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Creation and Deception in the Evolution of Art Forgery

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Abstract

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By Anda D. Lopazan

This thesis will trace the evolution of the concept of “forgery” from its connections with creation to its modern associations with deception. I will discuss this change using examples of art from the Middle Ages to explain forgery as creation, from the Baroque to show how borrowing blurred the line between emulation and stealing, and from the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries to demonstrate how forgery became synonymous with fraud. Many examples from other times could have been used. I chose these examples because they correspond to two moments of transition in history and in art: the advent of the printing press and the application of the scientific method to analyzing art. These two events had a role in shifting the conception of forgery because they changed the intellectual climate that gave meaning to the concept. Distinguishing between the nuances of the word “forgery” is another useful tool for showing the difference in “forgery” from one time period to the next.

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