hiler, 84.

¹⁷Hiler, 149. Leonardo describes his recipe for walnut oil as follows: "Select the finest walnuts: take them from their shell; soak them in a glass vessel, in clear water, till you can remove the rind. Then replace the substance of the nut in clear water, changing the latter as often as it becomes turbid, six or eight times. After some time the nuts, on being stirred, separate, and become decomposed of themselves, forming a solution like milk. Expose this in plates to the open air, the oil will float on the surface."

¹⁸Doerner, 96.

¹⁹A.P. Laurie. The Painters Methods and Materials (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1926) 169-170.

and comes into play when studying panel paintings or the wooden supports of a stretcher. This technique is based on the examination of annual rings which vary in thickness according to the species of the tree, as determined by climate and other conditions that influence growth. The various patterns are compared to standard chronologies of rings as a means of rendering an approximate date for when the tree was felled, a process known as cross-dating.²⁰ As well, dendrochronology can determine, based on the similarity of ring patterns, whether certain panels are derived from the same source. Matching patterns of rings, which act like a signature, also exist on trees of the same species growing in the same region. Detailed chronologies have been established for the growth of various tree types such as the 7,000 year history of the oak in Ireland.²¹

In knowing the regional availability of various species of trees at certain periods in time, the connoisseur is able to determine the tendencies of specific artists in relation to their choice of materials.²² For example, in northern Germany and Holland, oak panels of slight thickness were almost exclusively used in old master works in contrast to the use of pine, fir, larch, linden, beech and ash wood in southern Germany.²³ In France, panel paintings were generally executed on oak or wood from nut-trees, while thick boards made of poplar were extensively used in Italy.²⁴ Interestingly, poplar does not exhibit distinct rings: a necessary component in which to determine age.²⁵ Thus, the forger's use of poplar solves his problem of having to acquire authentic wood from the period in which his work is supposedly to have been

²⁰Sonnenberg, 136.

²¹Mark Jones, ed. Fake? The Art of Deception (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) 286.

²²Helene Verougstraete-Marcq and Roger van Schoute, "Painting Technique: Supports and Frames" Art History and Laboratory: Scientific Examination of Easel Paintings eds. Roger Van Schoute and Helene Verougstraete-Marcq (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1986) 19. The authors explain that "As a rule, the use of a particular wood is constant at a certain place in a certain epoch and largely depends on local resources or on the possibilities of supply from local trading centers."

²³Doerner, 33.

²⁴Friedlander, On Art and Connoisseurship, 186.

²⁵"Fakes from Father Christmas," The Economist December 23 (1978): 83.

produced. If analysis shows that the type of wood support used in a work does not correspond to the known practices of an artist, this may be cause for suspicion, although the possibility exists that the artist may have uncharacteristically changed materials. However, if tests prove that the date in which the tree felled was years after the death of the supposed artist or the documented period of his practice, then the connoisseur can surely conclude that the work is a forgery. As well, the sawing techniques utilized in removing the panel from its source may be used to determine an approximate age for the piece of wood.²⁶

Another technique that assists in the practice of connoisseurship is microscopy: the magnification of small samples of materials under the lens of a microscope.²⁷ High magnification is used in pigment and fiber analysis which can yield important information regarding the authenticity of an art work. In removing paint specimens, the examiner should be certain that the sample is taken from an authentic part of the original painting as opposed to an area which may have undergone any restoration or overpainting. In order to ensure the removal of an original sample, paint should be taken from the outer edges of the work, close to the frame.²⁸ As well, the removal of the paint is hardly noticeable from this area. In examining the sample obtained from a hypodermic needle, the various layers of the painting including the grounds, pigments and varnish, can be clearly distinguished.²⁹

Under such magnification, the various optical properties of the cross section, as it is called, can be examined as a means of classifying the various pigments utilized by individual artists. For example, such analyses have established that

²⁶Van Schoute and Verrougstraete-Marcq, 228. Panels are sawn perpendicular to the growth rings of the wood, in either a radial or a tangential cut.

²⁷Sonnenburg, 136. An example is illustrated in: Madeline Hours, Conservation and Scientific Analysis of Painting (New York: Van Norstrand Reinhold Company, 1976), pg. 86, plate 76: Micro sample of cross section.

²⁸A. Martinus de Wild, The Scientific Examination of Pictures (London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., 1929) 5.

²⁹Stuart Fleming, Authenticity in Art: The Scientific Detection of Forgery (London: The Institute of Physics, 1975) 27.

Rembrandt mixed glass particles containing arsenic and cobalt into his dark pigments.³⁰ Other properties such as the size and shape of the particles vary according to the chemical make-up of the pigment.³¹ As well, these characteristics also indicate whether the pigments were ground by hand or came from a modern tube.³² Hand-ground pigments display a diversity of shaped grains, while the particles of modern pigments, produced mechanically, exhibit a distinct uniformity in size and roundness in shape.³³ In characterizing the compounds of different pigments, the connoisseur can accurately date the painting based on when the pigments were first developed for use. For example, zinc white was not utilized before 1780, while titanium white was only developed in 1920.³⁴ As well, over time, certain pigments fell completely out of use, such as lead-tin oxide, a yellow pigment commonly found in works from the 15th to the 17th century. Recent publications regarding specific technical information on this pigment, has enabled forgers to reintroduce this color into their palette.³⁵ In light of all that is known about the pigments utilized by the old masters, an inexcusable mistake of the forger is his use of anachronistic pigments or other materials that post-date the supposed time of production.

Pigments can also be treated chemically in order to determine their exact composition. The physical make-up of the pigments can be detected by observing specific chemical reactions. For example, some pigments are identifiable through their solubility in alkaline, acid or water. A blue pigment, for instance, that is soluble in hydrochloric acid and contains copper, is characteristic of azurite.³⁶ An indicator

³⁰Sonnenburg, 31. The glass was thought to aid in the drying process of the pigments.

³¹Stuart J. Fleming, "Science Detects the Forgeries," New Scientist December 4 (1975): 567.

³²"Fakes From Father Christmas," 84.

³³Stuart J. Fleming, "Detecting Art Forgeries" Physics Today April (1980): 37.

³⁴R.H. Marijnissen, Paintings: Genuine. Fraud. Fake: Modern Methods of Examining Paintings (Brussels:Elsevier Librico, 1985) 87.

³⁵Marijnissen, 88.

³⁶Van Schoute and Verougstraete, 178.

of white lead, on the other hand, is its particular reaction when treated with nitric acid: the formation of lattice shaped crystals of lead nitrate.³⁷ The Center on the Materials of the Artist and Conservator, a branch of the Carnegie Mellon Research Institute, has compiled a library of the chemical composition of the various pigments used by different artists, as well as those employed in particular countries during specific time periods.³⁸

A systematic categorization of the properties of pigments as such is truly an asset. The findings of the Mellon Institute may serve as a basis for further investigations, while reducing the overall cost of such testing. The data recorded in the Mellon library eliminates the need to conduct various preliminary tests on authentic works that form the basis of further assessments. As well, numerous scholars have spent years investigating the pigments and other materials utilized by the old masters, such as A.P. Laurie who, in 1914, published The Pigments and Mediums of the Old Masters.³⁹ Laurie's motivation to conduct this study is clearly expressed in the preface of this work when he states, "It seemed to me that a more exact knowledge of the pigments and mediums used at various dates in the history of art, along with the methods of identification which could be carried out without injury to the painted surface, would prove of practical value in fixing the dates of works of art and detecting forgeries."⁴⁰ Since this publication, and others of its kind,

³⁷Fleming, Authenticity in Art, 28. Detailed results of the chemical treatment of pigments can be found in: Franz Mairinger and Manfred Schreiner, "Analysis of Supports Grounds and Pigments" Scientific Examination of Easel Paintings eds. Roger Van Schoute and Helene Verougstraete-Marcq (Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1986), Chapter IX, Table I: *Synopsis of the Most Important Pigments and Dyes and Their Chemical Composition, Period of Application and Identifications*.

³⁸"Fakes and Frauds: Atoms for Detection" Time April 5 (1968): 87. The Center on the Materials of the Artist and Conservator is currently involved in research which includes "the aging of acrylic paint media which become yellow, translucent and more insoluble as they grow old; identifying light sensitive paints that can be ruined if displayed in ordinary gallery lighting, and examining the factors that produce unstable paint films prone to cracking or flaking." "The Center on the Materials of the Artist and Conservator" (1998) Available: <http://www.cmu.edu/cmri/spr.html> (9 February 1998).

³⁹A.P. Laurie, The Pigments and Mediums of the Old Masters (London, Macmillan and Company, 1914)

⁴⁰Laurie, preface.

like Hilaire Hiler's Notes on the Techniques of Painting of 1934, much information has become known about the various palettes of artists. For example, Rubens palette consisted of fourteen colours including lead white, yellow lake, vermilion, red ochre, malachite green, burnt sienna and ivory black, to name but a few.⁴¹ The relevance of such knowledge is obvious in the detection of forgeries.

Though microscopy and microchemical analysis require an actual sample from the art work, other methods of analysis exist that are non-destructive. Infrared (IR) photography is one such technique of surface examination. This technique records the existence of contrasting materials: those that absorb infrared, such as carbon-based pigments, and those that reflect it such as the white ground layers.⁴² Most significant for its ability to simultaneously reveal underdrawings and the overlying paint layers, infrared radiation also benefits the conservator as damaged areas of the painting are well recorded.⁴³ The application of this technique has proven extremely useful in examining 15th-century Flemish works, as the paint layers are quite thin, and thus the infrared wavelengths of light are able to penetrate the surface well.⁴⁴ Infrared photography has helped establish the individual deployment of line and sketching style utilized by various artists. For example, Roger van der Weyden (1399/1400-64) used simple contours without any shading while Jan van Eyck (c. 1390-1441) favored the use of a coarse hatching style. As well, the various qualities of line have been determined through this technique. The change of pressure along the lines produced by Hieronymus Bosch (c.1450-1516), a left-handed

⁴¹Hiler, 137. Hiler also discusses the palettes of such artists as Titian, Van Eyck, Andre Derain and Maurice Utrillo.

⁴²Sonnenburg, 136.

⁴³J. R. J. Van Asperen de Boer, "Examination by Infrared Radiation" Scientific Examination of Easel Painting, eds. Roger Van Schoute and Helene Verougstraete (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1986) 109. An example of this is illustrated in: Madeline Hours, Conservation and Scientific Analysis of Painting (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1976), pg 56, plate 50 and 51: Suzanna and the Elders, 16th-century Flemish school, *The preliminary drawing carefully executed under this painting is seen again under infrared rays that reconstruct the artist's meticulous workmanship.*

⁴⁴Fleming, "Detecting Art Forgeries", 37. Often the layers were so thin that portions of the underdrawing can be observed with the naked eye. Van Asperen de Boer, 121.

artist, is clearly distinguished in infrared photographs.⁴⁵ While the revelation of underdrawings provides much insight into the working methods of the artist, often, they are only detectable when present beneath white, red and brown areas of pigments. Blue and green pigments, on the other hand, block the infrared waves from penetrating the surface, and thus these areas of the photograph appear black, offering inconclusive evidence.⁴⁶

The limited nature of this technique led to the establishment of infrared reflectography, a method of analysis developed in the late 1960's.⁴⁷ This method uses a video system that incorporates an infrared tube that is sensitive to a longer wavelength of radiation, and thus can penetrate deeper into the various layers of the art work.⁴⁸ A significant improvement from the use of photography, infrared reflectography is able to reveal underdrawings beneath green and blue pigments.⁴⁹ However, infrared reflectography can only detect the underdrawing if it is made on a white ground with a carbon-containing pigment or drawing tool.⁵⁰ Red chalk, often used for underdrawings, is invisible in reflectograms because it is transparent to the infrared waves.⁵¹ Overall, the possibilities with the use of infrared reflectography far surpass the results attained merely through IR photography.

Another harmless method of surface examination is one which employs ultra-violet light. Depending on their age and composition, various surface materials, including pigments, binding agents and glues, based on their chemical make-up, will autofluoresce, or glow, when examined under ultra-violet (UV) light.⁵² For example,

⁴⁵Fleming, "Detecting Art Forgeries", 37.

⁴⁶Van Asperen de Boer, 112.

⁴⁷Van Asperen de Boer, 114.

⁴⁸Sonnenburg, 136.

⁴⁹Van Asperen de Boer, 114.

⁵⁰Van Asperen de Boer, 117.

⁵¹Van Asperen de Boer, 118.

⁵²Wendy M. Watson, Altered States: Conservation, Analysis and The Interpretation of Works of Art (South Hadley: Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, 1994) 173.

linseed oil fluoresces pale pink under UV light.⁵³ Lead white appears pure white, or, depending on the binding medium, fluoresces a light violet color, while zinc white appears bright yellow/green under the light.⁵⁴ The different intensities and colors of fluorescence, as exhibited by the art work, offer insights into the condition of the work's surface. While old layers of paint manifest a considerable amount of fluorescence, newer layers, resulting from restoration or perhaps overpainting, appear quite dark under the UV light, and thus are easily differentiated.⁵⁵ As well, UV light has been useful in detecting forged signatures. In one instance, a painting inscribed with the signature of Pissarro, proved to be a forgery. When examined under UV light, it was discovered that the signature was painted over that of another artist as traces of paint from the original signature fluoresced under the light.⁵⁶

Most of the materials that fluoresce contain organic compounds, while those of an inorganic nature rarely fluoresce. Pigments that exhibit fluorescence of considerable intensity include zinc white, cadmium yellows, oranges and reds.⁵⁷ All other pigments that fluoresce do so as a result of their particular oil medium. Generally, UV light is only absorbed in the outermost paint layers. Thus, dirt on the surface of the painting may obstruct the penetration of the UV light.⁵⁸ It is therefore necessary that the painting undergoes a proper cleaning before applying this test. Varnish layers often exhibit strong fluorescent qualities which may make it difficult to distinguish those levels of fluorescence as emitted from the pigments underneath

⁵³Fleming, "Detecting Art Forgeries," 36.

⁵⁴De Wild, 105.

⁵⁵E. Rene de la Rie, "Ultraviolet Radiation Fluorescence of Paint and Varnish Layers," Scientific Examination of Easel Painting, eds. Roger Van Schoute and Helene Verougstraete (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1986) 91. An example of this is illustrated in: Madeline Hours, Conservation and Scientific Analysis of Painting (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1976), pg. 46, figs. 34 and 35: Holy family of the House of Canigian, Raphael, Bayerische Staatsgemaldegammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich; *A photograph taken by ultra-violet light clearly shows the dark lines or patches where light touching-up has been done.*

⁵⁶George Savage, Forgeries, Fakes and Reproductions: A Handbook for the Art Dealer and Collector (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963) 268.

⁵⁷De la Rie, 93.

⁵⁸De la Rie, 104.

the varnish.⁵⁹ As well, the existence of a varnish layer helps to date a painting. Complete coverage of a painting with varnish is a post-1650 phenomenon. Previously, varnish was used only in the role of a glaze to highlight certain areas of a picture.⁶⁰ The presence of a varnish layer in a painting that supposedly pre-dates 1650, will be an indicator of its spurious nature. Examination by ultra-violet light not only assists in the classification of pigments and mediums, but also in determining the extent to which the paint layers are in fact original, overpaints or restorations.

X-radiography, a technique which utilizes x-rays, is the final scientific method of examination to be discussed. Just as an x-ray can see inside a human being, so too can x-rays uncover the interior or hidden features of a painting. The degree to which x-rays are absorbed depends on the chemical make-up of the various pigments, and the consistency of the other materials present, such as the support.⁶¹ Dense pigments that contain elements of a high atomic number, such as lead and mercury, absorb x-rays much greater than those of a low atomic number. The lower the atomic number, the more permeable the pigment is to x-ray penetration.⁶² Essentially, x-rays record the amount of radiation that materials allow to pass through.⁶³ X-rays have revealed, among other things, *pentimenti* or artist's corrections, underpaintings, distinctive techniques of brushwork, as well as a chronology of the execution of an art work in regard to the placement of figures and the addition of detail.⁶⁴ The connoisseur must keep in mind, however, that as an artist's technique changes over time and his style

⁵⁹De Wild, 105.

⁶⁰Fleming, Authenticity in Art, 22.

⁶¹Kurz, 24.

⁶²De Wild, 97.

⁶³Savage, 270.

⁶⁴Roger Van Schoute and Helene Verougstraete-Marcq, "Radiography" Art History and Laboratory: The Scientific Examination of Easel Paintings (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1986) 148. An example of this is illustrated in: Madeline Hours, Conservation and Scientific Analysis of Painting (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1976), pgs. 80-81, figs. 71 and 82: Portrait of a Young Man, Rembrandt, Louvre, Paris; *X-ray photography shows the existence, under the painting we normally see, of a sketch for another Rembrandt picture: a woman leaning over a cradle.*

develops, the x-radiographs of his paintings will reveal conflicting evidence that at first may seem to suggest the workings of a foreign hand.

The revelation of such features of a painting plays a key role in determining the authenticity of the piece. For example, the use of x-rays played a significant role in the trial of Otto Wacker who forged thirty-three paintings by Van Gogh. In 1932, Wacker was found guilty of fraud and the falsification of documents.⁶⁵ X-rays submitted as evidence in the trial helped to distinguish that the paintings in question, indeed were not produced by Van Gogh. Enlarged details of x-ray photographs of an authentic Van Gogh, Wheatfield with Reaper, illustrate the master's distinctive technique which involved "a coherent build up of layers with a final modeling atop a thick impasto," in contrast to Wacker's method which consisted of "a series of stucco layers overlain by an unsculpted paint film."⁶⁶ Wacker's "Van Goghs" were deemed forgeries with the help of this scientific data, among other evidence, including the lack of a secure provenance.⁶⁷

In addition to insights into the creative process of the artist, x-rays reveal various symptoms of aging, including the characteristic *craquelure*, or age cracks. Distinguishing this feature becomes a significant factor in detecting forgeries, as will be apparent in the case study of the Van Meegeren forgeries. As well, the nature of the support, to the extent that the x-rays can penetrate the material, may be revealed by this method of analysis. For example, x-rays can detect the number of wooden

⁶⁵Feilchenfeldt, 289.

⁶⁶Fleming, "Detecting Art Forgeries", 36. Ironically, the authentic Van Gogh that was used as the control in this examination was, in 1970, catalogued as a forgery. The distinct techniques of painting as conveyed in the x-rays prove merely that the canvases were executed by two different forgers. Feilchenfeldt, 295.

⁶⁷Feilchenfeldt, 298-99. Other evidence against Wacker's 'Van Goghs' was their lack of vibrancy in color as well as the existence of small canvas imprints that result from laying wet canvases on top of one another. Such marks do not exist in authentic works of Van Gogh. Additionally, other factors played a role in the condemnation of the works. During and after his stay in Paris, Van Gogh typically painted all his works on French canvas; Wacker's pieces however, are not painted on this type of support. As well, the forgeries display slight cracks on the surface, yet Van Gogh's authentic works are never affected by such *craquelure*.

elements and the system of joints used in canvas stretchers and wooden panels which correspond to a particular region and period in time.⁶⁸ The texture, quality and condition of the canvas can be established in an x-ray as well as the type of nails used to attach the canvas to the stretcher.⁶⁹ All of this information is relevant in trying to establish the authenticity of an art work.

While all of these tests focus on the chemical composition of pigments or the nature of the other materials used such as the supports, mediums or ground layers, other qualities of a painting, including the hardness of the oil paint and network of *craquelure*, both relative indicators of age, can be evaluated by scientific means. Testing the extent of the hardening of the paint is one of the most common tests used to ascertain an approximate age of a painting, as it takes many years for oil paint to dry completely. If when pricking the surface of the painting with a pin, the point sticks into the soft paint layers, then this is a sign that the paint is relatively new. Yet, if the paint is truly old, having had years of drying time, the pin will slip on the hard, glassy surface of the painting. One must be aware, however, that many forgeries, now over a hundred years old, have acquired the characteristic hardness of the paint layers such that these works would resist the pin. Thus, one must use caution when applying this test as the results obtained may need further substantiation through other means of investigation. Another way in which to test the solidity of the oil paints is to rub alcohol over the surface of the painting. Fresh paints easily dissolve in alcohol, while old paints are resistant to this solvent. Particular care should be taken when executing this test because often, genuine works will exhibit various

⁶⁸Panels are generally made up of one or more planks of wood, depending on the size of the particular painting. The planks of wood are assembled in various ways including the butt-joint, rabbet-joint and groove-and-tongue. Over 90% of Flemish panels from the 14th to the 19th century are assembled with a glued butt-joint. In the Northern schools and in Germany, the groove-and-tongue joint is most common. The rabbet-joint is used primarily in Southern schools of painting, as seen especially in 14th and 15th century Spanish works while occasionally being used in Netherlandish works. Van Schoute and Verougstraete-Marcq, "Painting Technique: Supports and Frames" 25.

⁶⁹Van Schoute and Verougstraete-Marcq, "Radiography," 148.

degrees of paint removal due to the particular glazes or varnishes present on the surface. These resinous substances easily dissolve in alcohol, causing damage to the authentic work.⁷⁰ Thus, a weak solution of alcohol should be employed. Even a low concentration of alcohol will remove fresh layers of paint that comprise any modern forgery.

Craquelure is a common indicator of age and is often viewed as the ultimate sign of authenticity. These cracks can be magnified to various degrees, whether it be under a hand held lens or by photographic enlargements, enabling an accurate analysis of this feature.⁷¹ There are two distinct types of cracks that occur on the surface of a painting. One kind of crack formation, known as early crackle, which occurs during the drying process, results from faults in the artist's technique, either in the preparation of the support, the mixing of the pigments with inappropriate substances or the application of the actual paint. For example, painting over a layer that has not yet dried to the touch, adding the varnish too soon or using too much binder or medium, may yield early cracks. The pattern of early crackle, often rather fine, is generally quite erratic and corresponds to the direction of the brushstrokes.⁷²

The second type of crackle results from the effects of the aging process. Over time, the painting undergoes a loss of elasticity such that the ground and paint layers can no longer adjust to the movements of the support that occur due to changes of humidity.⁷³ As a subsidiary effect, the paint may also lose its adhesion and separate from the ground, causing areas of paint to flake off.⁷⁴ Age crackle runs through all of

⁷⁰Kurz, 27.

⁷¹An example of this is illustrated in: R.H. Marijnissen, *Paintings: Genuine, Fraud, Fake* (Brussels, Elsevier, 1985), pg. 52: Albert Bouts, *The Assumption of Mary*, detail, Brussels, Museum of Fine Arts, *The crackle is normal age crackle*.

⁷²Marijnissen, 115-6. For a detailed list of the causes of early crackle, please see pages 115-6.

⁷³Hebborn, 141.

⁷⁴Mayer, 151. Paint may lose its adhesion due to moisture which penetrates the back of the canvas or from faulty canvases. Mayer also explains how wrinkling or blistering of the paint may result. An example of this is illustrated in: R.H. Marijnissen, *Paintings: Genuine, Fraud, Fake* (Brussels, Elsevier, 1985), pg 282: *Detail on an 18th-century canvas, photographed in raking light. The paint layer is flaking off.*

the paint layers, including the ground. Thus, in an x-ray photograph, the extent to which the visible surface cracks actually penetrate deep into the layers of the painting can easily be discovered, and thus help to establish the status of the art work. Paint on panels cracks parallel to the wood, while canvas cracks usually radiate from a central point.⁷⁵ Thus, in analyzing the physical appearance of the network of crackle, important information regarding the genuineness of the overall aging effect can be obtained.⁷⁶

In understanding the basic techniques utilized in the aforementioned scientific methods of analysis and the goal of each process, one can begin to comprehend the obstacles the forger faces in his attempt to produce works that deceive the connoisseur.

The Forger vs. Science: Techniques of Deception

The forger, aware of the availability and use of the various scientific techniques of analysis as discussed above, must develop certain strategies in order that his works go undetected under such scrutiny. The forger must anticipate the possibility that his works may be subjected to one form or another of scientific analysis, and therefore must be prepared to face the consequences should his works fail to meet the connoisseur's requirements for authenticity. Cleverly, the forger has developed various techniques of production. While some of the forger's methods produce more effective results than others, the gifted forger may succeed in creating an "authentic" work that even science cannot detect.

⁷⁵Kurz, 29.

⁷⁶The formation of cracks may differ according to the "thickness of the application of the ground and the proportion of pigment to binding medium." Thus, the works of different artists display variations in crack formations. For example, unusual parallel cracks can be found in the work of Lenbach which may have resulted from the use of a medium containing paraffin. Doerner, 404. As well, Max Friedlander explains that circular cracks that look like spider's webs are characteristic of 18th century works. As well, some artist's works display no cracks at all. Friedlander, On Art and Connoisseurship, 193-4.

The first job of the forger is to acquire a support, either a canvas or a panel, that corresponds to the period in which the forged work was to have been produced. Remember, the age of the wood can easily be determined through the use of dendrochronology, while the uneven fibers of old, handmade canvases are easily distinguished from the more regular texture of machine made canvases.⁷⁷ With this in mind, a variety of options are available. The forger may find an authentic, but already used canvas or panel from the appropriate period and carefully remove the paint layers with various solvents and cleaning tools. After cleaning off the layers of paint, the forger will have a suitable surface on which to create a work. If unable to locate such authentic materials, the forger may find a support that is relatively close in age that can be manipulated to appear as if the material is from the right period in time.⁷⁸

For example, a typical sign of aging in wood is the presence of worm holes. The forger Eric Hebborn explains in his recently published book The Art Forger's Handbook, how such holes may be simulated. Firing a small-calibre shot gun into the wood or using a drill to create the holes in the panel is an option, although these techniques become problematic as the holes produced by these methods run at right angles to the wood, while genuine worm holes run parallel to the panel in a series of tunnel formations.⁷⁹ Hebborn also suggests beating the surface of the panel with a coarse file until the wood appears to have been worm-eaten.⁸⁰ While these suggested methods may superficially yield convincing results, upon further examination, these simulated worm-holes are easily detectable as such. As the worm leaves

⁷⁷Hebborn, 135.

⁷⁸Frank Arnau, Three Thousand Years of Deception in Art and Antiques trans. J. Maxwell Brownjohn (London: Jonathan Cape, 1959) 51.

⁷⁹An example of this is illustrated in: R.H. Marijnissen, Paintings: Genuine, Fraud, Fake (Brussels, Elsevier, 1985), pg. 157, plate 1: Jan Van Eyck, The Mystic Lamb, top register, St John the Baptist, *Photograph of a cut strip of wormy sapwood. The worms made a circular movement around the hard knot.*

⁸⁰Hebborn, 135.

physiological traces of his existence in the wood, a lack of such evidence raises doubt as to the authenticity of the wooden support.⁸¹ The forger also has the option of using old materials that originally were used for a different purpose. For example, the door of an old cupboard or a bench may now function as a panel picture. Conveniently, these sources usually exhibit authentic worm-holes which resolve the forger's need to simulate these signs of aging that if left to his own hand would inevitably produce inadequate results.

Once the forger has secured an appropriate canvas or panel that seemingly meets the requirements of age, he must consider the other materials needed in order to execute the actual work. For example, the forger must be knowledgeable about the grounds, pigments, mediums and varnishes used by the artist he wishes to forge. The biggest mistake of a forger is his use of anachronisms in these materials as these are easily detectable through a variety of scientific tests. For example, Laughing Cavalier, a painting once attributed to Frans Hals, was discovered to be a forgery after undergoing pigment analyses.⁸² The background of the painting was covered in cobalt blue, the Cavalier's coat contained synthetic ultra-marine and his collar showed traces of zinc white.⁸³ The development of each of these pigments post-dates Hal's death, a sure sign of the dubious nature of the work.⁸⁴

The forger can avoid the careless use of non-existent materials by consulting a number of sources including A.P. Laurie's The Painter's Methods and Materials, Max Doerner's The Materials of the Artist and Their Use in Painting and Ralph Mayer's

⁸¹ Arnau, 201. Often, dead worms are found imbedded into the wood fibres. Thus, some forgers have tried placing dead worms into the artificial holes of their panels.

⁸² This work is believed to be one of Van Meegeren's earliest forgeries produced in 1923. Jones, 237.

⁸³ Fleming, Authenticity in Art, 31.

⁸⁴ Marijnissen, 37-38. The purchaser of the Hals painting took the Dutch expert, Hofstede de Groot, to court after the painting that De Groot authenticated was deemed a forgery by a restorer. This scientific evidence was presented in court. De Groot ended up purchasing the painting back from the owner for 50,000 guilders. Further features of the work such as the existence of false cracks and the use of mechanically produced nails, supported the restorer's claim that the Laughing Cavalier was a fake. Marijnissen, 37-38. The anachronistic pigments, artificial ultra-marine and cobalt blue, were produced in the late 19th-century while zinc white was not developed until 1780. Hoving, 169.

The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques. These sources detail, among other things, the various recipes for preparing grounds, grinding pigments by hand and mixing oil mediums as utilized by specific old masters. Not only does the forger become knowledgeable of the exact materials that he will need in order to produce a seemingly authentic work, but one source also conveniently informs the forger of various suppliers from which to acquire such materials.⁸⁵ As well, the various properties and particular effects of each material is discussed to help facilitate the forger's process. For example, in knowing that linseed oil takes three to four days to dry in comparison to poppy oil which dries in five to eight days, the forger can choose the more suitable medium to meet his exact needs.⁸⁶

Once the forger has determined the palette of colors and mediums that were utilized by the artist he wishes to forge, he must also be knowledgeable about the artist's techniques and tools of painting, such as the use of brushes made of pig's bristle.⁸⁷ X-ray studies of the master's creative process can be examined by the forger. As x-rays of paintings have become an important tool of study, various publications exist which may assist the forger. For example, in 1967, the Central Museum of Utrecht documented x-rays of sixty Netherlandish paintings.⁸⁸

One important feature that the forger must be able to simulate is the characteristic network of *craquelure*. Interestingly, Friedlander notes that while "there exist many genuine paintings which show no cracks; they are never absent in forgeries."⁸⁹ Thus, many techniques have been developed by forgers in order to

⁸⁵Mayer, 510-518. These materials include solvents, adhesives, resins, varnishes, oils, dyes and pigments.

⁸⁶Doerner, 159.

⁸⁷Hebborn, 117. Old masters usually used round brushes. Soft brushes were used on panels while stiff brushes were more suitable for works on canvas. Other brushes made of red-sable and cow hair, for example, were used in order to achieve various effects. The forger's use of authentic brushes is important for another reason as well. A bristle may break off from the brush and get mixed into the paint. If the bristle is found and removed, it can be tested. Thus, the forger would not want to risk using a modern brush and leaving traces of its bristles in the paint surface.

⁸⁸Van Schoute and Verougstraete-Marcq, "Radiography", 144.

⁸⁹Savage, 209.

produce these convincing effects of age. Hand painting the cracks with a fine brush or scratching them into the paint surface are two methods, that although easily detectable with the naked eye or a magnifying glass, have been utilized by unskilled forgers.⁹⁰ A technique that dates back to the 17th century is rolling up the canvas or rubbing the back of it against the edge of a table, which produces a network of cracks in the paint.⁹¹ Another method involves simply the use of the forger's fingernail or the tip of a pointed instrument that is dragged along the back of the canvas to facilitate fractures on the surface. A special varnish may also be applied that is specifically designed to create surface cracks. Such varnishes are easily obtainable from a French company called Lefranc et Bourgeois.⁹² Two different solutions are applied to the surface, one of which dries more quickly than the other which causes the formation of cracks.⁹³

Other more complex methods exist that produce more effective results for the forger. Exposing forged works to varying conditions of humidity may bring about changes in the support and facilitate cracks in the paint surface.⁹⁴ As rapid changes in temperature can induce cracks, forgers have often baked their paintings in an oven. While cracks may result from such baking, the forger has used this technique not as much for the purpose of creating *craquelure*, but rather to harden the paint. As the solidity of the paint will be tested by the pin and/or alcohol test, the forger must insure that his surface not only appears old, as aided by the cracks, but also physically seems aged. Another trick of the forger that ensures his painting will pass the alcohol test, is adding a layer of size before applying the final coat of varnish.⁹⁵ This layer of size or glue produces a surface that is resistant to the alcohol.

⁹⁰Marijnissen, 116.

⁹¹Hebborn, 149.

⁹²Hebborn, 150.

⁹³Arnau, 203.

⁹⁴Marijnissen, 116.

⁹⁵Hebborn 148-9.

The forger must also consider the many years of dust and dirt that has affected the surface appearance of the painting. As such dust enhances the visibility of the *craquelure*, the forger will generally rub the surface of the painting with some sort of substance that gives the appearance of a build-up of dirt in the cracks. While this "dirt" may seem to have resulted from authentic conditions, under scientific examination, the composition of this dirt may prove otherwise. The dust in genuine cracks that has collected over the natural course of time, exhibits a more varied composition than the modern "dust" of the forger.⁹⁶ As well, various elements in the air correspond to specific periods in time. For example, diesel fumes only existed after the turn of the century.⁹⁷ Thus, this element would not be present in the dust of old master works. Hebborn's formula for simulating dirt consists of using dust from the street or the contents of a vacuum cleaner combined with rectified petrol. As well, melted wax and candle smoke are added as the final touches to this aging effect.⁹⁸

Whether or not the composition of the dirt is examined, may depend on the how authentic the *craquelure* appears. The characteristic features of false *craquelure* have been devised by the connoisseur in order to facilitate the detection of forgeries. Simulated cracks are commonly betrayed by their uniformity across the surface, as Friedlander states, "natural *craquelure* throbs with rich variety, whilst monotony and pedantic repetition mark the arbitrary, intentionally irregular one."⁹⁹ As well, their lack of penetration into the ground layer and their flat rather than curled up edges, raises suspicion as to the genuineness of the cracks.¹⁰⁰ In recognizing the features of

⁹⁶Arnau, 103.

⁹⁷Arnau, 203.

⁹⁸Hebborn, 141. It would seem to me that the use of dirt from the street would certainly contain traces of non-existent elements in the air, which would raise suspicion as to the authenticity of the piece. However, the composition of this dust would be quite heterogeneous, as desired by Hebborn.

⁹⁹Friedlander, *On Art and Connoisseurship*, 193.

¹⁰⁰Marijnissen, 118.

fake *craquelure*, the connoisseur is better informed of the characteristics of genuine cracks which enables him to authenticate works more accurately.

While this discussion has only highlighted some of the techniques of production utilized by the forger, it is clear that the forger must know as much, if not more, than the connoisseur about the creative process of the artist he forges. While the forger has gained much knowledge about the production of art works from the connoisseur and the various scholarly publications on the materials and techniques of the old masters, as well as the many monographs on these artists, so too has the connoisseur learned from the forger.

In understanding the techniques of the forger, the connoisseur has been able to recreate the processes of the original artist. Furthermore, by studying the materials of the forger, the connoisseur becomes keenly aware of the physical components of genuine paintings. By recognizing what should not be present in an authentic work, as derived from the study of forgeries, the connoisseur can firmly establish what should be exhibited in a genuine piece. As well, the connoisseur becomes well informed of the effects of aging by comparing those signs displayed in forged works with those exhibited in genuine pieces. As new scientific techniques of analysis are developed and publicly documented, the forger will plan his works according to the capabilities of such tests. While the forger tries to outsmart the connoisseur, the connoisseur hopes that in the end, science will prevail. John Riederer, the head of the Rathgen Research Laboratory at Berlin's State Museum of Prussian Cultural Property, conveniently summarizes this wish by stating that,

Counterfeiters are becoming more clever and ingenious from day to day. Fortunately, so are we. Our job is to keep a step ahead of them with modern science, to make detection so precise, comprehensive and reliable that the forgers' input to outsmart us becomes so costly and time-consuming that their profit margin dwindles. It's a bit like a race

and, on the whole, we are winning it.¹⁰¹

The Forgeries of Han van Meegeren: A Case Study

Henricus Antonius (Han) van Meegeren may well be considered the greatest forger of all time. The infamous creator of the Disciples at Emmaus¹⁰² canvas, supposedly a rare religious work by the master Jan Vermeer of Delft, Van Meegeren is responsible for five other forgeries, supposedly by Vermeer, two canvases by Pieter de Hooch (1629-after 1688) and a number of unfinished pieces in the style of Vermeer, Gerard ter Borch (1617-1681) and Frans Hals.¹⁰³ The Disciples at Emmaus was first discovered in 1937 by Dr. Abraham Bredius, a reputable Dutch art historian. In the November issue of Burlington Magazine of that year, Bredius declared the work to be an authentic Vermeer.¹⁰⁴ The painting was later purchased by the Boymans Museum with the assistance of the Rembrandt Society. A steady flow of "Vermeers," all religious in content, surfaced in the Dutch art market during the war years. Each work was authenticated and subsequently sold to an array of distinguished collectors. One of the most extraordinary purchases was of The Washing of Christ's Feet for 1,300,000 florins, made by the Dutch government on behalf of the Rijksmuseum, in 1943.¹⁰⁵

In 1945, after the German occupation of The Netherlands, Van Meegeren was arrested for collaborating with the enemy, having been involved in the sale of a 'national treasure,' Vermeer's Woman Taken in Adultery, to Hermann Goering, a Nazi

¹⁰¹Dornberg, 62.

¹⁰²Please see chapter one, note 60 for a reference to this illustration.

¹⁰³Dr. P. B. Coremans, Van Meegeren's Faked Vermeers and De Hooghs: A Scientific Examination (London: Cassell and Company, 1949) 5.

¹⁰⁴Coremans, 30. Bredius' article, "An Unpublished Vermeer," is in Burlington Magazine, 61 October 1937.

¹⁰⁵Jones, 238. This is illustrated in: P.B. Coremans, Van Meegeren's Faked Vermeers and De Hooghs: A Scientific Examination (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1949), plate 15: Washing of the Feet, *Vermeer style*.

field-Marshal.¹⁰⁶ After six weeks in prison, Van Meegeren could no longer tolerate the conditions and startled the world on July 12th by confessing that he was the author of the six, newly discovered Vermeer canvases, including the Woman Taken in Adultery, as well as two previously accepted works by de Hooch. Although no one believed him at first, the charge of collaboration was changed to that of forgery upon witnessing Van Meegeren paint Jesus Amongst the Doctors in the same exact manner as the other "Vermeers."¹⁰⁷ While the similarities between Van Meegeren's work and the "Vermeers" in question were significant, these alone did not supply adequate proof that Van Meegeren was indeed responsible for the works. The Dutch Legal Authorities conducted an exhaustive investigation into the nature and authorship of these curious pieces.¹⁰⁸

The experts consulted were both art historians and natural scientists. The commission of experts was headed by Dr. P. B. Coremans, Director of the Institut Royale du Patrimoine Artistique in Belgium.¹⁰⁹ Their goal, as defined by the authorities, was to determine if the paintings date from the 17th century or are modern, and whether or not these works, if contemporary, can be attributed to Han van Meegeren.¹¹⁰ The following discussion will detail the physical and chemical analyses of the suspect works as conducted by the various experts which yielded conclusive evidence that, in fact, the paintings were contemporary pieces and could be linked to Van Meegeren.¹¹¹ In the process of the investigation, the experts were able to reconstruct the working techniques of Van Meegeren in their laboratories.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶Richard Newnham, The Guinness Book of Fakes, Frauds and Forgeries (Middlesex, Guinness Publishing, 1991) 145. This is illustrated in: Coremans, plate 13: Woman Taken in Adultery, *Vermeer style*.

¹⁰⁷This is illustrated in: Coremans, plate 38: Jesus Amongst the Doctors, *Vermeer style, painted in 1945 under the supervision of the Dutch Authorities*.

¹⁰⁸Coremans, VII.

¹⁰⁹Jones, 240.

¹¹⁰Coremans, VII.

¹¹¹Coremans, VIII.

¹¹²Coremans, VII.

This case study serves as a reminder that where the connoisseur is lacking in definitive evidence, science conveniently fills in the gaps, providing a firm basis for a more accurate assessment of art works.

The Van Meegeren paintings were subjected to various scientific tests, including the use of x-rays, infrared radiation and ultra-violet light. As well, cross sections of paint samples from the works were analyzed both visually and chemically. In addition to examining the actual paintings, other materials were collected for testing such as the original stretcher of the Disciples canvas found at the Boymans Museum as well as a piece of wood, pigments and various mixtures of resins and oils collected from Van Meegeren's studio in Nice, France.¹¹³

Van Meegeren used authentic 17th-century canvases, as verified through scientific analysis, and carefully removed the original paint surfaces while making sure to keep the ground intact, as the genuine *craquelure* present in this layer would play an important role in facilitating the emergence of cracks in his overlying composition.¹¹⁴ Thus, upon examining the fibers of the canvases, they proved to be authentic, as stated by Van Meegeren. As well, the Disciples canvas was shortened on the left side as Van Meegeren explains,

I painted this on an old canvas representing the Resurrection of Lazarus. As my composition did not require such a large surface, I cut off, from the left-hand side, a strip of canvas 30 to 50 cm wide. In consequence, I had to shorten the old stretcher to the same extent. And so I displaced to the right the corner-braces on the left-hand side of the stretcher. In my Nice workshop you will find the strip of canvas and the two pieces of wood belonging to the left-hand extremities of the two horizontal stretcher-members. You will find the old stretcher in the Boymans Museum.¹¹⁵

¹¹³Coremans, 2-5.

¹¹⁴Coremans, 20.

¹¹⁵Coremans, 8. At the studio in Nice, the piece of canvas was nowhere to be found, while only one of the fragments of wood was recovered and taken back to Amsterdam for testing. 9.

Tests confirmed that the threads on the left-hand side were straight from the cutting down of the canvas while the fibers on the right side were irregular and deformed, as they went untouched.¹¹⁶ As well, the piece of wood found at the Nice studio, upon matching the annual growth ring formations, proved to have comprised part of the original stretcher. On the basis of this evidence, the Disciples at Emmaus could be linked to Van Meegeren as the producer. As well, other items in Van Meegeren's studio were confiscated, such as various props including a jug, a set of glasses, a map and two pewter plates, all of which had been represented in the questionable compositions.¹¹⁷ While it was certain that the Disciples canvas was forged by Van Meegeren, the experts were left to analyze the specific working techniques of the Disciples and the other paintings in order to determine whether all the suspect works were produced by the same hand. In the following discussion, I will highlight the various scientific observations made by the experts which serve as proof that the works in question are in fact forgeries.

It is known that the supports were authentic 17th-century canvases. However, Van Meegeren had not anticipated that his works might undergo x-rays. Thus, he was not careful to remove all traces of the original paint layers of the canvases. Various underpaintings were revealed in certain works, while others displayed no signs at all of their original subject matter. For example, the Bust of Christ,¹¹⁸ the Blessing of Jacob¹¹⁹ and the two Interiors¹²⁰ in the style of de Hooch, show no traces of underpaintings in their x-rays. Yet, a head under the Disciples canvas, a battle scene under the Woman Taken in Adultery, a horse and rider under the Washing of the Feet

¹¹⁶Coremans, 9.

¹¹⁷Coremans, 5. These are illustrated in: Coremans, plate 45: *Various accessories seized in Van Meegeren's Studio: They can be recognized in different forgeries.*

¹¹⁸This is illustrated in: Coremans, plate 6: Bust of Christ, *Vermeer style*.

¹¹⁹This is illustrated in: Coremans, plate 11: Blessing of Jacob, *Vermeer style*.

¹²⁰These are illustrated in: Coremans, plate 17: Interior with Drinkers, *De Hoogh Style* and plate 19: Interior with Cardplayers, *De Hoogh style*.

and a hunting scene with dogs and game under the Last Supper,¹²¹ were all identifiable in each respective x-ray.¹²² In addition to the traces of these underpaintings, x-rays also revealed a series of scratches and abrasions that seem to have been caused when removing the original paint layers with a brush.¹²³

Trained at the Institute of Technology in Delft, Van Meegeren acquired various skills that aided in his forging process.¹²⁴ As well, Van Meegeren had learned various techniques of the old masters from a restorer named Theo Van Wijngaarden.¹²⁵ Furthermore, Van Meegeren's first art teacher familiarized him with the early pigments and their preparation, as used by the old masters.¹²⁶ Thus, as may have been expected, the pigment analyses showed that Van Meegeren only used colours that were known in the 17th-century.¹²⁷ However, upon further micro-chemical examination, the presence of a modern pigment, cobalt-blue, was discovered in two of the works, Woman Taken in Adultery and Woman Reading Music.¹²⁸ Cobalt-blue did not exist until the first quarter of the 19th-century, proving beyond a doubt that these works could not date back further than when this pigment was first discovered.¹²⁹ The use of this anachronistic pigment was a careless error on the part of Van Meegeren.

In regard to the network of *craquelure* in the paintings, various tests revealed that these age cracks were artificially induced. As previously discussed, authentic crackle has a sharp outline, is relatively thin and often has raised edges.¹³⁰ More

¹²¹This is illustrated in Coremans, plate 7: Last Supper, *Vermeer style*.

¹²²Coremans, 9.

¹²³Coremans, 22.

¹²⁴Coremans, 24.

¹²⁵Jones, 237.

¹²⁶Newnham, 143.

¹²⁷Coremans, 16.

¹²⁸This is illustrated in: Coremans, plate 21: Woman Reading Music, *Vermeer style*.

¹²⁹Coremans, 12.

¹³⁰Coremans, 10. The cracks in Van Meegeren's works appeared flat, without exhibiting raised edges, indicating that moisture had not penetrated the paint layers, as is typically the case in authentic age crackle. 6.

importantly, these cracks are always visible in x-rays. Each age crackle seen on the surface of a work should correspond exactly to those indicated in an x-ray of the piece. If the number of cracks that appear on the surface exceeds those revealed in the x-ray, than this indicates that the cracks did not emerge from the ground layer, as a result of changes in the support, but rather, were derivative of some other means. While each of the canvases used by Van Meegeren contained genuine age crackle as preserved in the ground layers, he had to simulate these aging effects on the surface. Thus, while the genuine cracks appeared in the x-rays, they could not be precisely superimposed on an image of the surface cracks, as these cracks outnumbered those in the underlying ground, as revealed in the x-ray.¹³¹ It was Van Meegeren's hope that the existence of the cracks in the ground layer would help facilitate the formation of cracks in the surface when rolling up the canvas in various directions, the technique he used to create the artificial *craquelure*.¹³² While this process of rolling up the canvas produced convincing effects, the simulated cracks could not fool the x-rays.¹³³

Upon observing these cracks further, the experts paid special attention to the "dirt" that filled in these crevices. Tests confirmed that the substance which covered the surface of all the paintings, resembling "dirt," was a rather homogenous, blackish substance, rather different from the more typical heterogeneous type of dirt found in genuinely old paintings.¹³⁴ The substance was determined to be liquid in nature, some sort of ink.¹³⁵ As well, traces of this ink were discovered between the upper paint layers and the varnish in the Disciples at Emmaus, inside a layer of white lead in the Bust of Christ, and between the first and second paint layers in the Last

¹³¹Coremans, 10-11.

¹³²Coremans, 21.

¹³³This is illustrated in: Coremans, plate 63: Disciples at Emmaus, *False age crackle of two different types. The macrograph (top) shows many more cracks than does the radiograph (bottom). They cannot therefore be real age crackle.*

¹³⁴Coremans, 7.

¹³⁵Coremans, 19.

Supper.¹³⁶ In observing that the "dirt" had soaked into the various paint layers of many of the works, scientists concluded that the paint surface was clearly porous, due to a lack of sufficient drying or hardening of the paint layers.¹³⁷

In addition to creating a surface that appeared old, through the simulation of cracks and the addition of dirt, Van Meegeren had to devise a way in which to harden the paint surfaces. Upon testing the solubility of the paint layers, all of the pictures resisted the alcohol in a manner characteristic to authentic 17th-century paintings. However, when tested with strong alkalis and acids, the paint layers behaved quite differently from what is normally expected of such works. While authentic 17th-century oil paintings are severely attacked by such solvents, these paintings resisted them completely. Furthermore, when these works were treated with a drop of ammonia, a yellow stain formed on the paint surfaces, yet, no old painting has ever reacted in this manner. As well, while the overall hardness of the paint was typical, the surfaces displayed a "marked dullness and porosity that was quite foreign to an early painting." The experts began to suspect that these uncharacteristic observations may be the result of some unknown medium.¹³⁸

Further tests were subsequently conducted in order to determine the mystery medium. A solution of 1% vanillin in a concentration of sulfuric acid was added to a sample of one of the works; the particles quickly absorbed the solution and turned blue. From this observation, the scientists could conclude that the paintings contained no fatty medium. The medium was finally classified as an artificial resin of the phenol-formaldehyde group.¹³⁹ This resin was not discovered until the early

¹³⁶Coremans, 7.

¹³⁷Coremans, 21. This is illustrated in Coremans, plate 73: Bust of Crist (forehead), *Crackle containing the residue of a bluish-black liquid. In certain places the liquid has soaked into the paint on either side of the crackle.*

¹³⁸Coremans, 14.

¹³⁹For details on the nature and results of the tests, please see Coreman's Van Meegeren's Faked Vermeers and De Hooghs, 14-15.

19th-century.¹⁴⁰ Thus, the works could only date as far back as the development of this substance. According to the details that Van Meegeren disclosed in his interrogation, as well as the recollections of his son, this synthetic medium was the key to producing a genuinely hard and resistant paint surface.¹⁴¹ As recreated in laboratory experiments, it appears that Van Meegeren dissolved the phenol-formaldehyde resin in benzene or turpentine.¹⁴² This mixture was then thickened with an essential oil such as lavender or lilac oil. By adding the desired pigments to this substance, Van Meegeren produced a paint that was easily manipulated with a brush.¹⁴³ Lastly, in order to completely dry the paint layers, Van Meegeren baked his paintings in an oven at a temperature of 100 to 120 degrees C for approximately two hours, a figure that he determined after much trial and error.¹⁴⁴ This technique was also reconstructed in the Brussels laboratory by the experts to confirm the results obtained by Van Meegeren.¹⁴⁵

While this case study has primarily focused on the scientific evidence in support of the fraudulent nature of these works, it is interesting to turn one's attention to the stylistic features of these paintings, which may also offer clues regarding the status of these pieces. All of the "Vermeers" exhibit the same general characteristics, including heavy shading of the eye lids, noses and mouths. As well, the heads are out of proportion, being about five centimetres too large.¹⁴⁶ The lips and noses appear overly fleshy, the fingers look rather squared and wooden and the wrists seem quite fragile. Furthermore, the figures lack an anatomically correct structure, even beneath

¹⁴⁰Coremans, 14. The first patent for this resin was registered in 1907 by Baekeland.

¹⁴¹Jones, 237.

¹⁴²White spirit, toluene and xylene, may also have been mixed with the formaldehyde resin.

¹⁴³Coremans, 20.

¹⁴⁴Newnham, 143.

¹⁴⁵Coremans, 23.

¹⁴⁶Coremans, 36.

their baggy clothes.¹⁴⁷ Such features are in no way characteristic of any known, authentic Vermeer.

Mark Roskill, in his book What is Art History, points out that the specific circumstances surrounding the discovery of the Van Meegeren forgeries, played a significant role in their acceptance. Surfacing during the Second World War, the forgeries had obvious stylistic differences that under different circumstances would have immediately raised doubt as to their authenticity. Wanting to keep their national treasures out of the hands of the Nazis during the German occupation of Holland, Dutch authorities hid Vermeer's paintings, making them inaccessible for comparative purposes. If these authentic Vermeers had been available to compare with the Van Meegeren canvases, no expert would have rightly authenticated the pieces. Furthermore, the conditions of the war prevented any travel which meant that no research could be conducted as a means of substantiating the supposed, foreign origins of the works. Ultimately, in accepting the possibility that unknown Vermeers could turn up, experts created an environment that fostered the acceptance of the Van Meegeren forgeries.¹⁴⁸

It is even more surprising that the pieces were deemed authentic Vermeers when comparing any of the images of Christ as depicted in these works with Van Meegeren's drawing, Mother and Children.¹⁴⁹ There is no mistaking that this drawing served as the model for Christ in these works.¹⁵⁰ There is a marked deterioration in quality from the first "Vermeer", the Disciples at Emmaus, which is by far of the highest quality, to the subsequent works that Van Meegeren created. As the interest in such religious "Vermeers" grew, Van Meegeren produced these pieces rather

¹⁴⁷Jones, 240.

¹⁴⁸Mark Roskill, What is Art History (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976) 164.

¹⁴⁹This is illustrated in: Coremans, plate 31: Drawing, Mother and Children.

¹⁵⁰These comparisons are illustrated in: Coremans, plate 43: *Comparison between the heads of Christ in the faked paintings (from left to right, and from above downwards: Disciples at Emmaus, Woman Taken in Adultery, Washing of the Feet, Bust of Christ and Last Supper) and the head in the drawing Mother and Children (plate 31).*

quickly. Despite their lack of quality, the works were still authenticated as original Vermeers, just as Van Meegeren had anticipated.

While important observations were made regarding the style and quality of these works which, in and of themselves, may have raised concerns as to the authenticity of these works, in the end, it was the evidence obtained through various forms of scientific analysis that proved beyond a doubt that these works were forgeries by Van Meegeren. While the role of science has been most evident in this case study regarding the final assessment of the works in question, it is important to consider the limitations of science in order to have an informed understanding of the appropriateness of its application to the study of art works.

The Problematics of Science

As demonstrated in the case study, science can reveal valuable information that is otherwise unattainable by the connoisseur. While science has been able to firmly establish whether works of art, on the basis of the materials and techniques of production used are, in fact, forgeries, science cannot establish the genuineness of art works.¹⁵¹ For example, many forged works, if produced with authentic materials and executed with the proper techniques, can pass all of the scientific tests. This does not, however, prove that the piece is genuine. Thus, if the connoisseur relies merely on science, it is possible that certain carefully constructed forged works may go undetected. In such cases where a work meets all of the scientific requirements, it must be left up to the connoisseur to make the final judgment as derived from applying the more traditional tools of his trade. As some forgeries were created during the artist's own time, if one relies merely on scientific evidence, these works, produced with authentic materials, would pass all of the scientific tests, and

¹⁵¹Kurz, 23.

therefore, could easily be misattributed. As well, one must also be wary of possible errors in the application of the tests or in the accuracy of the tools used.

While the application of science plays an important role in assessing works over 200 years old, or presented as such, these tests prove to have a limited capacity when assessing works of the late 19th-century to the present. This is because most of the materials used by artists of this time are still readily available to the forger. Thus, science is not as relevant in assessing works of this nature. The connoisseur is often left on his own to authenticate such modern pieces. Finally, scientific methodologies and techniques, in and of themselves are relatively neutral: they only acquire significance and relevance when properly interpreted by the connoisseur.

The connoisseur has certainly benefited from the application of science to the study of art. Without the aid of science, the connoisseur would not be as informed of the various materials and processes of artistic production. Science should be regarded as a necessary complement to, but not substitute for, the traditional tools of the connoisseur's practice. The knowledge derived from the scientific study of forgeries has further added to the arsenal of the connoisseur in his process of authenticating art works. By way of summary, the scientific study of art works has, by implication, provided an additional framework from which to recognize the valuable contribution of forgeries to the study of art.

Chapter Four

Forgeries and the Art Market: The Influence of Supply and Demand

David Stein, a prolific forger of modern works, profited from the rising demand in the art market for works by Marc Chagall during the mid 1960's. At this time, Chagall had recently completed the stained-glass windows at the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem. As well, he was finishing the ceiling of the Paris Opera and would soon hang his mural at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Stein was keenly aware that Chagall's rising popularity would translate into a heightened demand for his works. Prepared to meet these changing conditions in the market, Stein accepted the challenge of forging Chagall's work.¹

Stein's motivation to forge the work of Chagall offers insights into the relationship between the production and/or sale of forgeries and developments in the art market. Thus far, I have examined the benefits of forgeries as derived from the application of the tools of connoisseurship and of science. In this chapter, I wish to consider forgeries from a broader perspective, one that contextualizes forgeries as having derived from particular circumstances which exist in the art market. Rather than focusing primarily on the material aspects of forgeries as in chapter three, attention will now be given to the incidence and nature of these works. Specifically, I am interested in the occurrence of forgeries in relation to the current status and market value of the artist that has been forged. In tracing the patterns of particular forgeries over time, one can gain insights into the art market and its determination of value. Before conducting such a survey of the proliferation of these works, one must have a clear understanding of the mechanics of the art market and particularly of the role that auctions play in establishing the value of art works.

¹Stein, 127.

A clear conception of the art market will provide a framework from which to develop a case study on the incidence of forgeries, to the extent that they can be traced, of the Canadian artist Jean-Paul Riopelle (b. 1923). One of the greatest living Canadian artists, Riopelle has experienced tremendous success both in Canada and in Europe. I will attempt to offer an analysis of the cause and effect relationships of the existence of such forgeries on the basis of recent discoveries that have surfaced in the Toronto and Montreal areas. In tracing Riopelle's auction records over the last years, and tracking the specific occurrences of forgeries of his works, I hope to discover trends that will offer insights into the changing market value of his pieces. Forgeries of Riopelle's work hold particular interest to me as one such work was given to me by the Metropolitan Toronto Police for research and educational purposes.

Furthermore, I will explore the circumstances which motivate the forger to target Riopelle. In discussing the known cases of Riopelle forgeries, the most relevant facts will be addressed. Lastly, I will offer an analysis of the Riopelle forgeries, which through the application of the various tools of connoisseurship, have been confirmed to be fraudulent in nature. This case study of Riopelle will serve as a basis from which to derive general notions of what the existence of forgeries can reveal about the nature of the art market.

The Nature of the Art Market

It has been said that "a painting is worth whatever someone is willing to pay for it."² Though this statement may hold some degree of truth, an informed concept of the art market begins with an understanding of value and the competing will to possess.³ As discussed in chapter one, many factors affect the value of art works. These include, among other things, the attribution, condition, provenance, quality,

²Sophy Burnham, *The Art Crowd* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1973) 56.

³Charles W. Smith, *Auctions: The Social Construction of Value* (New York: The Free Press, 1989) 177.

medium, size and rarity of the work. The goal of the art market is to match supply with demand, as facilitated by dealers and auctioneers.⁴ As soon as two people wish to possess the same work of art, a market for that work and that artist exists.⁵ Most often, the supply of art works available to the public fails to adequately meet their demand. This scenario is ideal for the forger who, like Stein, aims to augment the supply of these desirable art works.

The art market mirrors the ever-changing fashions of collecting and may be viewed as reflecting the "general consensus of opinion at any particular point in time." Furthermore, "the art market also provides a means of demonstrating the fundamental changes in fashion that take place over time."⁶ Fashions or trends in the art market may be influenced by a number of factors including recent exhibitions, publications, or as addressed in chapter one, the specific acquisitions of museums and galleries as well as prominent private collectors. In order for a particular fashion of collecting to be established, enough attractive examples must exist in the market for public consumption. Trends in the art market are most clearly demonstrated by their effects on the value of minor works.⁷ Lesser works of a popular genre or by a desirable artist will sell for high prices, regardless of the quality or condition of the pieces. Yet, these same works, if for sale at a time when that type of art is not trendy, may fail to gain the attention of any collectors at all.

It is important to consider, as well, the extent to which the various trends in collecting are limited to a certain region. For example, the works of most Canadian artists, which are primarily collected by Canadians, have not realized the same value as the top American or European artists, which have a world wide appeal. When interest in certain art works spreads to other regions, the demand for such pieces

⁴Geraldine Keen, Money and Art: A Study Based on the Times-Sotheby Index (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971) 34.

⁵Keen, 17.

⁶Keen, 47.

⁷Keen, 42.

increases which subsequently elevates the potential value of the works in the newly expanded market. When the demand exceeds the actual supply of works available, the pieces will sell for higher prices due to the competing wills to own the art works. Conversely, if the demand for such pieces is limited, such as to Canadian collectors, the prices will not be as high, as the competition to own Canadian works is not as great as the desire to purchase works by the Impressionists, for example. Though Riopelle is one artist who has achieved an international status, the work of most Canadian artists has not gained similar international recognition.

An additional factor in determining the fashionability of certain art works is the period in which the pieces were created. If an art work was produced during an artist's "good period," the work will be more desirable and consequently, more valuable. For example, the most sought after works by the Impressionists Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), are from the late 1860's and 1870's, as these were the years in which the Impressionist movement first began to flourish.⁸ Thus, the art works from these periods seem to hold particular historical value for the collector.

While the various fashions of collecting that evolve over time dictate the demands of the art market, the greatest display of the desirability of art works is evident in the auction environment, where the "true" value of art works are realized.

The Role of Auctions

Though auctions are considered somewhat of a spectacle and performance, according to Charles W. Smith, auctions "establish the value, identity, and ownership of items; they entertain; they shape social relationships; and they reallocate vast sums of money." As well, auctions "match individual preferences of buyers and sellers,"

⁸Keen, 40.

while the process provides an environment with open and competitive bidding.⁹ Museums base their insurance evaluations on current auction records while dealers establish the value of the works they sell on similar criteria.¹⁰ Thus, it is important to look closely at the auction process in order to understand its exact role in determining value.

Auction houses, such as the prestigious firms of Sotheby's and Christie's, sell works on behalf of clients who in turn must pay the House a commission which is based on the hammer price of the sale. Those individuals who purchase a work at auction are obligated to pay the House a buyer's premium, which is usually 10% of the hammer price, although this figure may vary. Before a work of art is sold, specialists in the appropriate department determine a pre-auction estimate, which is a realistic projection as to what the works will fetch at auction. As well, the experts advise the client on a reserve price. This reserve price is the lowest price that the client will allow the auction house to sell the piece for, and offers the client a degree of protection, as this figure insures that the work will not sell below its fair market, or anticipated value. If the piece does not reach its reserve price during the sale, the lot will be "bought in": the term assigned to an item that does not sell. If the reserve bid is too high, the piece may fail to be purchased. Thus, the reserve, which, according to the policy of Sotheby's, cannot exceed the low estimate, is often quite conservative, though this bid may vary significantly, depending on the client, the art work or the locale of the sale. The reserve figure necessarily remains confidential to the auction public. A low estimate stimulates interest in the piece and brings in more bidders which then potentially may increase the value of the work as head-to-head competition between potential buyers drives up the price.¹¹ If a buyer has a vested interest in a piece, he or she may be so determined that the question of how much to

⁹Smith, 162.

¹⁰Burnham, 53.

¹¹Keen, 35.

bid becomes secondary to the question of "Do I want it?"¹² For example, in 1987, competition between two bidders drove the price of a Philadelphia Chippendale "hairy-paw" chair to \$2,750,000. Auction prices for such specialized items are determined by a small pool of interested collectors whose motivation to buy is very personal; in this case the buyer owned a matching table.¹³

If an art work does not sell at auction, the collecting public often views this piece as undesirable and the market value of the work may be damaged. If the piece comes up for sale again, the general consensus will be that "nobody wanted it last time" and thus the piece will either not sell again or be purchased at a substantial loss to the previous owner. It may take years before such damage to a work's value wears off and it once again becomes a player in the market. Thus, it is advisable not to re-enter the unsold work back into the market too soon after its failed attempt at auction.

An artist or particular genre of work that frequently goes up for sale at auction serves as a guide in establishing the potential value of similar works. On the basis of these past prices, projections may be made for upcoming sales. However, it is difficult to estimate the value of a work that rarely goes to auction, as there is no basis from which to assess an accurate value for the piece. Therefore, the market only sets values for works that frequently are seen in the sale room.¹⁴ Old master paintings seldom go to auction because they are already owned by museums, galleries or private collectors who usually retain these works in their collections indefinitely. However, Impressionist and Modern works of art most regularly are available for purchase. At Sotheby's, such sales take place twice a year in both New York and London.

It must also be noted that certain works are more suitable for some collections than others and this fact influences the nature of the market for such pieces. For

¹²Smith, 177.

¹³Smith, 172.

¹⁴Smith, 168.

example, it is difficult to sell large scale works to private collectors. The magnitude of many of these pieces is suitable only for display on museum and gallery walls; such accommodating spaces are often lacking in private collections.¹⁵ Thus, the market for these substantial pieces is mainly limited to institutional spaces.

In considering the various factors which influence value in the art market, it is evident that the state of the market dictates the forger's activities. The forger must be keenly aware of the fashions which drive the demands of collectors. In the following sections, I will explore the circumstances surrounding the discovery of the Riopelle forgeries which form the basis of this study, in an attempt to offer observations of the relationship between forgeries and the art market.

Jean-Paul Riopelle: Background

"More than any other Canadian, living or dead, he (Riopelle) has impressed his artistic personality on the world outside of Canada."¹⁶ The works of this native Montrealer are handled by some of the world's biggest galleries such as the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York and the Galerie Maeght Lelong in Paris and Zurich. As well, Riopelle's art works have been acquired by such prestigious institutions as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. Part of a Quebec group of artists known as the Automatistes, Riopelle's rise to stardom came in the 1950's when his pieces were shown in New York alongside the works of such artists as Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985), Yves Tanguy (1900-1955) and Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966).

J. Russel Harper describes this early phase in Riopelle's career:

¹⁵Keen, 39.

¹⁶Lisa Rochon, "The Lion in Autumn: The Magical Past and Clouded Present of Jean-Paul Riopelle" Canadian Art 4.2 (1987): 48.

Riopelle flattened out with his palette knife some of the rebellious blobs of paint squeezed from the tube. His use of the knife increased steadily. Soon the whole surface became a modelled mosaic of flat colour areas, skillfully aced together to give an exhilarating sensation both of romantic colour harmonies and light vibration...¹⁷

In Paris, Riopelle's art works caught the attention of Salvador Dali (1904-1989) and André Breton (1896-1966).¹⁸ Riopelle's link to the Surrealists was not with his fantastic imagery, of which his works contain none, but rather with his automatic or gestural painting process: "a rapid and spontaneous movement that tried to unite the artist's feelings."¹⁹ Influenced by his mentor Paul-Emile Borduas (1905-1960), Riopelle is considered one of the most innovative artists to emerge at his time.²⁰ Although much of Riopelle's work was created in France where he lived most of his life, "his early paintings are an important bridge between North American and European artistic development in the mid-century."²¹

It is estimated that between 1941-1981, Riopelle created approximately 10,000 watercolours, drawings, gouaches, prints, sculptures and paintings, which includes an average production of one hundred paintings per year.²² Thus, as his *oeuvre* is so extensive, his daughter, Yseult Riopelle, is currently working on a catalogue raisonné, which among other benefits will serve to expose and eliminate Riopelle forgeries.²³

¹⁷Rochon, 55. An example of Riopelle's early technique is illustrated in: Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts. Jean-Paul Riopelle 1992, pg. 92, plate 46: Untitled, 1954, oil on canvas, 114.5 x 195.5, courtesy of the Drabinsky Art Gallery, Toronto.

¹⁸Rochon, 48-49.

¹⁹Rochon, 54.

²⁰Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts. Jean-Paul Riopelle 1992, 26.

²¹Alycen Mitchell, "Seeing Red Over Riopelle," The Financial Post 22 Nov. 1997: 30.

²²Lawrence Sabbath, "Jean-Paul Riopelle: Truly a Giant on Canadian Art Scene," The Gazette 24 July 1982: C15.

²³Mitchell, 30. Yseult Riopelle also has plans to put the various forgeries of her father's work that she has been cataloguing on the internet as a public resource for collectors, dealers, students and scholars. Yseult Riopelle, Personal Interview, 29 March 1998.

The Value of Riopelle

Jean-Paul Riopelle holds the record for the highest amount paid at auction for a Canadian work. The Untitled work sold on May 3, 1989 at Sotheby's New York in the Contemporary Art sale, was an oil on canvas measuring 78 x 138 inches and painted circa 1955. Estimated at \$250,000-\$350,000, the work sold for \$1,540,000 u.s. (this amount includes the buyer's premium).²⁴ This sale not only marked the height of the Riopelle market, but also of the market worldwide as it experienced a boom in the 1980's. Furthermore, this price is indicative of abstract expressionism being in vogue among collectors. In addition to this distinction, Riopelle holds seven of the top ten record sales at auction for Canadian art works. Most of the records which range from between \$400,000 to \$800,000 cdn., were set in 1988 and 1989.²⁵ Riopelle's most valued pieces date from the 1950s: the years in which his technique of gestural painting was perfected.²⁶

During Riopelle's peak in the market, his works were so desirable that prices realized for his pieces at auction were substantially higher than the pre-auction estimates. For example, just two weeks after setting the record price for one of his pieces in the New York sale, Sotheby's Toronto sold an Abstract Composition, signed and dated '50 on the reverse and measuring 15 x 18 inches, for \$115,500. The pre-auction estimate valued the piece as being worth approximately \$30,000-\$40,000.²⁷ While one might expect that Riopelle's larger scale works, which often fetch

²⁴One week after this record price was paid for his work, a Riopelle was stolen from a private gallery in Montreal. The 1959 work which measures 73 x 100 centimetres, is estimated to be valued between \$100,000 and \$500,000 cdn. The piece was on display at the Galerie Claude Lafitte, as part of a month long exhibition of Riopelle's work from the 1950's. The Sotheby's sale gave much publicity to Riopelle and to this particular exhibition of his works. The timing of this theft is indicative of the popularity of Riopelle's works and their subsequent value as demonstrated in the Sotheby's auction. The spokesman for the Galerie said, "I think the fact that Riopelle sold for more than any other Canadian artist ever woke up a lot of people." Stephen Godfrey, "Riopelle Stolen in Montreal" The Globe and Mail 13 May 13, 1989:

²⁵Anthony R. Westbridge, Canadian Art Sales Index: Paintings Prints, Sculpture, Books (Vancouver: Westbridge Publications Ltd., 1997) 142.

²⁶Rochon, 48.

²⁷This is illustrated in: Sotheby's Catalogue, Important Canadian Art, May 17, 1989, lot 55.

substantial prices, would sell better in Canada, the potential value of these pieces is greater in the New York or London auctions. These sales, unlike those in Canada or rather Toronto, attract a larger pool of buyers who have more funds available for expenditure on art acquisitions.

From 1987 until 1992, approximately 23 paintings sold for over \$100,000 cdn., yet from 1992 until the 1997 auction year, only three works exceeded this amount.²⁸ This figure does not mean that fewer works ranging in this value were up for sale, rather, people are unwilling to pay these prices when the market is in a recession. While this recession may have naturally affected the value of Riopelle's work, it is worthwhile to consider the possibility that the existence of Riopelle forgeries in the market may have similarly affected his value. Before investigating the specific effects of such forgeries, it is important to explore the features of Riopelle's work that attract the forger.

Riopelle: The Forger's Target

The forger who fabricates the work of Riopelle is likely motivated by the prices realized at auction for his pieces. As Riopelle is an artist that has proven to be a valuable and fashionable commodity, it is not surprising that over the last decade, forgeries of his works have been discovered. In addition to considering the marketability of the works he intends to create, the forger must also evaluate the necessary technical skills and materials required in order to produce convincing works.

In addition to his art being highly valued, as it is the work of a Canadian artist, Riopelle's technique is one which can easily be forged. As his works are abstract, the forger is merely required to perfect Riopelle's method of gestural painting and

²⁸Riopelle's works are also sold through dealers and private galleries. Such transactions are not made available to the public, and thus auction records alone serve as a basis from which to judge relative changes in values of particular art works over time.

understand the theories behind his choice of colour combinations, rather than having to be proficient in more technical matters such as depicting figural images which require a thorough understanding of various concepts such as the use of perspective. I do not mean to suggest that Riopelle's technique is not complex in nature. Rather, it encompasses the process and application of paint which does not necessarily require the same level of artistic training as producing more subject-oriented pieces. As Van Meegeren was trained as an artist, his skills enabled him to undertake the difficult task of forging such artists as De Hooch and Vermeer, whose technical mastery may be viewed as unsurpassed. Thus, it is clear that the forger creates works that befit his own talents. For example, Eric Hebborn, a trained draughtsman, had a successful career as a forger of old master drawings. While abstract works appeal to the forger due to the ease of production, such pieces are often more thoroughly catalogued, which poses a difficulty for the forger. The creation of older works, however, are not as well documented or even documented at all. Thus, while it may be easier to create works by such artists as Riopelle, the forger has a greater chance of marketing old master works, over modern or contemporary pieces, without raising suspicion.

While Riopelle's technique seems to entice the forger who may not be as technically skilled, other factors make Riopelle, or any modern or contemporary artist attractive to the forger. As such pieces have not yet undergone the effects of aging as experienced by old master works, the forger need not concern himself with simulating such indicators of age in the same way that Van Meegeren did when forging his pieces. In recalling Van Meegeren's elaborate methods of production, which range from gathering authentic 17th-century canvases and rare pigments to laboring with complex techniques of aging and cracking the painting, as detailed in chapter three, one notes the attention to detail involved in the execution of such forgeries. In contrast, Riopelle's materials are still readily available to the forger and therefore do not pose the kinds of difficulties faced by Van Meegeren. At the most,

the forger of Riopelle's pieces need only simulate some dirt and minor damages which require far less effort and attention as compared to tasks associated with forging older works.

Faux Riopelle: Canadian Forgeries of a Canadian Artist

Forgeries of Riopelle paintings reported in the Montreal and Toronto areas provide evidence for a contemporary case study. In the following accounts, I will focus on issues concerning the relationship between forged works and the art market. This study is based on reports in newspapers, interviews with police detectives, documentation at the Toronto Police Museum and first-hand correspondence with Yseult Riopelle and Sotheby's experts.

The first instance of a Canadian forger convicted and imprisoned for such art crimes occurred in 1995 in Montreal.²⁹ Riopelle was among the many artists forged by Pierre Luisi, who was found guilty of eleven counts of fraud and imprisoned for nine months. Like most forgers, Pierre Luisi was an aspiring artist, who, unable to sell his own works, began to forge various sought-after Quebec artists such as Riopelle.³⁰ As Luisi explains, "I tried selling my own paintings, which I signed 'Da Luisi,' but people preferred to invest in big-name artists, so I decided I'd give them names."³¹ Luisi placed classified ads in various Montreal newspapers, offering some Riopelles for as little as a few thousand dollars. Since they were well below their market value, these prices should have raised suspicion among collectors and dealers

²⁹Claude Arpin, "How Art Police Trapped The Lizard": Forger Churned out Fake Riopelles in LaSalle Kitchen" The Gazette 31 May, 1995: A1, A11. The difficulty in convicting art forgers is in having to prove that the individual under suspicion actually created the forgeries, which would require one to witness the suspect creating the works with his own hand, which is rare. In the case of Luisi, however, this is exactly what happened. When police raided his residence, they caught Luisi red-handed, hard at work, producing forgeries in his kitchen. Arpin, A11.

³⁰Mitchell, 30.

³¹Arpin, A11.

regarding the authenticity of these works. However, Luisi managed to entice several buyers who believed they were acquiring a genuine work, despite its bargain price.

The Luisi forgeries came to the attention of the police when a prominent businessman who in 1994 had purchased a "Riopelle" for \$16,000, arranged to have himself and the painting photographed with the artist. Upon seeing the work, Riopelle declared the piece to be a fake and inscribed "This is not my work" on the back of the painting.³² Riopelle contacted the Montreal police who in turn conducted an investigation which led to Luisi's arrest.

It is helpful to trace the path of the forged painting from Luisi's hands to its recognition as a forgery by Riopelle himself. The businessman had purchased the Riopelle from an individual who had responded to an advertisement in Le Journal de Montreal. This individual paid \$3,000 for the painting, and brought the work to a reputable Montreal art gallery where the dealer accepted it as an authentic Riopelle and affixed the gallery label on the back for a cost of \$53. No charges were brought against the art dealer or the first purchaser of the painting as they were believed to have acted in good faith.³³

Over time, other collectors surfaced with similar Riopelle forgeries. In order to apprehend the forger, Riopelle approved police suggestions to publicize the matter stating that, "this nonsense has got to stop."³⁴ Based on these accounts, the police were able to identify the source as Luisi. The raid on Luisi's home in October of 1994 found the artist hard at work and forty-seven paintings on site, including eleven "Riopelles". Among other materials discovered were various practice sheets of signatures, including one with numerous examples of Riopelle's with the more

³²Mitchell, 30.

³³Arpin, A11.

³⁴Arpin, A11. Riopelle was willing to cooperate with the police in their investigation. As a preventative measure, detectives convinced Riopelle to be fingerprinted. Riopelle had "mentioned that he always touched a finger to his wet canvas." Therefore, it seemed advantageous to have Riopelle's prints on file as a definitive means of determining the authorship of any other questionable pieces of his work.

convincing examples circled by Luisi. Luisi did not copy works directly, rather, he produced *pastiches* of the artist's work.³⁵

The seized paintings were ordered destroyed as part of the court case, but on the recommendation of the detective in charge, the \$16,000 "Riopelle" that set off the investigation was retained for the Montreal Police Museum. Although the work remains in the custody of the police, it is significant that the National Gallery in Ottawa wanted access to this Riopelle forgery for comparative purposes.

While unsuspecting collectors in Montreal were falling victim to Luisi's forgeries, Toronto's art community was also struggling against the infiltration of fakes into the market. The majority of reported incidents of Riopelle forgeries in Toronto can be linked to one particular individual, Henry Louis Kuntz.³⁶ Originally from France, Kuntz moved to Toronto and became a self-proclaimed art dealer. While at first orchestrating various art thefts, Kuntz later became involved in marketing forgeries in the Toronto area, which subsequently led to his arrest in 1986. Kuntz was sentenced to five years incarceration for his involvement in various art crimes.³⁷

Spending time behind bars did not, however, deter Kuntz from continuing his illegal activities in the art community after he was released. In the autumn of 1990, an individual approached Simon Dresdnere, a Toronto art gallery owner, with several Picasso etchings; Dresdnere, an authority on modern art, immediately recognized the pieces as fakes. He was familiar with one of the etchings and noticed that its image was inverted.³⁸ In questioning the individual regarding the origins of the pieces,

³⁵Arpin, A11.

³⁶Johnson, B3. Information on Henry Kuntz was gathered from publically available sources. The details presented in this thesis are an amalgamation of facts and do not reflect the author's personal views or inferences. The author believes these accounts as published in newspapers to be true and reliable.

³⁷The entire investigation of Kuntz involved 3,000 hours of surveillance tapes by five police forces, including the F.B.I. Thomas Claridge, "Paintings Were Fake: Toronto Art Dealer Jailed for Five Years" *The Globe and Mail* Aug. 6 1986: A13.

³⁸Detective Neil Stokes, Personal Interview, July 1997. Detective Stokes confirms the veracity of the information he has divulged to the author and has authorized reproduction of the investigation details for publication in this thesis.

Dresdnere discovered that his recently purchased \$65,000 Riopelle originated from the same source.³⁹ Rather than overlooking the probability that his Riopelle too was a forgery, and wishing to protect his own reputation, Dresdnere contacted the police.

The Riopelle that Dresdnere purchased was offered to him by a legitimate dealer, who in good faith had relied on a secure provenance. The painting had been authenticated by the autobiographer of Riopelle, although it was later determined that although this individual wrote a book on Riopelle, he was not actually an authority on the artist. As a self-proclaimed expert, this person provided authentications of Riopelle's works at a cost of \$500 per picture.⁴⁰ When the police contacted the dealer who sold Dresdnere the Riopelle, she disclosed the original source of the painting, who in turn confessed to working on behalf of Kuntz. In July of 1991, police raided Kuntz's home and seized more than 100 works of art, both stolen and forged. Among these works were 15 Riopelle forgeries.⁴¹

The Riopelles that Kuntz was dealing in were high quality fakes produced by world-class forgers. The works, not only convincing in their technique, were painted on canvases purchased from Lucien Lefebvre Foinet, Riopelle's Parisian art supplier. As well, affixed to the backs of the forgeries were phony labels from French galleries which added an additional air of authenticity. Although Kuntz never divulged the exact source of his forgeries, it is assumed, based on this evidence, that he imported them from France.⁴²

³⁹Mitchell, 30.

⁴⁰Stokes, Personal Interview.

⁴¹Mitchell, 30.

⁴²Mitchell, 30. A Montreal gallery owner, Michel Bigue, has reason to believe the forgeries originate in France. Bigue, who was offered a fake Riopelle in 1991 that "looked pretty good," explains, "I went into a gallery in Paris the year after I saw paintings exactly like Riopelle's. I asked people in the gallery about them. They said the artist was in his sixties and he knew Riopelle. I figured this has got to be the man. This guy in Paris gets nothing for his paintings. Maybe Kuntz met him and said 'Listen, let's make some money.'" Yseult Riopelle, on the other hand, believes that the forgeries are produced in Canada. While it is true that many of the forgeries are made with Parisian materials, Yseult has confirmed with the Paris suppliers that they have had various requests for their materials to be sent to Canada, which is atypical. Thus, Yseult is convinced that such requests have been made by Canadian forgers. Yseult Riopelle, Personal Interview, 29 March 1998.

Unclear as to the status of the Riopelles at the time of their seizure, detectives in charge of the case consulted Marie-Claude Corbeil, the senior conservation scientist at the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa. In addition to the works being compared to various authentic Riopelles, scientific tests were conducted on the art works. The most significant findings came from the pigment analyses. According to Corbeil's report, the paintings, which were executed in Riopelle's style from the 1950s, contained an orange paint that was not available at the supposed time of production. As well, some of the paintings had been signed in red which Riopelle does not generally use for his signatures. In addition to this evidence, it was noted that the supplier's stamp on the back of the canvases post-dated 1988 and differed from the stamp used in the 1950s.⁴³ The Institute contacted the canvas manufacturer in Paris in order to confirm this information.⁴⁴ While it is assumed that the forgeries were created after 1988, Kuntz claimed that although the paintings may not have been painted in the 1950s, they were still authentic works by Riopelle.⁴⁵

Despite the overwhelming evidence against the authenticity of these Riopelles, it was decided that the most definitive answer regarding their status would come from Riopelle himself. Detectives brought a number of paintings to Riopelle who confirmed their fraudulent nature.⁴⁶ In 1994, Kuntz was once again convicted and sentenced to two years incarceration in addition to other sanctions which prevent him from further involvement in the art business.⁴⁷

⁴³Mitchell, 30.

⁴⁴Interestingly, the owner of the manufacturing company was asked to come to Canada to testify as to the nature of the stamps on the canvases, but refused to do so. She was willing to testify if the court came to her. Detective Stokes explained that the cost of such a trial would have been astronomical as they would have to set up a special court, sending the judge, the crown attorney, the defense, the accused and several of the detectives to France. A new crown had been assigned to the case, who after much consideration, decided to opt for a plea bargain, rather than proceeding with such a costly trial. Stokes, Personal Interview.

⁴⁵Stokes, Personal Interview.

⁴⁶Michael Hanlon, "Fantastic Fakes' Lead to Jail Term: Henry Kuntz gets Two Years in Massive Art Forgery" *The Toronto Star* January 5, 1994: A6.

⁴⁷It is evident that Kuntz, despite these sanctions, continues to be involved in illegal activities involving art. Most recently, Kuntz's residence was raided on February 4, 1997. Attempting to retrieve stolen

Crimes Against Riopelle: The Effect of Forgeries on his Market

I have already discussed some of the factors that make Riopelle a desirable target for forgers. I will now offer an analysis of the aforementioned cases involving Riopelle forgeries in an attempt to establish the nature of their effects on Riopelle's market. It will become apparent, however, that various limitations prevent any conclusive findings.

As Riopelle's works were most popular in the mid to late 1980's, it would make sense that forgers would seize the opportunity to produce Riopelle's works at such a time when the collecting public is most willing to expend enormous sums for his pieces. Thus, one would expect to find a heightened incidence of Riopelle forgeries in these years. It is important, however, to distinguish that there are two variables at play. One concerns the historical moment at which the forgeries were produced and the other that at which they were sold. The difficulty in trying to trace any patterns regarding the sale and production of forgeries, is that while the sale of such works is often recorded, it is almost impossible to know when the forgeries were created unless one has first-hand knowledge from the forger himself, which is most rare. Furthermore, some forgeries have been discovered prior to their sale, such as those seized from Kuntz's residence. Such pieces provide statistical information about the existence of Riopelle forgeries, but offer no real evidence of fluctuations in Riopelle's value, as they have not entered the market.

As forgeries can have a long history of exchange, perhaps more insights may be gained about the art market through a study of when the forgeries were purchased, rather than created, as these transactions, like the sale of any legitimate art works, reflect a particular state of value in the market. Thus, while I would like to be able to formulate suggestions regarding the relationship between the art market and the

works that they believed to be in Kuntz's possession, police discovered a number of forgeries in the raid, which they subsequently seized. This raid on Kuntz's residence produced the author's Riopelle forgery.

production of Riopelle forgeries, I will have to focus on the sale of these works. In this capacity, I will attempt to establish conclusions as to why the forgeries were successfully sold when they were.

Based on the information that has been presented regarding the various accounts of Riopelle forgeries, one notes that the years in which these pieces were sold, the Luisi forgeries being purchased in 1994 and those connected to Kuntz in 1990 and thereafter, do not coincide with my hypothesis which suggests that the production and/or sale of Riopelle forgeries should correspond to Riopelle's peak years in the market, the mid to late 1980s. Thus, certain conditions must have existed in the market during the years in which these forgeries were sold in order to have fostered their acceptance.

In the early 1990s, the Canadian economy experienced a recession which subsequently effected the art market. As the market for Riopelle declined, so too did the value of his pieces. Rather than selling works at a time when the market is strong, perhaps the forger strategically offers his Riopelles for sale when the market is down so that his typically low prices will not raise doubt regarding the authenticity of the pieces. The collectors who often fall prey to the forger, ill informed, bargain-seekers, may genuinely be led to believe that the market for Riopelle has experienced such a decline that the price quoted to the collector by the forger, rather than seeming suspiciously low, appears to reflect the overall recession in the market.

Though the above suggestion offers an explanation as to why forgers have successfully sold their pieces when the market is experiencing a recession, an alternative view can be taken which proposes that such conditions in the market would prevent the forger's success. By way of explanation, let me first discuss why the sale of forgeries is more likely to occur when the market is doing well. At the peak of Riopelle's market, or any artist for that matter, his work was in such demand that many collectors may have cared only about getting their hands on one of

Riopelle's pieces in order to attain the status associated with such an acquisition. Perhaps such circumstances would prevent the potential buyer from scrutinizing the work closely, leading to a compulsive purchase due to the highly competitive environment. Furthermore, as so many works change hands at such a fruitful time, it is difficult to keep track of all the pieces, such that the forgeries become hard to distinguish from the genuine works. By contrast, when the market is down with less competition and fewer works for sale, the potential buyer may make more of an effort to substantiate the authenticity of the piece before going ahead with the purchase. Thus, there is a greater potential that forgeries will be discovered and eliminated under such scrutiny.

The various analyses suggesting which circumstances are most ripe for the sale of Riopelle forgeries are merely speculative in nature and the author does not wish to mislead the reader. The data available to me, which includes limited documentation on the incidence of forgeries in Canada only, naturally, does not permit a complete analysis of the effects of these works on Riopelle's market. It is likely that various cases of Riopelle forgeries exist around the world, particularly in Europe, which encompass a wide variety of mediums including works in oil which has been the focus of this study. One must also consider that many victims of forgeries do not come forward and press charges for fear of embarrassment for having been deceived by these works. Currently, there does not seem to be a comprehensive way of calculating the incidence of forgeries regarding their sale and production over time. Thus, in regard to the effects of the Riopelle forgeries, while the public declaration of the existence of forgeries in the market, such as in the November 1997 Financial Post article, "Seeing Red Over Riopelle: Art Dealers and Collectors are Getting Burned by Forgeries of his Works," has surely alerted dealers and collectors to be wary of their Riopelle purchases, it is difficult to acknowledge the extent to which they have changed their collecting patterns because of the infiltration of

forgeries in the market. Yseult Riopelle states that, "It is well known that the art market has dipped, so it's no surprise that the prices for Riopelle's works have also fallen. But I believe that a good piece will always hold its own." In my opinion, it is a combination of the recession in the market as well as the various incidences of forgeries that currently continues to dampen Riopelle's market value. Ironically, now would be a wise time to purchase Riopelle's work. With a rejuvenated economy and the fact that Riopelle's health has been declining, the value of his pieces is likely to rise significantly in the upcoming years.⁴⁸ That is, of course, assuming that one does not buy a Riopelle forgery. Potential buyers of Riopelle's work will want to take particular note of the characteristic features of these forgeries as indicated by the expert.

The Riopelle Forgeries: An Expert Opinion

In an attempt to acquire an expert view of my Riopelle forgery (plate 1), which is assumed to parallel the other Riopelle forgeries associated with Kuntz, I sent photographs of the work in addition to photos of two small canvases from the police museum to the President of Sotheby's who specializes in Canadian art, for an assessment of the pieces. I would like to briefly share some of her insights regarding the problematic nature of these works.

In discussing the forgeries, Christina Orobetz, President of Sotheby's (Canada) Inc. in Toronto, conveyed that the subject works were quite convincing in regard to a number of factors. According to Orobetz, the calligraphy of the signatures on the forgeries is close to Riopelle's hand (plate 2). As well, the canvases seem sufficiently aged when viewed from the back, while the gallery labels appear characteristically faded (plate 3). However, she indicates that the overall impression of the work is unsettling. As Orobetz notes, the works lacks a certain "technical fluidity." The paint

⁴⁸Mitchell, 30.

application, though reminiscent of Riopelle's style, does not demonstrate the subtlety of motion which would otherwise be associated with Riopelle's works. Furthermore, the various layers of paint in the forgeries are too easily distinguishable as the lines do not delicately flow into one another (plates 4 and 5). The forgeries, lacking this quality, fail to depict an ambiguity of space, an essential component of Riopelle's work.

Jacques Dupin describes the artist's process: "Riopelle... works in a series of crises, outbursts, in a sort of fury and hypnotic explosion that leaves no room for pauses, corrections or second thoughts."⁴⁹ Orobetz, in agreement with Dupin, generally characterizes the forgeries as having a particular mechanical quality. This feature of the paintings contributes to an overall lack of spontaneity in regard to the creation of the pieces. Moreover, the paintings appear too structured. In addition to marked inconsistencies in the style of the pieces, the colours utilized pose difficulties for Orobetz. As she explains, there is a certain sharpness to the colours which differs from authentic works by Riopelle and she particularly notes that the use of white in the forgeries is almost sculptural. Furthermore, the overall tones appear too bright, as they seem to lack any natural effects of aging. While Orobetz admits to the high quality of these pieces, she is easily able to distinguish their flaws.⁵⁰

Interestingly, Orobetz commented that the task presented to her was rather unusual, as she does not normally approach a work knowing in advance that it is a forgery. Thus, Orobetz was required to work in a reverse process. Forced to articulate the problematic features of the forgeries, Orobetz necessarily formed a more precise understanding of the characteristics of authentic Riopelles.

⁴⁹Jacques Dupin, "La Traversee du Tableau," *Derriere le Miroir* 160 (1966): np.

⁵⁰Christina Orobetz, Personal Interview, March 20, 1998.

Forgeries do not arise in a vacuum. These works are inspired by external forces in the market which include individual tastes and fashions as well as auction sales and the current status of artists. As described in this chapter, forgeries, like other art works, respond to the impulses of changing supply and demand in the art market. The Riopelle case study has served to demonstrate this point. While the hypotheses posited in this chapter are not supported in their entirety as a result of limited resources including statistical data, certain assumptions remain true. Studying forgeries and their origins necessarily informs one of the competing forces at play in the art market. By tracing when in time forgeries are produced and sold, one gains insights into the notion of value as formulated in the market.

This thesis has developed the notion that forgeries offer insights that extend beyond their traditional art historical use. Simply stated, forgeries are a useful tool of study in the practice of connoisseurship, for the scientist and finally for the art dealer and collector. A forgery, when detected as such, provides a window into the complex underground world of art that may otherwise remain cloaked in mystery and uncertainty.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: The Future of Forgeries

I am not the first individual to advocate the study of art forgeries. These works have been the focus of endless books and scholarly articles, while also being the subject of a number of exhibits at various museums and galleries around the world. As early as 1908, the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London held an exhibition of copies of pictures; a museum class at Harvard organized a show at the Fogg Art Museum in 1940 called Art: Genuine or Counterfeit, and in 1984, the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester, England presented Seeing is Deceiving: Forgery and Imitation in Pictures, to name but a few.¹ Most Recently, in 1997, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Mo. held an exhibition entitled Discovery and Deceit and explored topics such as "Mistakes by the Art Historian" and "Falsely Condemned Antiques."² So what is it that sets this thesis study apart from all other inquiries into the topic of art forgeries, making it worthy of attention? In examining the way forgeries are typically approached by the scholar, and how their studies may shape a somewhat narrow understanding of these works, the unique nature of my thesis will become apparent.

Various texts devoted to the study of forgeries, such as Otto Kurz's Fakes: A Handbook for Collectors and Students, George Savage's Forgeries, Fakes and Reproductions: A Handbook for the Art Dealer and Collector, and more recently, Thomas Hoving's False Impressions: The Hunt for Big Time Art Fakes, seem to focus on one particular area: how to detect forgeries. Hoving provides anecdotes relating to his various encounters with forged works while offering the reader a detailed explanation as to how the pieces were discovered and subsequently proven to be

¹James Koobatian, Faking It: An International Bibliography of Art and Literary Forgeries, 1949-1986 (Washington, D.C., Special Libraries Association, 1987) 215-223.

²Paul Goldberger, "Is it Real? Or is it a Forgery?: An Exhibit Takes a Look at Fakes" The New York Times 19 Nov. 1996: C13.

forgeries. Perhaps Hovings's readers will become "fakebusters" themselves.³ Kurz and Savage similarly have one concern: how the collector can protect him or herself from being deceived by forgeries. The question that seems to be addressed in these works is: is the work authentic or not and what proof can be offered in support of this conclusion? As the goal of these texts is to be able to determine the authenticity of art works, once this task has been completed, through the application of the various tools of connoisseurship, including scientific technologies, this information about the status of the work remains nothing more than just that, a matter of fact. For these scholars, this fact alone provides closure to their exhaustive research. Yet, this is the point where my study begins. With the knowledge that a work is a forgery, I have devised a system which allows me study these works after their discovery, in order to extract knowledge from them that extends beyond their mere identification as forgeries.

Traditionally, the tools of connoisseurship have been used to identify the authorship and/or authenticity of art works. In this study, I have demonstrated how a recognized forgery can assist in and enhance the contemporary practice of connoisseurship. In assigning the forgery a new role, one that is active rather than passive, the forgery becomes valued for what it is, rather than what it is not. Similarly, science has commonly sought to identify the physical origins of art works in order to answer questions, once again, regarding authenticity. In this study, I have illustrated how the scientific data that confirms the status of a work as a forgery, rather than being a means to an end, can inform other areas of study including an understanding of the creative process of the artist. Forgeries that have attained an authentic status in the art market are rightfully considered dangerous to the honest dealer and collector. In accepting the fact that individuals and institutions have often

³The term 'fakebusters' comes from chapter one: Fakebusters, Fakers and How to Tell a Fake in Hoving's False Impressions.

been deceived by such forgeries, rather than trying to cover up these mistakes, this study has publicized the circumstances of the production and/or sale of these works in order to offer insights regarding the various conditions that influence the art market. Forgeries do not cease to provide meaningful information after they have been labeled as such. This thesis has maintained that forgeries are a valuable tool of study.

While I have discussed why this research is different from previous considerations of art forgeries, I will briefly address the relevance of this study from an art historical perspective. Even after being assigned a marginal status, as they often are, forgeries can be appreciated and valued not in terms of their attribution or monetary worth, but as works of art, that, like authentic ones, convey information regarding the social, cultural and economic circumstances of their creation. Furthermore, forgeries provide the art historian with resources from which to extract knowledge that can assist in the process of designating origins to authentic art works. Translating the information contained in forgeries into the vocabulary of the art historian helps meet the task of presenting a more accurate account of art history.

Forgeries have been validated as a legitimate area of academic inquiry. Yet, the difficulty in studying these works must be addressed. While students have direct access to authentic art works that are publicly displayed on museum and gallery walls, they do not have the same opportunity to examine forged works. Although forgeries have been exhibited in a number of short-term displays, very few institutions permanently offer the forgeries in their collections for view.⁴ In fact, many institutions are not even willing to admit that they possess such works, for fear of damaging their reputations. Therefore, an exposure to most forgeries comes only through photographs, which unfortunately do not sufficiently represent the art works. Thus, if forgeries are to be utilized in the manner suggested in this thesis, the art historian, connoisseur, scientist, collector and student must have direct access to

⁴The Royal Ontario Museum has a permanent display of forged medieval reliquaries.

these works. Only when forgeries, as compared to authentic works, are equally viewed as relevant sources of study, will they be similarly offered for public consumption.

Another problem inherent in the study of forgeries is that only those works that are brought to one's attention can be analyzed and documented. Thus one's understanding of forgeries, and art history, is constantly shifting as new works are being discovered. Yet, most forgers do not generally come forward on their own to claim authorship of already accepted, "authentic" works. As well, private collectors and institutions are not easily persuaded to publicly admit to their poor judgment in acquiring forged art works. As so many forgeries exist in collections around the world that have not yet been exposed, and perhaps never will be, I propose that those institutions and collectors who possess forgeries should come forward and offer their pieces for study purposes.

Notwithstanding the limited statistical data on the incidence of art forgery, the opportunity exists to explore the benefits that may be derived from the study of these known works. The application of the tools of art historical study, have, over time, been expanded to meet changing circumstances. The early art historian would not likely have appreciated the role of technology in the interpretation and study of art works. Similarly, many art historians, schooled in the traditional methods and nomenclature of their field, may not have recognized the value of studying forgeries alongside other authentic works. However, any meaningful analysis of art must include all relevant resources. Therefore, forgeries must be incorporated into the realm of art historical study, so that a more comprehensive understanding of art will result. In the study of art history, as in life, we often scorn that which we do not understand. Perhaps as we learn more about the role of forgeries for the art historian, these works may be removed from museum cellars and placed with pride in institutional spaces, in plain view, for all to appreciate.











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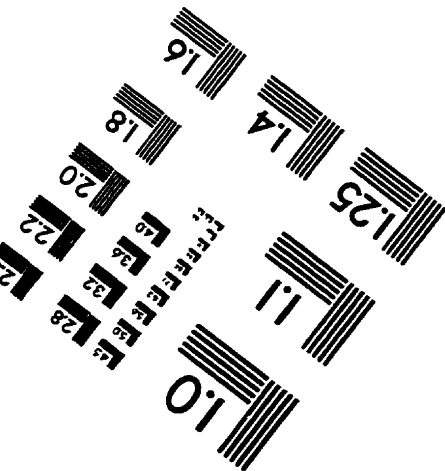
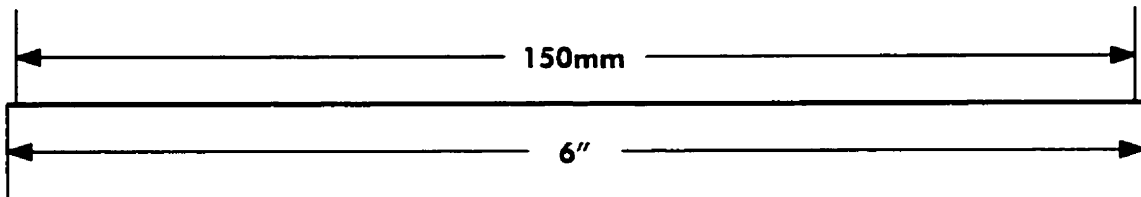
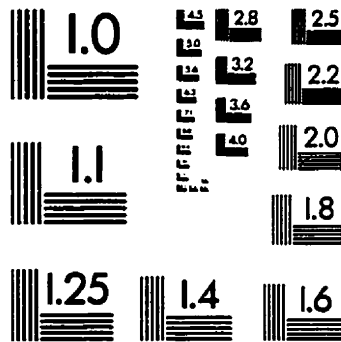
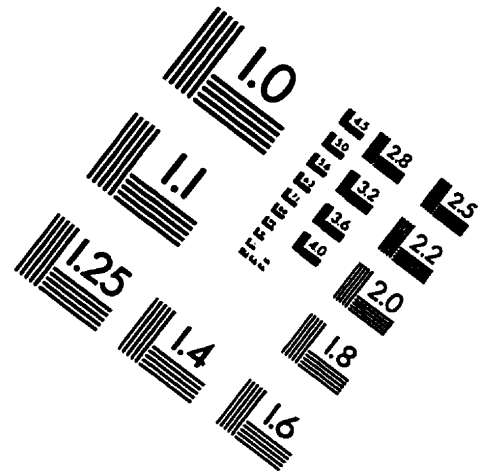
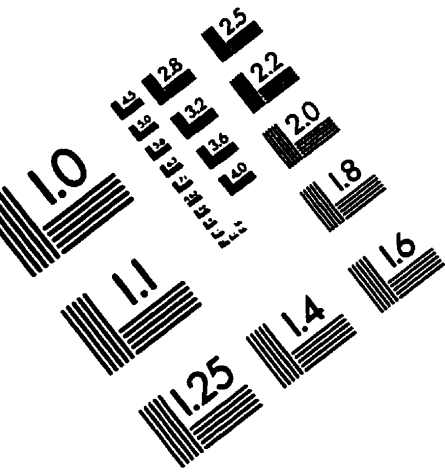
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