

Ringling exhibit explores the work and the minds behind fine art forgeries



“Standing Man Leaning on a Plinth,” Eric Hebborn National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., gift of Dian Woodner. COURTESY IMAGE

The works may look familiar, but they are not what they appear to be.

The exhibition “Intent to Deceive: Fakes and Forgeries in the Art World” examines the careers of five of the most notorious art forgers from the 20th century to the present. Pieces produced by the five talented con artists are on display through Aug. 3 in the galleries of the [Ringling Museum of Art](#), 5401 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota.

The forgers created imitations of works by world-renowned artists, including Pablo Picasso, Charles

Courtney Curran, Henri Matisse, Amedeo Modigliani, Honoré Daumier and Philip de László.

“Intent to Deceive” will provide exhibit visitors with a glimpse behind the curtain of the dark side of the art world,” said Steven High, executive director of the [Ringling Museum of Art](#).

“This exhibition tells an important story that we are excited to share.”

There are 60 works of art in the show, including some of the original pieces copied by forgers. The exhibition also features some of the tools the forgers used to create their imitations.

“This exhibition is unique because it is organized around the individual forgers in an attempt to explore what motivated them to produce their deceptions,” said C Chris Jones, Ringling’s associate curator for exhibitions.



1. "Yellow Madonna," John Myatt (courtesy of Washington Green Fine Art & Curatorial Services, Bedford England)
 2. "Girl with a Pearl Earring," Johannes Vermeer (courtesy of Graham & Margaret Wright, Westbrook upon Avon, Warwickshire)
 3. "Madame," Elmyr de Hory (1906-1976), written on paper
 4. Attributed to the style of Paul Signac, Black Ladder, Oldham City Museum of Art

“We get a feel for their personal narratives and points of view and that provides a fascinating context for the works themselves. Ultimately what is most provocative about the exhibition is that it forces us to really examine our notions of authenticity and authorship and how those notions fundamentally inform both our experience of art and perception of its value.”

The art world has yet to develop a foolproof system for authenticating works. The current system relies on the three-tiered approach of connoisseurship

(an expert authenticating that the work reflects the artist’s style and technique), provenance (tracking the history of the artwork’s ownership, location and documentation) and technical analysis (using equipment to verify that the work is from its reported age).

The forgers featured in the exhibition used their knowledge of this system to create works and back stories that fooled authenticators.

The forgers include Hans van Meegeren (1889-1947); Elmyr De Hory (1906-1976); Eric Hebborn (1934-1996); John Myatt (1945-); and Mark Landis (1955-). †