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Forgeries: Real insights from fake art

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ROBERT FOGT PHOTOGRAPHY
Detail of a forged Matisse by
Hungarian painter Elmyr de
Hory.

The artworks in question are fake, but there's real value in understanding them better. As [the Globe reported last week](#), an unusual new exhibit at the D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts in Springfield prominently features phony versions of paintings by the likes of Matisse, Picasso, and Vermeer. Entitled "Intent to Deceive: Fakes and Forgeries in the Art World," the exhibit should provide visitors with insights about why some people use their artistic skill to deceive others, and about how knowledgeable collectors get taken in. Beyond that, though, the underlying theme is also a triumph of creative curation — one that shows how smaller museums can attract new audiences by combining artworks in imaginative ways.

Because of the Commonwealth's many universities, and of the many philanthropists who lived here during the industrial age, Massachusetts has more than its share of locally prominent museums with intriguing collections. These institutions may never outcompete, say, the Louvre in putting on blockbuster exhibits, but can play host, either on their own initiative or through partners, to unconventional exhibits that bigger-name institutions might not contemplate. Springfield is the first stop for "Intent to Deceive," which was organized by independent curator Colette Loll in conjunction with the nonprofit International Arts & Artists, and moves on next to museums elsewhere in the country. Officials at D'Amour expect the forgery exhibit to be one of the museum's better-attended exhibits — and that points to genuine opportunities for all small museums.