



Saint Mary's College Museum of Art Explores the Fine Line of Authenticity in Art

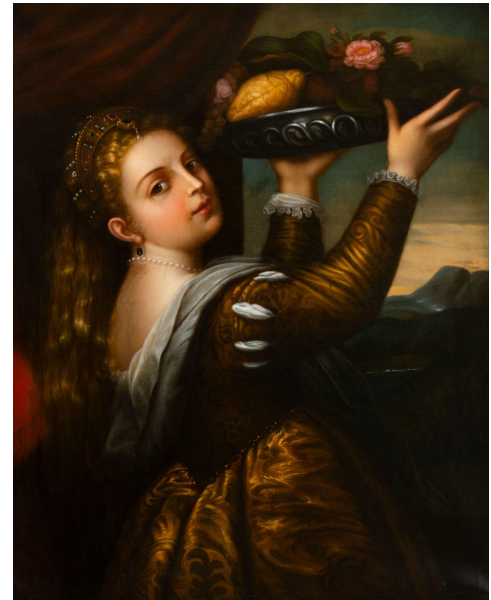
11/7/2022

MORAGA, California — An exhibition at Saint Mary's College Museum of Art (SMCMoA) explores the concepts of authenticity in art through objects in the permanent collection. *Fake It Till You Make It: A Quest for Authenticity* is on display from September 14 through December 11, 2022.

Featuring over fifty objects from the permanent collection, *Fake It Till You Make It* embarks on an exploratory journey of painting, photography, sculpture, mechanical advances of printing, and digital media to discover how authenticity shifts through time and context. From handcrafted copies of Byzantine icons to Andy Warhol's silkscreen printed cultural icons, the exhibition hones in on the subjective defining factors of authenticity and how culture expands and recoils from artists' pushing of boundaries and shifting of the game.

"Despite expertise, often there is no clear definition of *authenticity* for many works of art—largely due to expenses and research limitations, but also because of shifting contextual evidence and variation in cultural values," states exhibition curator Britt Royer. "This exhibition embraces ambiguity, bringing case studies forward to the viewer to deconstruct and consider."

Fake It Till You Make It brings forward several works from the college's permanent collection that have yet to be publicly viewed. Some appear in raw "condition as is" when the works were gifted into the collection, such as the mysterious "attributed to" painting by Rosa Bonheur featuring an unfinished Doe. The exhibition also presents recent acquisitions, like the signed print of *Oya's Betrayal* by Harmonia Rosales. The original, featured in the National Museum of African American History & Culture at the Smithsonian, reflects the artist's interweaving of Yoruba tales with Western Renaissance iconography.



The exhibition connects to contemporary topics, specifically the emergence of Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs). The museum commissioned a student in digital art practice, Katrienne Lemye, to create and mint a work through this process, which is shared through the exhibition's wall text and media. In contrasting dialogue, Bay-Area printmakers Zach Clark and Rebecca Ackermann implement four-press printing posters to argue NFTs as an unauthentic art practice and suggest the process simply reflects the modern implementation of regulating and selling art.

Themes of authenticity merge from the media to the subjects depicted, creating moments of reflection and further contemplation for the viewer. Particularly notable is a gelatin silver print series by Warhol featuring the artist's last lover and muse, Jon Gould—who, shortly after the works were taken, passed away of a disease, still in denial of his sexual orientation and the AIDS pandemic. This series, yet to be publicly displayed, connects to recent research unveiling Gould as Warhol's most depicted subject, thus further changing cultural understandings of the work created by many well-known artists.

The exhibition could not be complete without reference to the limited edition and lithographic forgeries of Salvador Dalí. "Many people connect Dalí to the Surrealist Art Movement and often are unaware of the controversial reproduction practices and distributions of his works in the 1980s," states Royer. "Dalí enjoyed making money, and distribution of his prints on paper quickly became unregulated as he and Gala often would sign questionable deals and not be present in the production process; this led to many fakes and forgeries, to the point many auction houses and galleries ceased selling his work."

"Authenticating art has also become taboo; many artists' foundations and experts steer clear of the practice due to increased liability—this creates much more potential for copies, fakes, and forgeries. *Fake It Till You Make It* unpacks historical case studies of how artists and works of art have been viewed in this context and why this will be an even bigger challenge for the art world moving forward."

Fake It Till You Make It: A Quest for Authenticity is curated by Britt Royer with the assistance of A.T. Johnson. The opening reception will be on September 15, from 4 to 8 p.m. The exhibition is open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Saint Mary's College Museum of Art (SMCMoA). An afternoon panel discussion exploring authenticity is scheduled for November 17 at 5:30 p.m. at the Soda Activity Center. Programs and admission are free for all. Public Tours begin September 21, 2022, on Wednesdays at 11 a.m. and Saturdays at 2 p.m. Please contact the Saint Mary's College Museum of Art at 925-631-4397 or via email at museum@stmarys-ca.edu for further inquiries. More information can be found at www.stmarys-ca.edu/museum.

Image credit: Attributed to Marco di Tiziano Vecellio (1545-1611), Copy of Girl with a Platter of Fruit by Titian (c. 1555) c. 1570, Oil on canvas, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert D. Dunn, Saint Mary's College Museum of Art Permanent Collection [0-106]

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