
Articles You May Have Missed

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“Michelangelo’s Fame Built on Forgery, Claims Author,” *The Independent*, 02/09/2014

He is known as a Renaissance great – but Michelangelo was also a skilled forger who made copies of major works before ageing them with smoke and swapping them for the originals. The little known details of his penchant for forgery were revealed by art historian Thierry Lenain at the Institut Français in London.

According to Mr Lenain, author of *Art Forgery: The History of the Modern Obsession*, the Italian frequently forged artworks in order to obtain the originals from their owners by giving them the copies. This is not the first time rumours of the artist’s forgeries have emerged. According to Mr Lenain, Michelangelo’s copies earned him great notoriety, which helped launch his career.

Significantly, the perception of art forgery in the Renaissance era was very different to the negative attitudes which developed in later centuries. “In late-modern forgeries, the main goal consists not so much in the creation of a work of art than in the construction of a trap,” said Mr Lenain. “The most important authors on art, from the Renaissance to the 18th century, had a completely different approach to the issue,” he explained. “Far from condemning those who performed that kind of trick, they hailed them with the utmost enthusiasm.”

“Unesco Stops Unauthorised Reconstruction of Bamiyan Buddhas,” *The Art Newspaper*, 02/06/2014

The international community has reacted furiously to news that a German-led team of archaeologists has been reconstructing the feet and legs of the smaller of the two Bamiyan Buddhas, the monumental Afghan sculptures blown up by the Taliban in 2001.

News of this reconstruction, which has taken place without Unesco’s knowledge or permission, was revealed during the 12th meeting of Unesco’s Bamiyan working group, in Orvieto, Italy, in December.

A team of archaeologists from the German branch of Icomos spent most of last year rebuilding the smaller Buddha’s lower appendages with iron rods, reinforced concrete and bricks, an operation that Francesco Bandarin, Unesco’s assistant director-general for culture, describes as “wrong on every level”.

Andrea Bruno, the architectural consultant to Unesco for the past 40 years, confirms that the work was carried out

“against Unesco’s decision [taken in 2011] not to rebuild the Buddhas” and says the organisation was never made aware that the project was going ahead. Bruno says the work has caused “irreversible damage, bordering on the criminal”.

Destruction of the buddhas was a disaster for the local population of Shia Muslims, who have been persecuted by the Taliban, because it deprived them of what little income they had from foreign visitors. A Unesco-led project aims to encourage visitors in the future with four projects: a cultural centre and museum devoted to Buddhist and Muslim history; an underground viewing chamber at the foot of the larger Buddha; a bazaar along the remains of the ancient Silk Route, and restoration of three interconnected caves in the nearby ancient site of Shahr-i Ghulghulah.

“Dallas Museum of Art Makes a Major Play for Painting Conservation,” *Dallas Morning News*, 02/07/2014

Officials announced last week that the first four paintings from private collections to undergo conservation treatment in the Dallas Museum of Art’s new Paintings Conservation Studio are now on view.

One of the four, *The Blacksmith Cupids* by Charles-Antoine Coypel, has become part of the museum’s permanent collection. The remaining three, along with the Coypel, are, according to DMA officials, “part of the museum’s new conservation program to collaborate with private collectors on the study and care of their collections,” before presenting the works in the galleries for public viewing.

“Ancient Buddhist Caves in China Could ‘Turn to Sand’,” *The Art Newspaper*, 02/25/2014

Urgent conservation work is needed to save a series of caves in northwest China containing ancient murals by Buddhist monks, which are threatened with destruction from the forces of nature.

The network of 236 sandstone caves extend over an area of two to three kilometres in the autonomous Xinjiang region of China, along the ancient Silk Road. The caves were inhabited by Buddhist monks and used as temples between the third and the eighth centuries, and are lined with murals providing a rich picture of early Buddhist culture.

The caves are prone to deterioration, particularly from moisture, because of their geological composition, which includes

many soluble salts. Although the region is very dry, any rainwater could have “distastrous consequences”, according to Giorgio Bonsanti, an expert in wall painting preservation. Bonsanti said that there have been efforts to buttress the mountains with cement and horizontal metal poles, which anchor the external layers of stone to more solid rock, but these fortifications are proving insufficient in the bid to save the caves.

The murals are particularly significant because of their stylistic similarity to Indian, rather than classical Chinese, art.

In the early 20th century, many of the paintings were removed by Western archaeologists, notably the German expedition of Albert von Le Coq in 1906, and are now housed in museums including the Museum für Asiatische Kunst in Berlin and the Musée Guimet in Paris.

“How 3D Printers Forge New Art from old Etchings,” *New Scientist*, 03/17/2014

When does restoration work become downright forgery? A new exhibition at Sir John Soane’s Museum in London is full of pieces that purport to be by the 18th-century Italian artist and etcher, Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Their date of manufacture: 2010.

The works are by Factum Arte, an Italian design company that straddles the worlds of museum conservation and contemporary art. Right now they are printing and sculpting a meticulous life-size facsimile of Tutankhamun’s tomb, to take visitor pressure off the original.

Sited in Soane’s famously cramped museum of antiquarian curiosities, the exhibition is called *Diverse Maniere* after one of Piranesi’s most famous collections of engravings, published in 1769.

The exhibits show Factum Arte exploring the middle ground between serious restoration and pure fantasy. They have worked from Piranesi’s etchings of ancient Roman artefacts and created life-size, three-dimensional sculptures, realising forms that previously only existed on the page.

Assembled using the CAD package ZBrush, the exhibits were prototyped using the largest stereolithographic printers in Europe, then assembled using more familiar technologies like routing, milling and laser cutting.

“Monuments Man in War, Conservator in Peace,” *New York Times*, 03/19/2014

By now, much of the movie-going

world is familiar with “The Monuments Men,” an art-historical film that sees George Clooney, Matt Damon and other stars swashbuckling around Europe during World War II, trying to save masterpieces from bombs and the clutches of German and Russian troops.

Mr. Clooney’s debonair, mustachioed role was inspired by the real-life exploits of George L. Stout, the American conservator who traveled to the front as part of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Section of the Allied military effort.

But like so many other veterans of the war effort, Mr. Stout rarely tooted his own horn about his wartime feats. In fact, his posthumous outing as a boots-on-the-ground war hero seems to have taken many conservators by surprise. In their world, Mr. Stout, who died in 1978, is already revered, but for a very different achievement: being a pioneer and promoter of the scientifically grounded conservation methods that define the field today.

In 1928, together with the chemist Rutherford J. Gettens, Mr. Stout established America’s first conservation research laboratory at Harvard University’s Fogg Museum. After the war, Mr. Stout became the founding president of the field’s first international professional association, now called the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works.

He also produced seminal publications and textbooks, served as director of two major museums, helped establish America’s first graduate conservation program (at New York University’s Institute of Fine Arts in 1960) and generally led a vast range of efforts to modernize and professionalize the way art was restored and preserved.

“Bayeux Tapestry: The Islanders who Finished the Final Scenes,” *BBC News*, 06/30/2014

The Bayeux Tapestry is arguably the most famous piece of embroidery in history. Yet, when it was rediscovered 300 years ago, the final section appeared to be missing. Until now.

The tapestry, chronicling the Norman conquest of England and that battle in 1066, is regarded as a marvel of medieval Europe. However, since it was “rediscovered” by scholars in the 18th Century, its original final scene has been missing.

Instead, the final scenes showed the death of Harold Godwinson, the Anglo-

Saxon king, and his unarmoured troops fleeing following their defeat at Hastings. No one is certain how much longer the original tapestry was or what it showed, but most experts believe it was an 8-10ft piece including a depiction of William’s coronation on Christmas Day in 1066.

Now, a team of embroiderers on Alderney, a small island just off the coast of William’s native Normandy, have “finished” the job. The project took a year to complete and every effort was made to ensure it fitted in with its famous forebear. Embroiders used the same techniques, fabrics, colours and similar types of wool to the medieval original.

The new tapestry is the same height as the original and 3m (10ft) long, with four panels showing events following the Battle of Hastings, culminating in William’s coronation. The finished work is set to be displayed in the room next to the original tapestry at the Bayeux Tapestry Museum in Normandy.

“United States Museums Provide Emergency Support for Syrian Museum Collections,” *Art Daily.org*, 07/17/2014

In addition to the high toll that Syria’s four-year-old civil war has had on its people and infrastructure, Syria’s cultural heritage has been and continues to be destroyed at an unprecedented rate.

World Heritage sites like the historic city of Aleppo and Krak des Chevaliers, as well as medieval Christian cemeteries and numerous archaeological sites and museums, have been subjected to extensive raiding and looting.

In an effort to help stem the loss of the region’s significant cultural heritage, Penn Museum’s Penn Cultural Heritage Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., in cooperation with the Syrian Interim Government’s Heritage Task Force, have come together to offer assistance for museum curators, heritage experts, and civilians working to protect cultural heritage inside Syria.

A three-day training program, “Emergency Care for Syrian Museum Collections,” focusing on safeguarding high risk collections, was completed in late June; additional training programs are being planned, pending funding.

“IS militants Destroy Ancient Mosque in Mosul,” *Arab News*, 07/25/2014

Islamic extremist militants blew up

a revered Muslim shrine traditionally said to be the burial place of the Prophet Jonah in Iraq’s second-largest city, Mosul.

The residents said the Islamic State militants, who overran Mosul in June and imposed their harsh interpretation of Islamic law on the city, first ordered everyone out of the Mosque of the Prophet Younes, or Jonah, then blew it up.

The mosque was built on an archaeological site dating back to 8th century BC and is said to be the burial place of the prophet, who in stories from both the Bible and Qur’an is swallowed by a whale.

It was renovated in the 1990s under Iraq’s late dictator Saddam Hussein and until the recent militant blitz that engulfed Mosul, remained a popular destination for religious pilgrims from around the world.

“This Flipped Class Is Studying Biology with a \$10 Microscope and a Smart Phone,” *Campus Technology*, 08/19/14

Take a smartphone, add \$10 worth of plywood and Plexiglas, a bit of hardware, laser pointer lenses and LED click lights from a keychain flashlight and you have a DIY microscope worthy of use in college classes.

At least, that’s the idea of an instructor at the Missouri University of Science and Technology who is adding the do-it-yourself technology in her biology lab courses.

The project is part of a larger research endeavor at the university to explore the design of instructional labs for science and engineering courses that can be delivered in a blended or online format.

The goal of the research is to develop e-learning models to redesign traditional lab courses to work in a hybrid format and to create a handbook for use by instructors that explains how to apply the new models.

The microscopes were designed during the spring semester by Daniel Miller, a graduate student in biological science who served as a teaching assistant in the biology class taught by Associate Teaching Professor Terry Wilson, where the scopes were used.

Wilson had been hunting for a commercial kit, but she wasn’t happy with what she was finding. Then Miller showed her his own prototype: “I was blown away by it,” she recalled. “I was really shocked by how good a job it does.” The devices are impressive. They can magnify samples up to 175 times with a single laser pointer lens — nearly 400 times when stacking two lenses, Miller said.