

# The Art of Fake

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**ABSTRACT:** It was Plato who defined the meaning and metaphysical value of Beauty in a way which was valid for all types of Arts, emphasizing on the concept of “Mimesis”. This aesthetic principle, developed mainly during ancient times, states that art represents an imitation of the real world. If criminal expertise of hand-writing has as its subject the study of handwriting based on scientific evidence regarding the graphics skills with the aim of identifying the author, can we consider counterfeiting of historical evidence as a form of art? Both in the case of hand-writing and works of art, there occur anatomo-physiological and psychological peculiarities specific to their author, the complex conditioned reflexes, and the dynamic stereotype which define a certain individual. Thus, the author of the fake needs to have the ability and training to accurately render the characteristics of the original.

**KEYWORDS:** art, fake, imitation, hand-writing, peculiarities

## Introduction

The written documents, as well as the art creations, have a special importance in the judicial, social, economic and cultural domains. They can certify events which can be of great significance and because of this reason it is important to have the certainty that they are original and not created through false means.

The social danger appears when the false means are used in order to commit or hide some crimes. If the writing criminalistic expertise has as object the study of the writing based on the speciality acknowledgments regarding the graphic habits, for the purpose of identifying the author, can we frame the historical document counterfeiting by imitation in the art category?

Plato, the one who established the metaphysical sense and value of beauty in a valid manner for all types of arts, granted a major importance to the “mimesis” concept. This aesthetical principle, developed especially in the Antiquity, considers that art represents an imitation of the real.

## The art of fake

Since the beginnings of the humankind and until the present, the writing and graphics have represented the main of communication modes. Since the ancient hieroglyphs and the cuneiform writings, these fascinating inventions of the human were raised to the level of art and all the descriptions until now continue to amaze us.

The hieroglyphic writing is the first writing which appeared and was predominantly pictographic. The Maya hieroglyphs were brought to life by the Maya civilisation, who used logograms and glyphs, painted on ceramics or walls. The Hieratical writing was similar to the hieroglyphic one and was used in trading and administrative documents, literary or scientific works.

At the same time with the evolution of the human, important transformations took place both in the graphic and the writing domain. The works became ever more complex, thus in time it became necessary to set some principles which lay at the basis of the work’s expertise. However, with all these rules created, a series of difficulties in expertising appeared.

There were cases in which the great collectors also purchased also copies made after the original works, these being carried out even at their order. The author of the fake was proposing the imitation of the painting manner, especially in regard to the work technique and composition specific to the author of the original painting.

The authenticity of many paintings was insured via rumours that they belonged to famous collections. Most of the experts who signed the authenticity certificates were most often persons surrounding the artist, even members of his/her family. The experts were also coming also from the

category of the art critics or historians who certified through signatures on the back of the work that those were not fakes.

Regarding the false painting, among the most frequent falsification manners we mention copying after the model, imitation of the manner to paint, especially with regard to the work technique and the composition, specific to a great master (Stancu 2015, 341). Signing a work as identification document appeared only in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In that period copying after a model was not something unusual, the apprentices considering this practice a eulogy brought to the artist and not a fraud at all.

Many times, signatures were provided on imitations of the works of art in uncertain situations which could not be later explained by the specialists because, at that time, the technical expertising means were not sufficiently developed. Moreover, there were also experts who, in exchange for an amount of money, certified a false art work of art as being original.

When falsifying art works, counterfeiting the signature appears either as a complementary element accompanying other fraudulent manners (copying after a model, assembly some copied fragments after several authentic works, imitating a master etc.), wither as unique operation through which a worthless painting is transformed in "original" just by adding a false signature (Ionescu and Buzatu 2009, 22). Signing a historical document or an art work equates most of the times with its certification because it is considered that these have certain features specific to the author and they no longer require confirmation.

Within the writing notion are included also the non-literary graphic signs such as the punctuation signs, underlining, signs accompanying the numbers etc. Although, at the first glimpse, these seem to have a rather simple construction, there are cases when their formation is bodacious, thus identifying some features belonging to a certain author.

Therefore, we can clearly see that the particularity of the writing is not limited only to the alphabetical writing, but includes all the forms of the graphic manifestation of a person, and thus can form the object of an identification even the features of a drawing, being desired that the drawings used for comparison to come from the same period since the manner of writing or drawing can change from one period to another.

The writing expertise must not be reduced only to the materialisation of the inscribing gestures by ink, crayon etc. features. There are cases, more rarely, in which the object of the expertise forms a concrete writing only in the traces of the depth, produced following a pressure transmission, on another sheet of a historical document carried out in normal conditions.

The falsifying manners of a historical document, no matter the procedures used, are divided in two categories: by changing an existing written document and by manufacturing a fictitious written document. The falsified historical documents can be of the public or private type (charters, books, manuscripts, journals, proclamations, as well as documents issued by the institutions of that period).

Falsifying the documents appeared at the same time with the writing creation. The falsifiers derived from people who knew how to write and read, grammarians, members of the Chancellery, monasteries, etc. They used the calligraphic writing which is considered the art of handwriting. Using this type of writing allowed them to create works of art by arranging some symbols on the paper in a special manner with the help of the writing instrument used.

Both the writing of a historical document as well as the painting of a tableau represents a manner for fixing and communication some ideas and constitutes an intellectual habit by forming a personal style. The physiological mechanism is provided by the complex of temporary nervous links and the conditioned reflexive links.

According to Pavlov's theory, at the level of the brain cortex, the fundamental processes are permanently systematised. The irradiation phenomena of the excitation from the weaker to the stronger vortex and of the concentration of the two types of nerve processes, as well as their reciprocal induction, takes place the particular stabilisation and learning phenomena of an action. This way, it is formed a complex of temporary links occurs, manifesting themselves as a stable reaction with a unitary feature. This stereotype requires numerous repetitions so that, over time,

takes place a fixating process of the features regarding the writing of a document or the creation of some art works, these actions becoming automatized.

The executing organs, the hand and the arm, are placed in action being led and controlled by the centralised nervous system which regulates the muscular tonus, but it must be considered that these automatized actions do not fully exclude the acknowledgement of the action.

If writing a document and creating an art work is the result of some complex nervous processes by moving the arm and the hand, these can be influenced also by the abnormal physiological state which can be due to some disorders, from the simplest ones produced by cold, tiredness, depressive state, up to the severe chronic diseases or mental illness.

Both in the case of fake documents as well as the works of art, the expertise imposes, in addition to the examination under the artistical aspect, a complex criminalistic investigation in order to establish the age, pigmentation and features of the paper and the inks used.

To begin with, it is considered an analysis with regard to the history of the artistic work or document and of the author. The information based on which a certain work is attributed to an era allows for the restriction of the investigations to a certain group and the delimitation of the technical and scientific expertise only to the strictly necessary operations.

To start with, an analysis is carried out with regard to the history of the artistical work or of the document and its author. Once obtained this information, the analysed works are attributed to a period, thus the investigations will be restricted to a certain group of persons and the technical and scientific expertise will be limited only to the necessary operations.

It is not less true that by examining the signatures on the paintings a certain specificity is presented in comparison to the signatures on the documents (documents). Although in both cases, the expertise is based on the same principles and methods, in addition, it is resorted to a series of procedures and connections imposed by the exigencies of the visual arts' expression and by the particularities of the instrument, the writing substance and support on which the signature is placed, are also used. (Ionescu and Buzatu 2009, 21)

In the following stages, it is proceeded to the optical examinations, in visible and invisible, ultraviolet and infrared radiations, to micro-chemical examinations and physical and chemical analysis, more frequently being the micro-spectrometry, the electronic microscopy with deflection, coupled with the micro-analysis, fluorescence in the "X" ray, microscopy with laser stimulation being more frequent (Pfeferli 1983, 209).

Albert Osborn (1858-1946), within the first complete expertise treaty of the documents, *Questioned Documents*, exemplifies that "thousand of these features are individual creations and developments".

Both in the case of writing as well as the works of art, particularities appear such as the anatomical and physiological, psychic ones, the conditioned reflexes complex and the dynamic stereotype appear. All these epitomise the individuality of the author.

The person falsifying must have the capacity and necessary training to render closely all the particularities of the original document.

We can observe that all the special features of the writing or of a work of art represents the total of the personal habits of the person manifested in the construction of the work formed from the graphic signs. All the scriptural and graphic forms in a document of art work are, mainly, non-repeatable for another author due to the execution details and the combinations carried out.

In the case in which the construction level of a falsified work does not comply with the characteristic features of the original's author or personal graphic involuntary features are included, upon a scientific examination using advanced technical means, it will be able to emphasize the mistakes in more elaborate constructions of the falsified works.

Due to this reason, the special features are generally better noticed and reproduced by the falsifying persons such that imitation can, sometimes, reach striking similarities with the original.

## Conclusions

Thus, we can say that there were works of art for which the fake could not be proven and the same thing was acknowledged also in the case of some historical documents fully imitated, these being declared authentic by some experts because they stated that it is impossible to carry out the expertise or, if they carry it out, it is impossible for them to declare it authentic or not (Frăţila and Constantin 2000, 78). Due to this reason, we can consider that the author of a false historical document was born with this special talent or that this talent was later on developed through intensive study, exercise, patience and perseverance, and, in the end, his/her capacity to build an identical work with the original one imposed the loyal compliance with all the particularities of the original work, which raises the perfect imitation to the rank of “*ART OF FAKE*.” You enter the world of the work of art, you are surrounded by emotions connected to a masterpiece, you feel touching your soul, it fascinates you and, in your mind, natural questions arise regarding the author, the period when it was created, the work technique. You smile full of admiration... you consider it perfect... yet among the multitude of questions which arise in your mind, a new question that you have not thought until then rises and you become thoughtful... “Is it original?”

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