An Honest Display of Fakery: Replicas and the Role of Museums

CONSTANTINE SANDIS

Abstract
This essay brings together questions from aesthetic theory and museum management. In particular, I relate a contextualist account of the value of copies to a pluralistic understanding of the purpose of museums. I begin by offering a new defence of the no longer fashionable view that the aesthetic (as opposed to the ethical, personal, monetary, historical, or other) value of artworks may be detached from questions regarding their provenance. My argument is partly based on a distinction between the process of creating a work of art and the artwork in question.

Next, I defend a pluralism about the purpose of museums and their exhibitions. I combine this with a pluralist account of the value of replicas which falls out of the above argument, exposing our preference for originality as being frequently fetishistic. I maintain that the importance of the provenance of artworks is relative to the specific purposes of any given exhibition or museum. Those that are primarily educational (such as encyclopaedic ones) are in many cases best served with high-quality replicas. This view may be extended to artefacts that are not artworks, such as fossils and dinosaur skeletons. Finally, I expound the variety of roles that replicas may play in museums and relate these to notions of authenticity.

> *[W]e are, for all practical purposes, quite unable to make reproductions of pictures and statues which are completely indistinguishable, by direct sensory inspection, from the originals. If this practical limitation did not exist, then the originals of paintings and works of sculpture, like the original manuscripts of poems, would not as such have any but a sentimental value, and, perhaps, a technical-historical interest as well; we should be able to speak of the same painting being seen by different people in different places at one time, in just the same way in which we now speak of the same sonata being heard by different people at different times in one place…there is no reason for regarding the members of some classes of works of art as essentially particulars, rather than types. All works of art, certainly, are individuals; but all are equally types and not particulars.* (P.F. Strawson)[1]

[1] P. F. Strawson, 'Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art', in P. F. Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2008), 202. Strawson's essay was first published in 1966.

doi:10.1017/S1358246116000163 ©The Royal Institute of Philosophy and the contributors 2016

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Constantine Sandis

We don't even know who the Real McCoy was. (Hillel Schwartz)[2]

1. The Autonomy of Aesthetic Experience

In May 2000, Sotheby's and Christie's found themselves selling what appeared to be the same painting – Paul Gauguin's *Vase de Fleurs* – at the same time. Both had been authenticated by experts but the latter turned out to have been painted by Ely Sakhai.[3] Sakhai has since been charged with eight counts of fraud relating to the sale of twenty-five works 'by' Gauguin, Renoir, Chagall, Monet, Klee, and others. He is not the first or last to have done such things. Van Meergeren famously forged and sold numerous Vermeers including *Christ and the Disciples at Emmaus* (unveiled by the Boymons Museum in Rotterdam in 1937),[4] and Elmyr de Hory is thought to have sold over a thousand forgeries (including Matisses, Picassos, Modiglianis, and Renoirs) to reputable art galleries worldwide.[5]

In this essay I shall be primarily interested in replicas created *without* any intention to deceive. Replicas should be distinguished from artists' copies, pastiches, facsimiles, alterations, ameliorations, duplicates, twins, imitations, art that is derivative or plagiarized, and other forms of fakery.[6] What I say will have repercussions for the value of all of the above, but it is not my intention to spell these out.

Debates on the aesthetic value of original artwork typically focus on forgeries and/or fakes. The precise relation of forgeries to fakes is a matter of some dispute. Mark Rowe, for example, uses the two terms interchangeably, adding that 'a painting is only a fake or forgery…if

[2] Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (New York: Zone Books, 1996), 11.

[3] Will Bennett, 'Two versions of Gauguin work on sale at same time', *The Telegraph,* 12/02/2004. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1456587/Two-versions-of-Gauguin-work-on-sale-at-same-time.html.

[4] For this and many other examples see Denis Dutton, *The Art Instinct* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 177–181.

[5] Clifford Irving, *Fake! The Story of Elmyr de Hory the Greatest Art Forger of Our Time* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1969).

[6] Gerald W. R. Ward (ed), *The Eye of the Beholder: Fakes, Replicas and Alterations in American Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1977), 11.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

it was created in order to deceive'.[7] On this view, it is not enough for those in charge of its sale or exhibit to intend deceit. Both in the case of paintings and more generally, the view might plausibly fit the notion of a forgery but not that of any kind of fake (think of monopoly money, for instance). Moreover, just as all fakes are not obviously forgeries, so all forgeries are not obviously fakes. For example de Hory (who rarely signed his paintings with the name of the artist whom he was imitating) maintained that paintings made *in the manner of* a certain artist are not fakes, regardless of whether or not the artist intends them to deceive: 'I made paintings in the style of a certain artist. I never copied. The only fake thing in my paintings was the signature'.[8]

Perhaps it is better to analyse fakes in terms of authenticity. Mark Jones writes that 'the authenticity of a work of art depends on the relation between the work itself and the artist to which it is attributed'.[9] Assuming we don't include artists' copies within their class, most replicas are inauthentic in this sense.[10] While my main concern is with perfect replicas of artefacts, it makes sense to begin with a brief exploration of the main positions concerning the aesthetic significance of the possibility of there being no observable differences between an original and a perfect fake in general.

One year prior to Peter Strawson, Alfred Lessing similarly argued that, from a purely aesthetic point of view, it cannot and should not matter that something is a forgery: 'aesthetically it makes no difference whether a work of art is authentic or a forgery…the fact of forgery is important historically, biographically, perhaps legally, or…financially; but not, strictly speaking, aesthetically'.[11] According to Lessing, aesthetic experience is 'wholly autonomous' and

[7] M. W. Rowe, 'The Problem of Perfect Fakes', in A. O'Hear (ed), *Philosophy and the Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 151.

[8] As quoted in Milton Esterow, 'Fakers, Fakes & Fake Fakers', *ARTnews*, 20 November 2013: http://www.artnews.com/2013/11/20/fakers-fakes-fake-fakers/.

[9] Mark Jones (ed), *Fake?: The Art of Deception* (London: British Museum Publications, 1990), 50.

[10] A potential counter-example to all this is that of ready-mades and their copies. A very different sort of worry relates to Elmyr de Hory's claim (in Orson Welles' 1973 film *F for Fake)* that his Picassos are far more authentic 'Picassos' than some of Picasso's own work. I return to notions of authenticity in the final section of the essay.

[11] Alfred Lessing, 'What is Wrong with a Forgery?', in Alex Neil and Aaron Ridley (eds), *Arguing About Art: Contemporary Philosophical*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> does not and cannot take account of any entity or fact which is not aesthetically perceivable in the work of art itself. The historical context in which that work of art stands is just such a fact. It is wholly irrelevant to the pure aesthetic appreciation and judgment of the work of art.[12]

If this is right, then only observable features matter aesthetically, at least when evaluating *objects* of art.[13]

While it is difficult to accept that extraneous facts do not (let alone cannot) influence our aesthetic evaluation of *objects* of art, Lessing is right to point out that they *should* not and that 'critics should have the courage of their convictions and take pride in having praised a work of beauty'.[14] No museum visitor or art collector should require authentication by art experts (fallible or otherwise) to feel secure in their aesthetic evaluations. One of de Hory's 'Modigliani' drawings was sold to a Minneapolis collector and another to a collector in Chicago. When he was exposed as a forger, the dealer offered the collectors their money back. The Chicago collector took it but the one from Minneapolis refused, retorting: 'That's nice, but frankly, I bought the drawing because I liked it and it's too bad it's not a Modigliani but I'm going to keep it because we still love it'.[15]

Lessing's outlook is inspired by Arthur Koestler who maintains (more realistically) that while we may find it *psychologically* difficult to separate our aesthetic evaluation of an object from questions of provenance, the two should be sharply distinguished. Koestler concludes that those who prize originality in cases where they cannot tell the difference are fetishistic snobs:

> [I]n our minds, the question of origin, authorship, or authenticity, *though in itself extraneous to aesthetic value*, is so intimately and indistinguishably fused with our attitude to the object that we find it well-nigh impossible to isolate the two.... *Snobbery is the result of the psychological fusion of two independent value systems which are separate by origin and nature, but inextricably mixed up in the subject's mind.*[16]

Debates (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Inc, 1995), 8–21. Lessing's essay was first published in 1965.

12 Ibid., 20.

13 Neil and Ridley (eds), *Arguing About Art*, op. cit., 6.

14 Cited in ibid., 92.

15 Esterow, 'Fakers, Fakes & Fake Fakers', op. cit.

16 Arthur Koestler, 'The Anatomy of Snobbery', in Melvin J. Lasky (ed), *The Anchor Review*, Issue 1 (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1955), 6 and 19, emphasis in the original.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In the next section I shall maintain that while this is indeed often the case, it is equally true that there are occasions in which the preference for an original (which we cannot distinguish from a replica) is justified. First, however, I wish to reframe the above outlook by exploring some of the opposition to Koestler, Lessing, and Strawson.

Nelson Goodman has argued against the very notion of a perfect fake by noting that differences are in principle always discernible to someone and can emerge.[17] This may well be so, but it is neither here not there if the 'observable differences' in question are largely undetectable by the naked eye (and often also by the microscope) of experts, let alone by laypeople. The ability of an expert with refined machinery to distinguish between an original and a fake is tangential to what we paradigmatically call an aesthetic experience. Goodman's point is a moot one, not least in the case of museums with publicly funded open access to all.

A very different defence of originals has been offered by Ian Ground who asks us to consider a fallen meteorite that 'happens to exactly resemble' an outdoor sculpture by Henry Moore.[18] Ground argues that from an aesthetic point of view we are interested in the appearance of things as works of art, not mere objects and that consequently 'its having been made by someone is an essential ingredient in the way it appears to us…it is the intended appearance which is the object of aesthetic interest'.[19] More recently, Mark Rowe has similarly argued that there is more to a work of art than the 'manifest type' which is constituted by its actual and/or potentially perceptible features:

> [A]ll works of art are types which are identified by their physical properties and the history of their production…there need be no actual or potential perceptual difference between two paintings for them to be different works; they need only have different histories.[20]

[17] Cf. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 2nd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 99–123.

[18] Ian Ground, *Art or Bunk?* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1989), 25–26.

[19] Ibid., 29.

[20] Rowe, 'The Problem of Perfect Fakes', op. cit., 157, n.16. Rowe traces the 'manifest type theory' back to P. F. Strawson. I shall not here engage with Strawson's descriptive metaphysics of individuals save to say that the main point I wish to take from him would still hold true even if artworks were repeatable instances of types.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Rowe gives the example of the phrase 'pain formidable', whose meaning changes depending on the context in which it is written (e.g. English poets vs. French bakers).[21] He takes this to show that the value of a work of literature (and, by extension, any work of art) cannot be assessed independently of the culture in which it was written, one which arguably also includes the intentions of the author. A similar view has been expressed by John Dewey with regard to the aesthetic experience of crafts:

> Domestic utensils, furnishings of tent and house, rugs, mats, jars, pots, bows, spears, were wrought with such delighted care that today we hunt them out and give them places of honor in our museums. Yet in their own time and place, such things were enhancements of the processes of everyday life. Instead of being elevated to a niche apart, they belonged to display of prowess, the manifestation of group and clan membership, worship of gods, feasting and fasting, fighting, hunting, and all the rhythmic crises that punctuate the stream of living…the arts of the drama, music, painting, and architecture this exemplified had no peculiar connection with theaters, galleries, museums. They were part of the significant life of an organized community.[22]

Such appeals to context are not misguided; but there are three interrelated worries which seriously diminish their impact. The most celebrated defence of the view that 'the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art' is that found in Beardsley and Wimsatt's 'The Intentional Fallacy'.[23] In their view, the sole criterion for the existence of any *relevant* artistic intentions is the artwork itself which

[21] Ibid., 158.

[22] John Dewey, *Art As Experience* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 6–7; cf. Brian Eno, 'Miraculous Cures and the Canonization of Basquiat', in his *A year with Swollen Appendices: Brian Eno's Diary* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996).

[23] Monroe C. Beardsley and William K. Wimsatt, 'The Intentional Fallacy', in Joseph Margolis (ed), *Philosophy Looks at the Arts*, 3rd edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), first published in 1946. A parallel 'death of the agent' view about the epistemic relation between intention and action may be found in Robert B. Pippin's interpretation of Hegel in 'Recognition and Reconciliation: Actualised Agency in Hegel's Jena *Phenomenology*', in K. Deligiorgi (ed), *Hegel: New Directions* (Chesham, Bucks: Acumen, 2006), 125–142. It is criticized by John McDowell in 'Towards a Reading of Hegel on Action in the "Reason"

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

can also have meanings that its author wasn't aware of.[24] This theoretical stance is mirrored in the very practice of forgers like de Hory who attributed to David Stein 'the worst sort of nonsense' in claiming that he (that is, de Hory) would go 'into the mind and soul of the artist' and became Matisse when he painted Matisse:

> Could you write a story like Hemingway by trying to put yourself into Hemingway's mind and soul? Could you become Hemingway? No, it's a terribly vulgar and romantic explanation … though I'm sure the public eats it up. What *I* did was study—very, very carefully—the man's work. That's all there is to it.[25]

Whatever one makes of arguments for the 'death of the author',[26] it is impossible to deny that the purposes and intentions of the artist (e.g. to mock or pay homage in such-and-such a way) may be relevant in determining what an artwork is about and, *pari passu*, evaluating it *qua* authorial expression.[27] But, as John Hyman has rightly pointed out, the sense of what is depicted can come apart from the intended reference.[28] Hyman gives the example of a picture which depicts (in a non-relation-involving use of the term) a man in the uniform of a midshipman when the artist intended it to depict a man in the

---

Chapter of the *Phenomenology*'; reprinted in his *Having the World in View* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 166–184.

[24] See also Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, 2nd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1981), 20.

[25] Esterow, 'Fakers, Fakes & Fake Fakers', op. cit.

[26] A variety of similar arguments against the so-called 'intentional fallacy' may also be found in the following works: Stanley Cavell, 'A Matter of Meaning It', in W. H. Capitan and D. D. Merrill (eds), *Art, Mind, and Religion* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967); reprinted in Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 2nd edition (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 213–238; Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 87–90; Paisley Livingstone, *Art and Intention: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Dutton, *The Art Instinct*, op. cit.

[27] I take this point (found in Hegel, Wittgenstein, and Anscombe) to be at the heart of Cavell's argument. But, as we shall see later, 'expression' is ambiguous between the thing expressed and the act of expressing it. I believe it should be problematized by the fact that aesthetic evaluations frequently conflate the two.

[28] John Hyman 'Depiction', in A. O'Hear (ed), *Philosophy and the Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 136–140.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

uniform of an ensign.[29] It follows from this that there may be things that were not intended by the artist that are nonetheless 'there to be found' in an artwork itself, as opposed to a mere interpretation of it.[30] What can be seen depends not on authorial facts but on socio-cultural norms.[31] Indeed, as Peter Winch puts it, 'it would be an illusion to suppose that there *could* be a reader (viewer, listener, etc.) and a text (or picture, building, piece of music, etc.) without any presumptions at all.'[32]

This brings us to a formal distinction which we must make between an artwork and the process of creating a work of art.[33] Strictly speaking it is the latter and not the former that may be evaluated as novel, derivative, daring, and so on. Our evaluation of the one should not affect our evaluation of the other anymore than the evaluation of *what* someone did (e.g. give money to charity) should affect our evaluation of *their doing it* (which may be correctly re-describable as their showing off to impress a friend), and vice versa.[34] This is why – putting aside the question of where, if anywhere, the real artwork of a forger lies[35] – a 'forgery is not necessarily *aesthetically* inferior'.[36] Indeed, some re-creations are an improvement on the original (think of copies made

[29] Ibid.

[30] I take this point from Jonathan Lear's *Open Minded: Working Out the Logic of the Soul* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 39. Cf. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, op. cit., 230.

[31] In Goodman's terminology pictures only count as denoting so-and-so *in* a language; see Nelson Goodman, *Of Mind and Other Matters* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 90.

[32] Peter Winch, 'Text and Context', in his *Trying to Make Sense* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 20. Winch continues: '[o]utside any context whatever (if that phrase has any meaning) there would be no text to study'. Ibid., 24.

[33] I first argued for this and the points that follow in Constantine Sandis, 'Action in Life and Art', *Institut Français*, 8 June 2013. http://www.culturetheque.org.uk/listen/mnwp/action-in-life.

[34] The conflation between what the artist intentionally *does* and what is intention*al* (viz. her *doing* it) is apparent in Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, op. cit., 231ff.

[35] For a defence of fakery as a form of high art, see Jonathan Keats, *Forged: Why Fakes are the Great Art of Our Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[36] Lessing, 'What is Wrong with a Forgery?', op. cit., 13. What counts as a 'purely aesthetic' evaluation is not easy to determine and it may well be (given the point about context and presumption made above) that the very ideal in terms of which the debate is couched is a chimera. This should lead

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

by Renaissance masters or the compositions that Bob Dylan often built out of older folk songs).[37]

The basic distinction between an artwork and the process of its creation (e.g. painting as a noun and as a verb) provides 'manifest type' accounts with a much-needed conceptual framework which they were missing. Lessing, for example, argues that forgeries lack originality, but strictly speaking what is original or unoriginal in this sense is the act of creation and not the object created. We may talk of an artwork being daring but what this really means is that the artist was daring.

According to Dutton, all works of art can be seen as performances, and part of aesthetic appreciation involves the performative achievement of the artist. But this again only points to the fact that the achievement is an act (of creation) not an object (that has been created).[38] It is, of course, possible to admire and evaluate certain (but by no means all) aspects of the creative process by observing its results, but this shouldn't give us license to conflate these two distinct objects of aesthetic evaluation. Harold Rosenberg's notion of 'action painting' famously tried to identify paintings with actions and/or their representations. While he was right to think that the process of creating something

---

us to further question our motives and justifications for always favouring originals over replicas.

[37] Comparing the faker Eric Hebborn favourably to van Meegren, for example, Denis Dutton writes 'his *Temples of Venus and Diana*, by "Brueghel" or his *Christ Crowned with Thorns*, by "Van Dyck," would in my opinion have done credit to their purported artists'. Dutton, *The Art Instinct*, op. cit., 181. For earlier incarnations of these arguments see his 'Artistic Crimes: The Problem of Forgery in the Arts', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 19/4 (1979), 303–314 and *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

[38] For the view that paintings are not individual artefacts but action types see Gregory Currie, *An Ontology of Art* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989). Amie L. Thomasson argues against such views in her *Ordinary Objects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). There she writes: 'reducing ordinary objects to, or identifying them with, entities of other sorts – where these have different frame-level identity conditions, and thus are of different categories – is a nonstarter' (190). In his paper in this volume Graham Oddie argues that artworks with definite descriptions are not objects but *offices*. My own view (which I shall not defend here) is that our names for such works of art (as our name 'president') are ambiguous between the particular and the office it occupies.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

could be an artwork he was wrong to identify it with whatever artefact the process resulted in.[39]

Ethical questions raised by forgeries do not exist in the case of replicas, save that of whether museum visitors are deceived. It is natural to feel let down if you visit a gallery expecting to find an original only to discover in the small print that you have been looking at a replica. And no doubt visitor numbers of galleries will drop if originals are replaced with replicas (unless one is curating a special exhibition on the art of forgery). However our question is not a statistical one but a normative one: *should* people care so much about aesthetic differences they cannot discern or is our interest in originality a fetish of which we need to be cured. We won't be sufficiently prepared to answer this question until we have examined the relation between original context and purpose and that of contemporary museums.

2. Context and Purpose

What are museums for? How long is a piece of string? There is no consensus on the question of the role of museums,[40] but we may get a general idea of the sorts of purpose associated with them by looking at the ten most popular words from a random sample of mission statements from forty significant UK museums and galleries:

> 1. People (30); 2. Collections (22); 3. Future (17); 4. World (16); 5. Understanding (15); 6. Learning (14); 7. Public (13); 8. Enjoyment (13); 9. National (12); 10. Access (12).[41]

Critics disagree over the hierarchy of the above purposes. In particular they debate whether or not the role of museums has or should have changed since the time of Empires. Consider this statement by the Museums Association:

> The role of museums has changed over time and never more so than in the last 10–15 years. As well as their traditional role of collecting, preserving and sharing rich collections,

[39] Harold Rosenberg, 'The American Action Painters' in his *The Tradition of The New* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1959).

[40] Maurice Davies, 'What Are Museums For?', *The Art Newspaper*, Issue 224 (May 2011). http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/What-are-museums-for/23597.

[41] Nick Poole, 'What Are Museums For?', *Collections Link*, 2013. http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/new-perspectives/1380-what-are-museums-for.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> museums now find that they play an increasing role in supporting the development of communities. Museums can be a place to help shape community identity and bring different community groups together, a catalyst for regeneration through the creation of new venues and civic spaces, and a resource for developing the skills and confidence of members of those communities.[42]

This begins by a *descriptive* statement about museum changes but ends with a *normative* claim endorsing the changes in question. A similar view of contemporary museums has been defended by the Collections Trust CEO Nick Poole:

> The first duty of museums is to people, society, audiences, users – and this is exactly as it should be. Collections, however, seem to be of equivalent, if slightly lesser importance. Again, yes – Collections lie at the heart of museums, but they exist to serve our social function, not the other way round.[43]

Tiffany Jenkins accepts the former but rejects the latter, claiming that cultural authority is undergoing a crisis of confidence and that museum curators should learn to once again prize knowledge and act as legislators in 'the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge…a distinct realm, removed from social and political forces' without the inhibition of 'continued internal questioning'.[44] By contrast, Douglas Worts rejects the descriptive account of contemporary museums shared by both Jenkins and the Museum Association. Worts writes: 'The corporate notion of museums, as systematized collection-building, exhibit-making and expert information, all packaged within the context of leisure-time "edutainment", continues to prevail in the mainstream.[45] Worts also implies that this is a bad thing. This contention is made more explicit by Julian Spalding who, in his book *The Best Art You've Never Seen*, writes that in order 'to show real works of art to people….while claiming to be the custodians of art, nearly all museums bury countless treasures

[42] http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=143115.
[43] Poole, 'What Are Museums For?', op. cit.
[44] Tiffany Jenkins, *Contesting Human Remains in Museum Collections: the Crisis of Cultural Authority* (London: Routledge, 2010). For criticism, see Davies, 'What Are Museums For?', op. cit.
[45] Douglas Worts, 'What Are Museums For?', *WorldViews Consulting*, 17 April, 2013: http://worldviewsconsulting.org/2/post/2013/04/what-are-museums-for.html.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in storerooms'.[46] According to Spalding, this regrettable state of affairs is symptomatic of a more general crisis in the art world, one that is born out of a lack of communication and accessibility concern (viz. the mirror opposite of the crisis described by Jenkins).[47]

We must ask ourselves, however, whether the question which all of the above are trying to answer is a good one. Stefan Collini begins the introduction to his book *What Are Universities For?* with the following statement:

> Asking what something is *for* all too often turns out to be asking for trouble. There is, to begin with, the danger of seeming to reduce a complex activity or institution to a single, narrow purpose: it is doubtful whether an answer that is both short and illuminating could be given to questions about what, say, love is *for* or a country is *for* – we immediately sense that any answer is bound to be a tiresome mixture of banality and tendentiousness.[48]

Nonetheless, he then allows that *sometimes*:

> Asking what something is 'for' can, if understood as an expository tactic, a starting-point rather than a ruling, be a means of helping us to clear away the discursive debris that accumulates round any widely used category…to let rumination extend itself, brooding on the diversity that may shelter under a single term, pondering a series of characterizations or historical instances rather than seeking a single defining proposition.[49]

How do we decide when it is one of these times? Even if we restrict ourselves to human constructions as opposed to, say, biological organs, the following questions range from the obviously simple to the optimistically absurd:

- What are pens for?
- What are knives for?
- What are buildings for?
- What are films for?
- What are zoos for?

[46] Julian Spalding, *The Best Art You've Never Seen: 101 Hidden Treasures from Around the World* (London: Rough Guides, 2010).

[47] Julian Spalding, *The Eclipse of Art: Tackling the Crisis in Art Today* (New York and London: Prestel, 2003).

[48] Stefan Collini, *What Are Universities For?* (London: Penguin, 2012), ix.

[49] Ibid., ix–x.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

– What are friends for?

Collini believes that this is so in the case of universities. Perhaps it is also true for museums. One can perhaps see the various answers outlined above in the same vein: as not providing a definition of what museums are for but, rather, a sketch of the most important values. This will often include one or more of the following: scholarship, education (via knowledge and/or understanding), entertainment, artefact preservation, heritage preservation, the protection of honour, custody, story-telling, communication with the public, the democratization of access, the construction of national and international identities, the sharing of collections and expertise, experience (e.g. of a direct connection with one's past), inspiration, and wonder.

We have already accepted that the intentions of a creator or a culture can matter greatly, however intention is but *one* kind of context. Different exhibitions tell various different stories.[50] There is a world of difference between each of the following: local museums, large national museums, cast galleries, virtual museums, hybrid museums, relic displays, and universal encyclopaedic collections (my list is far from exhaustive).

What might do, in terms of originality, for an encyclopaedic collection with a primarily educational purpose, may be highly inadequate for a relic display in a place of worship or site of religious significance. This particular truth falls out of a wider holistic outlook. A feature that makes a difference in one situation may make either no difference at all or the opposite kind of difference in another.[51] A specific amount of salt, for example, might improve an omelette but completely ruin a raspberry trifle. Without taking a stance on intricate debates between contextualists (who claim that moral and aesthetic principles are context-specific) and particularists (who deny that there can be any such principles at all), I maintain the basic holistic

[50] Robert Storr, 'Show and Tell', in Paula Marincola (ed), *What Makes A Great Exhibition?* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, 2006), 14ff. For an amusing assortment of museums with rather idiosyncratic purposes see Hunter Davies, *Behind the Scenes and the Museum of Baked Beans: My Search for Britain's Maddest Museums* (London: Random House, 2010). For new approaches to curating which challenge standard paradigms of the relation between artists, curators, and visitors see Jean-Paul Martinon (ed), *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

[51] Jonathan Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 73–78.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

view that the meaning and value of any given object is dependent on the context in which it is displayed, for example, a specific gallery, exhibition, and/or museum.[52]

Consider, for example, Algot Lange's medicine chest from his 1911 Amazon expedition that has been on display as part of different exhibitions at Kew Gardens, the Welcome Collection, Science Museum, Horniman Museum, and the Natural History Museum. The object acquired a new significance within each of these contexts and, conversely, each of the exhibitions was changed by its inclusion or exclusion. More radically, the Parthenon friezes at the Acropolis Museum on Athens tell a very different story from those on display at the British Museum in London and, arguably, tell it to a different kind of visitor.[53]

Consequently, there cannot be any hard-and-fast rules determining the location of originals versus that of replicas. Rather, we must decide things on a case by case basis. It is our purposes which determine which contextual setting is best for any work of art or artefact. Often there will be no single right answer to this question, nor is there always a clear hierarchy of purpose. Still, when the two concerns are combined it will sometimes become easier to tell whether an exhibition or museum gallery is best served by an original or a replica. Would you rather see the original Mona Lisa behind a barrier and glass screen amidst a crowd of tourists in the Louvre or a perfect replica sat between pillars as Leonardo had conceived it?[54] Knowledge of the artist's intentions doesn't *always* favour the original above the replica.

Nor is it always the case that only originals should be on display on original sites. Reasons why a replica might be preferable to the real thing in some cases range from the health of visitors to the preservation of cultural heritage. These two concerns have recently combined to motivate Factum Arte (a foundation which produces facsimiles 'as part of a coherent approach to preservation and dissemination' of cultural heritage) to build a £420,000 perfect replica of Tutankhamun's tomb, near its original location in the Valley of the Kings in Luxor.[55]

[52] Constantine Sandis, 'People, Places, and Principles', in C. Holtorf, A. Pantazatos and G. Scarre (eds), *Cultural Heritage, Ethics, and Contemporary Migrations* (London: Routledge, 2017).

[53] Constantine Sandis, 'Two Tales of One City: Cultural Understanding and the Parthenon Scultptures', *Museum Management and Curatorship* 23/1 (2008), 5–21.

[54] Spalding, *The Best Art You've Never Seen*, op. cit., 236–237.

[55] http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/10/131026-king-tut-tomb-replica-ancient-egypt-pharaoh-archaeology-science/.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The original tomb has too much bacteria, mould, and moisture to make it safe for us to stay there long enough to appreciate it, and things will only get worse in the future. And just as the tomb puts the visitor at risk, so the daily visits of thousands of visitors (who bring in dust with them) damage the site itself, leading Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities to close down the tomb.[56] In the name of sustainable tourism, the replica replacing it will re-create every spot of mould without being a health or heritage hazard. According to Adam Low (founder of Factum Arte), additional benefits include those of involving people in 'understanding the problems of conservation' and nurturing 'a new relationship between the visitors and the long-term management of the [original] site'.[57] Visitors will also be able to see this facsimile in better lighting and proximity, allowing them a better understanding of the tomb, and it is arguable that understanding something is crucial to being able to respond to it appropriately.[58]

Such approaches to the wonders of ancient Egypt are not new. Touring exhibitions have long had indistinguishable replicas of King Tut's mask on display.[59] More recently, a touring World Heritage Exhibition has featured an exact anatomical recreation of Tutankhamun's mummy, alongside meticulous replicas of his antechamber and burial chamber with all its furniture and major treasures, as these would have appeared to Howard Carter when he discovered in them 1922.[60] When Howard opened the tomb he immediately compromised the sterile environment of a tomb that had been unopened in 3300 years.[61] This serves as a stern reminder of the fact that we cannot speak here of Tutankhamun's treasures as if they were meant to be seen by us. The true premise behind countless mummy-based horror films is that these tombs were not designed for the purpose of being visited by future mortals and it is *hubris* to ignore the wishes of the ancients in this instance. While we may receive a wondrous thrill via the thought of physically connecting with the actual past

[56] http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/03/replica-tutankhamun-tomb-tourists. Similar problems have affected numerous ancient sites worldwide including Lascaux, Easter Island, Stonehenge; heritage tourism has a lot to answer for.

[57] Adam Low in *National Geographic* article, op. cit.

[58] Winch, 'Text and Context', op. cit., 28.

[59] This mask forms one of the central examples of Graham Oddie's contribution to this volume.

[60] http://www.tutankhamun-exhibition.co.uk.

[61] http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2011/jan/17/tutankhamun-tomb-to-close.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and not a mere recreation of it, we must here question both our motivation and the cost at which we are willing to act upon it. Mike Pitts hits the authenticity nail on its fetishistic head:

> What excites us about the past is being there: feeling the heat as we climb a Mexican pyramid; adjusting our eyes to the light in the Pantheon; watching the paint peel off the walls of Tutankhamun's tomb. *Peeling paint?* If, in the brief, crushed tour of the Egyptian boy-king's rooms at Luxor we don't actually see it happen, we can certainly return later and note the damaging spread of holes and spots.[62]

It is simply an empirical falsehood that replicas fail to excite or inspire us. If the effect is there, we should not worry about the nature of the cause. As one journalist has put it, '[i]f it inspires, it inspires'.[63] There are different forms of wonder, of course, and various good reasons to sometimes seek experiences such as that of a direct connection to the past. A museum dedicated to producing such experiences of wonder may require the real thing or at least the belief in the real thing. Those primarily interested in education (e.g. the encyclopaedic collections of universal museums) will, by contrast, be better served by replicas that can be touched, moved, examined, photographed, and so on. An institution or exhibition may wish to achieve both in equal measure, as is the case with many museums of natural history. Such ambitions call for a mixture of original and cast galleries. Similarly, albeit more rarely, an object may be able to play both roles without difficulty. One example of this is the 4.5 billion year-old meteorite on display next to the ticket desk of the Royal Observatory's Astronomy Centre in Greenwich. This can be touched, studied, and photographed, and yet can clearly also elicit a true sense of wonder.[64]

All else being equal, there nothing wrong with the desire to come as close to the past as is physically possible. But all else is rarely – if ever –

[62] Ibid.

[63] Jonathan Jones 'Why Egyptian replicas are as good as the real thing', *The Guardian* 24/10/2010. http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2010/oct/24/egyptian-replicas-manchester-tutankhamun. The more general point is made by Brian Eno in his defence of art-works as triggers of experience (a term he credits to Roy Ascott), in his 'Miraculous Cures and the Canonization of Basquiat', op. cit.

[64] See Justin Spalding, *The Art of Wonder: A History of Seeing* (New York and London: Prestel, 2005). For a cross-disciplinary survey of the notion of wonder see Sophia Vasalou (ed), *Practices of Wonder: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012). See also Beth Lord's contribution to this volume.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

equal, and so we must re-consider the motives and costs of our desire for authenticity. Indeed, we must re-evaluate our very ideal of authenticity.

3. Authenticity

One way of trying to understand other cultures is via museum exhibits of their art and artefacts. The traveller will seek to do this by visiting local museums. If the past is indeed a foreign country, then we might also learn much about our own cultures in this way:

> 82% of British people want to have a museum or art gallery in their local town or city.
> 87% of people think the historic environment plays an important part in the cultural life of the country.
> 45% of museum-goers agree they feel more positive towards other people and their cultures as a result of a visit to a museum.[65]

If it is typically better to have originals in local museums and replicas abroad this is not because locals are better at distinguishing originals from replicas. Rather, it would be a matter of honouring a people's desire to feel a direct connection with their culture. For those expatriates and non-travellers who wish to feel a direct connection with other cultures there are the much-prized temporary touring exhibitions. That said, there are various complications related to the purposes and intentions of those who host and fund such exhibitions. In his review of a London exhibition of Bolivian artefacts, Tristan Platt expressed a worry central to many exhibitions that fit the general type:

> The funding of *Bolivian Worlds* by Lufthansa, and of *Madagascar, Island of the Ancestors* by Air Madagascar (both airlines clearly interested in boosting their tourist bookings to each country),… reminded me of the uncomfortable continuum between ethnography and the travel-brochure.… Could I persuade myself that these artifacts were in fact to be perceived as 'ambassadors' of their peoples to the English capital of Britain?[66]

If what one is interested in is the understanding of other cultures would decent replicas not have done the job equally well? Leonard

[65] http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=143115.
[66] Tristan Platt, 'What Are Museums For?: Museums, Objects and Representation', *Anthropology Today* 3/4 (1987), 13.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Meyer has argued that it is naïve to insist that it should make no difference whether or not a work is forged, for this asks us to turn our backs on our cultural heritage and the value our culture places on originality. Dutton accuses Meyer of a dangerous cultural relativism. After all, other cultures may prize mimicry above originality.[67] The question, Dutton rightly points out, is whether originality *should* matter. To answer this we must give good reasons for why it does matter. In the mouths of those who take a moral stance against forgeries, the value of originality is here often tied to the values of honesty and authenticity.

Those who take an aesthetic stance must ultimately claim that what makes the difference is non-observable facts. But these are not visible to the museum visitor, so even if this view is right whatever value is bestowed upon the object cannot (by definition) be detected by the museum visitor. All that matters (all else being equal between the real thing and the fake) is what we tell the visitor. This morphs back into the moral objection. I do not propose that museum galleries betray the trust of visitors. However, I do wish to question the motivation of those seeking to display originals at almost any cost. Dishonest displays of original works are more likely to put the public's trust at risk than any honest display of fakery. Hillel Schwartz has urged us to reconsider our ideals of authenticity:

> [W]e must reconstruct, not abandon, an ideal of authenticity in our lives…Whatever we come up with, authenticity can no longer be rooted in singularity…The impostors, 'evil' twins, puppets, 'apes', tricksters, fakes, and plagiarists…may be agents provocateurs to a more coherent, less derelict sense of ourselves. They may call us away from the despair of uniqueness toward more companionate lives.[68]

Schwartz's point is not restricted to art but may be extended to all aspects of life, from the mock-meat which enables vegetarians to partake in traditional meals without betraying their ethics to the fake profiles that people create on social media to parody inauthentic public figures. We must ask ourselves what is authentic about exhibitions such as *Bolivian World*, or with the exhibiting of the Elgin Marbles in the Duveen Gallery of the British Museum. If 'universal' museums are no longer to serve as memorials of the rise of

[67] Dutton, *The Art Instinct*, op. cit., 184.
[68] Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy*, op. cit., 17.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press

nationalism and imperialism,[69] they would do well to consider housing more replicas.[70]

University of Hertfordshire
c.sandis@herts.ac.uk

[69] Dewey, *Art As Experience*, op. cit., 8.

[70] This paper was first presented at the *Royal Institute of Philosophy* Annual Conference 'Philosophy and Museums: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Ontology' at the University of Glasgow. and the Burrell Collection, 24–26 July 2013. Many thanks to all the organizers and participants, particularly Anna Bergqvist, Victoria Harrison, Ivan Gaskell, Garry Hagberg, Michael Levine, Graham Oddie, Andreas Pantazatos, and Charles Taliaferro. This chapter has also benefitted from discussions with Shahin Bekhradnia, Andreas Lind and Catherine Rowett.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000163 Published online by Cambridge University Press