Chapter 8
The European Renaissance and Beyond

The Mona Lisa  Sistine Chapel Frescoes
Copies and the Emulation of the Past  The Restoration of The Last Supper
The Ludovisi Ares  Restoration and Identity
The Laocoön  Titian’s Bacchus and Ariadne
The Farnese Herakles  The Forgeries of Joni and Giunti

Here, as earlier, we must be careful not to confuse genuineness with aesthetic merit. That the distinction between original and forgery is aesthetically important does not . . . imply that the original is superior to the forgery.

—Nelson Goodman, Languages of Art

Introduction
Basic changes in assumptions and ideals took place during the Renaissance, although it may be more accurate historically to think not of one Renaissance but of an entire family of renaissances, stretching from the Saite period of ancient Egypt to the Carolingian Renaissance and the Chinese Renaissance. The latter took place during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, some 500 years before the European Renaissance, which is the basis of this chapter (Cronin 1992; Ruggiero 2015). The rediscovery of the ancient world and the increasing autonomy of action of the individual are two key aspects of the Italian Renaissance. There was little interest in the artistic achievements
of ancient Greece or Rome in the medieval period, when the philosophical mode of thought was directed to the worship of God, although, as was revealed in the previous chapter, fragments or entire works of ancient art could be (re)appropriated, reused, or incorporated into works of art in the medieval period to serve new cultural or religious purposes. Secular works of art existed during the medieval period, but these have not survived well. Before the Renaissance, there was less interest in the preservation of cultural materials, which tended to be reused or discarded as of no relevance to cultural or societal needs.

The principal period of the European Renaissance lasted from the fourteenth century, when it began in Florence (Cronin 1992), to the seventeenth century (Paoletti and Radke 2011; Ruggiero 2015). The rediscovery, or at least the revaluing, of antiquity was one of the major achievements of the Renaissance, responsible for passing down to us such vestiges of the ancient world that still existed.

Earlier empirical Greek science came as a revelation to the Renaissance mind. For example, the determination of the diameter of the earth and its degree of tilt on its axis by Eratosthenes (circa 276 B.C.E.–circa 195/194 B.C.E.) was certainly an original and impressively innovative work of empirical research (Fischer 1975); it was not repeated in Europe until 1,250 years later. The confines of Christian faith excluded empirical experimentation and promulgated belief rather than inquiry. Despite the fact that some people came to believe from their own observations that the earth was a sphere rather than a flat plane, they chose not to inquire into the matter any further, because faith alone was sufficient for the purposes of life. Scientific inquiry of the kind exemplified by Eratosthenes had no place.

Plenty of material from the Renaissance concerns emulation, copying, restoration, forgery, and the resulting controversies that restoration brings forth. This chapter discusses prominent examples: the Laocoön, The Last Supper, and the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. In the case of the Laocoön, some think the entire work is a forgery by Michelangelo, not the restoration of an ancient work. The restorations of marble sculpture during this period, as well as eighteenth-century adaptations, are discussed here in detail, based on several examples from the Getty Museum collections as well as other important works.

Forgery of ancient works in the Renaissance did indeed involve artists as elevated as Michelangelo. Even though the consensus view is that he did not create the Laocoön, he was not afraid to create works of art purporting to be ancient. They came to be admired in their own right rather than viewed as forgeries to be discarded or unappreciated. Some restorations carried out during the Renaissance repurposed works to suit norms of the period rather than to preserve what was truly ancient. Once again, Michelangelo is an interesting case. He so admired the Belvedere Torso that the fragment qua fragment was truly inspirational for him. He had no thought of a completion with modern additions. What was authentically ancient remained unaltered.

**Authenticity in the Renaissance**

Authenticity in the Renaissance represents part of the quest to find meaning, values, and motives attached to the actions, creations, and investigations of the individual, whether a scientist, artist, or scholar. However, the attainment of individual recognition for artistic achievement was presaged in ancient Greece and Rome by named and admired artists such as Lysippus. Pliny the Elder mentions by name
several artists who were famous in his own time or in the Roman past. Aspects of these historical antecedents have been discussed previously. It is not just a matter of presaging; it is a matter of recognition. Several scholars write as if the Renaissance hailed the inception of individual artistic achievement and as if art as such and associated ideas such as attribution were of no concern in earlier times. A few quotations from Pliny the Elder from his volume on stone (Book XXXVI.iv.17–20) are relevant to this dispute. He writes, “It is reported that Pheidias himself carved in marble the exceptionally beautiful Venus in Octavius’s buildings at Rome.” In assessing the quality of Pheidias’s work, he discusses just one example of his genius, the shield of the statue of Minerva at Athens:

On the convex border of which he engraved a Battle of the Amazons, and on the hollow side, Combats of Gods and Giants, and her sandals, on which he depicted Combats of Lapiths and Centaurs. . . . Although the figure of Victory is especially remarkable, connoisseurs admire also the snake, as well as the bronze Sphinx that crouches just beneath her spear. . . . They make us realize that the grandeur of his notions was maintained even in small details.

Pliny (Book XXXVI.iv.20–22) also mentions that the Athenian Alcamenes, Pheidias’s pupil, made several famous works, including the celebrated statue of Venus known in Greek as Aphrodite of the Gardens, which Pheidias is said to have finished for his pupil to pass off as his own. Another pupil, Agoracritus of Paros, one of his favorites, sold several works as made by himself when they were actually made by Pheidias. It was said that Praxiteles’s marble Venus in Cnidus was so beautiful that a man hid in the temple by night to make love to the statue and that a stain on the Venus betrayed his lustful act.

There are a number of salient points to note here: first, the recognition of named artists whose works were judged to be superior to others; second, appreciation of the special beauty of some of the works described; third, the finishing of a sculpture by the master himself when it was principally carved by a pupil; and fourth, sculptures created by the master himself that were purported to be by his pupil Agoracritus and were sold as work of the latter. None of these instantiations are any different from concerns expressed in the Renaissance, or later, regarding the mode of artistic production.

The connoisseurship of artistic detail, often stated to be a Renaissance phenomenon, is clearly not: Pliny and other aesthetes would have been able to differentiate between the quality, skill, and artistic execution of work by Praxiteles, in his carving of the detail of the snake and sphinx, and that of work by an imitator. Artifacts could be seen as so beautiful that men fantasized about copulating with them. The work of the master was so admired that favored pupils were able to sell the master’s work as their own, because of its superior quality. The recognition of aesthetic and material authenticity evidenced by these quotations is quite contrary to assertions of scholars of the Renaissance that only in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did the cult of the individual artist become recognized as a singular achievement. The restoration of works of art is also described by Pliny, and chapter 1 in this volume discusses the actions of King Nabonidus in 530 B.C.E., when he carefully restored buildings and artworks, some of which dated to 2500 B.C.E.
To characterize the Renaissance broadly then, the concerns that start to become important, compared with the medieval, are the value of creativity in terms of individual expression, the production of admired copies and replicas—not only of art of the past but of works of artists then living—and the desire to attribute works of art to particular schools, studios, epochs, or individuals. The intangible or conceptual authenticity that was so important during the medieval period assumes a lesser status, as the aesthetic, historical, and material authenticity of works of art become valorized.

In terms of copies of works of Renaissance masters by other contemporaries, there are several famous anecdotes. For example, according to Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574), Michelangelo (1475–1564) was able to copy drawings so well that he kept the originals and returned his copies, which he smoked to make them appear old. Depositing fine carbonaceous particles from smoke or soot mimics the surface degradation of age, a technique that has been much used by art forgers over the centuries. Vasari (1912–1915) defended the aesthetic power of copies because of the desire of “modern artists” such as Michelangelo to equal the attainments of the ancients. Vasari writes: “Modern works, if they be excellent, are as good as the ancient. What greater vanity is there than that those who concern themselves more with the name than the fact?”

During the half year he spent in Florence, Michelangelo worked on two small statues, a child Saint John the Baptist and a sleeping Cupid. According to Ascanio Condivi (1524–1574), Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici (1449–1492), for whom Michelangelo had sculpted Saint John the Baptist, asked that Michelangelo “fix it so that it looked as if it had been buried” so that he could “send it to Rome . . . pass [it off as] an ancient work and . . . sell it much better.”

This passage betrays sentiments that had already taken hold in the early sixteenth century—that a modern sculpture by Michelangelo would fetch greater monetary reward if it could be made to appear that it dated from the time of ancient Rome. Another common theme emerges: Both Lorenzo and Michelangelo were unwittingly cheated out of the real value of the sculpture by a middleman. Cardinal Raffaele Riario (1461–1521), to whom Lorenzo had sold it, discovered that it was a fraud, but he was so impressed by the quality of the sculpture that he invited the artist to Rome. There are slight variants of this story.

There were many imitations and copies of artists’ work by others. Carlo Cesare Malvasia (1616–1693) mentions imitations of drawings by Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (Raphael, 1483–1520) made by Denis Calvaert (1540–1619), who smoked them (Jones and Penny 1987) and sold them as originals to Cardinal d’Este (1509–1572). Luca Giordano (1634–1705) produced copies of works by Tintoretto (1518–1594) and was well-known as a painter with many styles of imitation (De Los Cobos 2010). Carlo Maratta (1625–1713) painted copies of works by Andrea Sacchi (1625–1713) (Harris 1978), and Pierre Mignard (Le Romain, 1612–1695) (Boyer 2008) produced imitations of Guido Reni (1575–1642) (Salvy 2001).

Spear (1989) mentions Shearman’s (1965) study of Andrea del Sarto’s (1486–1530) workshop organization and his conclusion that no single, primary autographic version of each painting existed but only a series of multiple “originals.” The same problems are found with Paolo Veronese’s (1528–1588) bottega, where wanting “a Veronese” and an “original” might not have been the same.
thing because of the nature of the workshop practices of Veronese.

A well-known case of copying that descended into forgery concerned Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), who became furious at inauthentic copies of woodcut prints bearing his famous monogram, which had also been forged. Twice he went to court over this copying, once in Nuremberg and once in Venice. The Venetian case was brought against Marcantonio Raimondi (1480–circa 1534), who had copied Dürer’s woodcut series The Life of the Virgin, including his famous “AD” monogram (Pon 2004). The Venice court ruled that Raimondi could continue to copy the woodcuts but was forbidden to add the monogram. Legal protection was therefore accorded to the monogram, the signature of the artist, but not to the act of copying the art produced by Dürer per se. The woodcuts would have enabled multiple copies to be printed from each block, and the signature of the artist was usually added in the block itself, so that it was integral to the printed edition. It is this that Raimondi would have been instructed not to add. In this connection, Lisa Pon’s discussion of the differentiation between conferred privileges and the modern notion of copyright is of interest (see Pon 2004:39–41, 43). Any signatures added after the event, unless signed in the block on the printed version, were usually regarded as unreliable or inauthentic and in modern terms might render the print of no value whatsoever.

Although the Renaissance brought to the fore the concept of the artistic genius whose work was original to himself or herself and, ideally, was executed solely by the artist, this period was also one in which a copy was not necessarily regarded as a denigration of art per se, continuing the theme of the ancient past. The view that aesthetic appreciation is the only means of judging the value of identical copies has been called “radical aestheticism” by Lenain (2013:22), since it relies on the assimilation of artistic value into aesthetic quality, independent of any other qualities of the work of art.

The various arguments pertaining to copies and replicas continue to haunt us today. Was Raimondi attempting to sell his copies of Dürer woodcut prints as the work of Dürer himself? Or did he declare that he had copied them so well and here they were for purchase, judge for yourself? Were they examples of appropriation art in the manner of Sherry Levine? Were they produced with the intention to pay homage to Dürer? The circumstances of the copying cannot be divorced from the authenticity of the final product, and the intention of the copyist in these determinations of authenticity cannot be divorced from the way in which they have come to be regarded.

The *Mona Lisa* and Her Instantiations

The subject of copies forms a good introduction to the exemplar of the *Mona Lisa*, one of the most contested, performative, interpreted, and copied works of art in the world (Sassoon 2001). According to Vasari (1912–1915), Leonardo da Vinci started painting the work in 1503 and finished it in 1507. The original is in the Louvre. Stolen in 1911, it was smuggled into Italy and hidden in a broom cupboard. It was placed on display in a small gallery at the Uffizi in Florence in 1913, before its return to the Louvre that year. The foreign sojourn was an opportunity for critics to claim that the authenticity of the 1913 returned version was suspect and that the authorities had been duped by a fake *Mona Lisa* (Volle et al. 2006). Not many people now
regard these claims as viable, although they continued into the 1930s. Technical studies of the Louvre original version have shown that Leonardo employed his sfumato technique in very thin layers, built up gradually to complete the image. The 30 layers he applied were cumulatively only 40 microns thick, or about half the thickness of a human hair (de Viguerie 2009).

Applied varnishes had apparently caused the painting to darken by the sixteenth century (Mohen et al. 2006). An aggressive restoration was carried out in 1809. It involved cleaning and revarnishing the painting and might have removed the eyelashes and most of the eyebrows. Removed from its original frame and cut down in size, the poplar wood on which the oil paint was applied warped, and a crack appeared in the painting. It was infilled and retouched. In 1906 more retouchings, using watercolor, were made. After the theft of 1911, during which further damage to the masterpiece occurred, more watercolor restorations were made to the recovered work. In 1951 two walnut butterfly braces were inserted in the painting’s back. In 1952 the varnish in the background was evened out in yet another restoration campaign, and in 1956, after an insane Bolivian man threw a stone at the painting, damage to the left elbow was retouched with watercolor (McMullen 1975; Sassoon 2001). In 1970, cross braces were added to keep the poplar from warping further. Today, the painting can be observed through bulletproof glass.

In 2006 a series of scientific investigations were carried out on the Louvre version. An infrared reflectography image showed that the fingers of the left hand were originally painted in a slightly different position than in the final work, the result of drapery held in the hand. Pascal Cotte (CNN News 2007) is quoted as saying, “It was really the first time that we have this kind of position of the arm and after Leonardo, thousands of painters have made a copy of this position but without understanding why we have this position. The real justification of the position of the wrist is to hold the blanket on her stomach.” Joanna Woods-Marsden (personal communication 2014) points out that the word blanket in this context is not correct and that it should be drapery. Cotte, the founder of Lumiere Technology, has been able to re-create the appearance of prior versions of the painting by means of multispectral imaging. Lumiere Technology states (2006) that “touchless multispectral imaging makes possible the virtual removal of the varnish.”

After this study, the physical condition of the painting was the same as it was before. The important detail of what her left hand is holding cannot be seen visually but was revealed by multispectral imaging. This feature of the painting could probably be seen by the unaided eye if the Mona Lisa underwent the usual chemical cleaning processes used in modern conservation, which could drastically alter the visual appearance of the work by removing layers of discolored varnish, which probably obscure the drapery held in her hand.

Apart from the innumerable sixteenth- to eighteenth-century copies of the Mona Lisa (Wikipedia 2012), have any required further study to determine whether they are directly connected to Leonardo da Vinci? There are two: the prosaically named Isleworth Mona Lisa and the Prado Mona Lisa (Asmus 1989; Bailey 2012; Brooks 2013; Syson 2011; Woods-Marsden 2014).

The Isleworth Mona Lisa is named for the location of the collection formed by Hugh Blaker, who discovered the painting in 1913 (a significant year for Mona Lisas given what
Figure 8.1. The *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci, 1503–1506. Oil on poplar; 77 x 53 cm (possibly cut down slightly and remarkably similar to the dimensions of the *Mona Lisa* in Figure 8.2). Louvre Museum. (Image in the public domain)
happened to the Louvre original). This version ended up in a Swiss bank vault, kept under wraps for 40 years. The brushwork was studied by American scientist John Asmus (1989) and found to be the same as that on the Louvre version. Alfonso Rubino, an Italian expert on Leonardo's geometric style, states that the work conforms to the basic line structure used by the artist (Brooks 2013).

These conclusions have not been generally accepted, and Martin Kemp, a prominent Leonardo scholar, has denounced the work as having “so much wrong with it” (Brooks 2013). Woods-Marsden (personal communication 2014) states that it hardly merits consideration in the same terms as the Prado version, as it is so obviously not the work of Leonardo. Undeterred, the Swiss-based Art Foundation has recently undertaken a radiocarbon dating of the canvas, which shows that it dates from 1410 to 1455, apparently refuting the claim that it is a sixteenth-century copy (Brooks 2013). However, if art connoisseurs cannot accept the quality of the work as being by Leonardo, it remains an inauthentic copy, perhaps a later version on a reused fifteenth-century canvas, which would help explain the radiocarbon date. So scientific connoisseurship of the pigments, binding media, underdrawing, and technique would be required to advance the argument any further to match the art historical connoisseurship.

On the other hand, the version in the Prado, shown in Figure 8.2, was always known as a copy made at a time quite close to that of the original work. Comparisons of the hairstyles in the two versions have been made to clear up the assertion that Mona Lisa was wearing a kind of bonnet or had her hair partially secured in a bun, with only a few strands falling around her face (Mohen et al. 2006), an argument described by Woods-Marsden (personal communication 2014) as quite erroneous, as the Prado version reveals nothing of the kind. Recent restoration work on the Prado copy, which formerly had a very dark background, has shown that this is all overpaint. It had been assumed that the Prado copy was a sixteenth-century version on oak, but a reevaluation shows the panel to be walnut, a wood lauded by Leonardo for its superior properties.

A study by infrared reflectography interestingly revealed an underdrawing very similar to that of the version in the Louvre, showing that the two works must have originated from Leonardo’s studio and that the Prado version is not a sixteenth-century copy as was formerly believed. Ana Gonzalez Mozo, from the Prado Conservation Department, described it as a “high-quality work” (Bailey 2012) and presented additional evidence that it was undertaken in Leonardo’s studio between 1503 and 1506. Mohen et al. (2006) propose that the painting was produced by one of two pupils of Leonardo—either Andrea Salai (1480–1524) or Francesco Melzi (1491–1570).

The Prado version, like the multispectral re-creations by Pascal Cotte, shows that the sky and background were not green, as currently seen in the Louvre version, but were originally blue. What is it that our authentic Mona Lisa should deliver? To be seen as she appears now, under layers of discolored varnish? With her original blue background, now altered by degradation to a green-blue restored? With her eyelashes? Apparently not holding anything? There are four principal issues here: the processes of degradation that the original materials used by Leonardo have undergone; the corresponding inability of cleaning to return the painting to its “original state”; alterations that have taken...
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**Figure 8.2.** The Prado *Mona Lisa* after cleaning and digital remastering. Oil on panel; 76.3 x 57 cm. Prior to the restoration, the background was almost black. The cleaning revealed a version much closer to Leonardo da Vinci’s, with very similar underdrawing. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons and Escarlati)
place as a result of ill-advised cleaning in 1809; and the problem of differentiation between the grimy yellowed varnish and original degraded materials underneath.

The weather-beaten authentic appearance is what is left to us today. This is not what the painting looked like when it was made by Leonardo, and since it cannot be cleaned without occasioning an international controversy, the work has to be left in the discolored and obscured condition it presently manifests.

Because public furor would result if the visual condition of the *Mona Lisa* was interfered with in any way to render the work more “authentic” to the aims of the original artist, it is simply left as is, with dirty and obscuring varnish layers. The painting is additionally obscured by its veil of bulletproof glass.

However, for the purposes of display, a very high-quality digital copy could be exhibited adjacent to the present painting. The original would remain in its present condition, but with the aid of new multispectral imaging technologies, a virtually cleaned *Mona Lisa* could be exhibited, showing a blue sky, not a green one, and with the dirty varnish coating removed, so that viewers can see what her left hand is holding. Since very little of the present-day *Mona Lisa* can actually be discerned through her glass encasement, this approach would offer a version of the remnant material authenticity of the work—of what it looked like closer to the time of creation, even if total recall of such an existence cannot be made.

**The Renaissance: Copies and the Emulation of the Past**

Part of the essential artistic inquiry of the Renaissance was the nature of the antique and how the invigoration of modern art of its time could be inspired by the ideals and artistic creations that survived into the Renaissance from ancient Greek, Roman, or medieval antecedents. Artistic practice in the Renaissance often sought to combine medieval motifs with revived antiquities, with the medieval sometimes already a pastiche of ancient and medieval components, variously interpreted by collectors and their restorers to produce a new artwork. Princes and rulers erected halls of fame to the 12 Caesars, described in the writings of Suetonius (Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, circa 69–circa 122 C.E.), which were copies and replicas from casts. Seymour Howard (1991:201) writes:

> Among the early Renaissance documents, the inventory of Guglielmo Della Porta’s studio-galleries is especially informative for its contents of ancient and modern works, including casts, to be used for study and emulations by artists, as well as for purchase by collectors. Inexpensive casts helped to disseminate the taste for antiquities, including portrait busts. As we know, the great model collections of dynastic rulers of church and state were succeeded by national and ecclesiastical museums for the public.

The desire for the antique was so pervasive that casts and copies had to be made to supply the greatly increased demand, which outstripped the availability of original works. This gave rise to two archetypal attitudes, common to our own time as well as the Renaissance, the latter reviewed by Muller (1989), especially as regards the concept of authenticity as formulated in the early literature of Renaissance connoisseurship. One attitude sought to isolate the qualities that separated originals from copies and dismissed the latter as inferior or inauthentic works, valorizing the originals.
The other recognized the value of copies and attempted to differentiate the instantiations of them in terms of type, quality, and production, defending the usefulness of their function in spreading the appreciation of art and the antique among a wider public. Echoes of concerns for endless copies pervade the postmodern as well (Krauss 1985).

Muller (1989) contends that the demand for authenticity is obvious from at least the sixteenth century, when Vasari was writing his famous accounts of the lives and paintings of the artists of his time (Lenain 2011). One of the theses of this book is that concerns for authenticity stretch back very much further than the Renaissance, that Muller’s view is a very parochial one that ignores thousands of years of human history. It is true, however, that the increased desire for understanding of material authenticity led to a rise in concerns over attribution and hence to art connoisseurship, although one could argue that attribution issues and comparative assessments of artistic quality go back at least to the work of Pliny.

In terms of the Renaissance era, on January 5, 1532, Marcantonio Michiel visited the house of Antonio Pasqualino in Venice. Here he observed a picture by Giorgio da Castelfranco (Giorgione, 1470–1510) that had been obtained from Messer Giovanni Ram, who possessed a copy of the same work, thinking it was the original (Klein and Zerner 1990). One of these two versions may now be housed in the collections of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna; which one is unclear.

Muller (1989) mentions Enea Vico’s Discorsi of 1555 on coins, which contains an entire chapter devoted to forgeries and copies. Vico writes that a skillful modern copy presents difficult problems in terms of authenticity and illustrates a supposedly ancient Roman sesterces with a head of Nero, warning that if a copy were struck with a die and covered with a false patina, only the eye of the connoisseur would be capable of determining the quality of the coin and arriving at the truth. In fact, Vico discerns that notable differences between artists are most visible in details “in the master’s style and in the execution of hair, ears, hands, and folds of drapery and similar things” (Muller 1989). These themes were taken up by connoisseurs, from Morelli to Berenson, in centuries to come.

Felipe de Guevara (circa 1560) discussed originals and imitations of Hieronymus Bosch (1450–1516) in his Commentarios de la pintura and advised the reader to beware of the countless forgeries, a matter that is still causing trouble: Marijnissen (1985) mentions three different types of underdrawings in works attributed to Bosch, which is unusual since an artist normally has a distinctive style as evidenced by the underdrawing. Giulio Mancini (1558–1630), a noted physician and writer on art, was among the first to discuss the problem of literal copies in his Considerazional of about 1620, in which he cautions buyers to determine if a painting is an original or merely a copy (Radnóti 1999). Mancini sought material signs of the authenticity of the paintings in his own collection and mentions as worthy of examination hairs, beards, ringlets of hair, and the spirited and scattered highlights that a master renders with one stroke of the brush. Mancini’s work was available in manuscript copies for centuries but not in published form until 1956.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the correspondence between freedom of touch and authenticity was becoming widely recognized. Lenain (2013) writes that Abraham Bosse (1604–1676), an engraver and theoretician, was the first to challenge the view that a copy could equal the original and be
mistaken for it. Filippo Baldicinni, in his letter on painting of 1681, describes “the universal rule of more or less boldness in handling” by which one can differentiate originals from copies. This is what great forgers such as Eric Hebborn (1991) tried to emulate: bold and spontaneous lines in the style of the master rather than fussy attempts to create exactly the same lines as the original, concepts that had already been enunciated by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the early decades B.C.E.

Mancini’s work honors him as the intellectual ancestor of Giovanni Morelli (1816–1891), who is much better known. He examined the ways artists represented hands, fingers, hair, beards, and eyes and stated that a painting boldly and spontaneously painted could not be effectively copied. Nevertheless, Mancini allows for a copy of a work to be made so well that it cannot readily be distinguished from the original (Radnóti 1999).

Roman versions of original Greek sculpture might not be viewed pejoratively in the ancient world, whereas an ersatz version of such an original produced today might very well be viewed as something inauthentic. The validation of ancient artworks and their copies essentially continues right through the Renaissance and beyond, without condemnation of the imitations or reproductions as being examples of forgery, a viewpoint very different from the late modern, so that even the very notion of forgery in earlier centuries might be a misleading concept. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (2008) highlights the cultural milieu in which such copies existed in his work Rome’s Cultural Revolution. Despite the title, the volume does not really engage in a discussion of numerous copies of Greek works by the Romans and how these might elaborate the story of the revolution of Roman achievement. In connection with the Boethus Herm of Dionysus, a bronze herm found in the Mahdia shipwreck (circa 80 B.C.E.), Wallace-Hadrill (2008:364) writes:

Far from seeking individuality and originality in taking distance from the tools of copying, the Greek artist stamps his mark in the variation on a theme. The fact that the Boethus Herm had already been used before shipping overseas suggests that it was not simply the Roman market that stimulated the practice of multiple copying, but that this was a feature of the Hellenistic artistic landscape they could exploit.

Of course, this had always been true of indirectly cast bronze sculptures, as opposed to those directly cast, since an original model in wood or clay would not have been damaged in the process of reproduction. Hence these can be seen as legitimate copies from a master model. Wallace-Hadrill (2008:364) continues: “We thus move away from a picture of Romans ignorantly plundering and then debasing an innocent world of Greek pure aesthetics to a more complex picture of Romans participating in a Hellenistic context in which art in multiples already serves a world of luxury.” This may be true, but it tends to gloss over the numerous forgeries produced in ancient Rome that would have been sold to less wealthy or less discriminating buyers, while at the same time outstanding reproductions in marble were produced from admired Greek bronze original versions for the cognoscenti. That trend continued. Radnóti (1999) draws attention to the outstanding achievement of Bernard de Montfauçon, whose collection of 40,000 antique reproductions was published in 10 volumes between 1719 and 1724.

Francesco Primaticcio (1504–1570) and
the young Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola (1507–1573) were both commissioned to make plaster copies for Francis I of France (1494–1547). David Teniers the Younger (1610–1690) was in the service of Archduke Leopold William of Austria (1614–1662) as a copier of the work of other artists (Radnóti 1999). Some works, such as the Spinario, were copied extensively for centuries. Radnóti (1999:79) writes:

The famous Spinario, the earliest plastic and miniature variations of which are dated back to the eleventh–twelfth century, initially the terracotta copies from the provinces formed the model, rather than the prototype for the Capitoleum. In the Medieval period it was the symbol of March (March the month when people started to walk barefoot) then it became a favorite subject for small plastics in the Renaissance, and survived all the way into the 18th–19th century, when it had some variants such as erotic female thorn-pullers.

Artist Jonathan Richardson the Elder (1667–1745), in his discourses on the whole art of criticism (Harloe 2013) as it relates to painting, showed how to judge “of the Goodness of a picture; II Of the Hand of the Master; and III Whether 'tis an Original or a Copy.” Richardson says that copies are different from originals for three reasons. First, they are one step removed from nature—the echo of an echo. Second, copyists will be unfamiliar with, and at pains to imitate convincingly, the customary styles of original artists. Third, copies are made under the constraint of their models, whereas originals are executed with license.

One of the effects of the discussion of copies was to affirm the value of them as works of art or as appreciative emissaries of the originals. Marco Boschini (1613–1678) wrote in 1674 that if copies are truly deceptive, then they are laudable deceptions and worthy of envy. As an example he points to Giovanni Battista Zampezzi (circa 1620–1700), who “when it comes to transforming himself into Bassano, surpasses all others, so that his copies appear to be twins of the originals, and this is the most difficult style to imitate because it is executed with so bold a touch” (Sohm 1991). Freedom of handling, which had been perceived as the most reliable mark of authenticity, was now a sign of the copyist’s virtuosity. Muller (1989) does not agree with Benjamin’s assumption that degrees of authenticity were primarily graded in response to the introduction of reproductive printing processes, which Benjamin thought struck at the root of the quality of authenticity by placing in doubt the uniqueness of the original. Muller (1989) thinks that the workshop production of replicas and the flood of good copies in the Renaissance raised the problem already, independently of prints. Following that line of argument, it could then be claimed that the problems had already become evident by the time the Romans began to produce numerous copies of original Greek works of art.

Renaissance Restoration

The impact of restoration on ancient marble sculptures and how their identities or changing contexts affect their authenticity has already been discussed. During the Renaissance, starting in the sixteenth century, some of the earliest restorations of major works of art from ancient Rome took place. One could almost say that in differentiating the Renaissance from earlier European paradigm shifts, the act of restoration of ancient artifacts in their own right was one of
the period's defining characteristics. Reuse, reappropriation, and spolia of architectural fragments occurred in previous epochs and works of art were given new identities, but restoration of a work of art qua admired art was uncommon.

In the Renaissance, restoration of sculpture was a means to complete the work of art to improve its aesthetic appeal—a process that involved an interpretation of the positioning of added fragments or the reassembly and possible recarving or recasting of missing elements rather than a faithful reproduction of whatever was actually broken (Conti and Longhi 1973:33). The original material authenticity of the artwork was therefore often compromised. Invariably, the missing parts were completely invented by the restorer, who was usually a sculptor or artist, more or less famous, to increase the value of the original sculpture and improve its already existing beauty or “grace” (Conti and Longhi 1973:33).

The same approach pertained to paintings, many of which were retouched, overpainted, or altered to suite the taste of the times. But few paintings survived from the ancient past into the Renaissance, which is why the restoration practices discussed here are principally concerned with marble sculpture.

The attitude of the restorer was “a mix of self-confidence, hubris and leadership, along with feelings of admiration camaraderie, fraternity and equality, in his ambitious creative improvisation” Howard (1990:19). The most famous exception involved Michelangelo himself and the story of the Belvedere Torso, a broken fragment of a nude male, signed on the front of the base “Apollonios, son of Nestor, Athenian.” Now in the Museo Pio-Clementino of the Vatican Museums, it probably dates from the first century B.C.E. and represents either Hercules or Polyphemus. Legend has it that Pope Julius II (1443–1513) requested that Michelangelo complete the fragmentary statue with new arms, legs, and head. He respectfully declined, stating that it was too beautiful to be altered, and instead he used it as inspiration for several of his figures in the Sistine Chapel, including the sibyls and prophets bordering the ceiling. The Belvedere Torso remained one of the few ancient sculptural fragments admired throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and through the Mannerist and Baroque periods (Howard 1991:210). The fragment was regarded as expressing a sense of grace and power “not despite, but because of its fragmented state” (Barkan 1990:189), although this idea was usually reversed and employed against the fragment as an argument for completion of an image of the whole.

More commonly, sixteenth-century restoration sought to create an aesthetic unity from an assembly of old fragmentary remnants and newly carved components, with subsequent patination of the surfaces to disguise the work of the restorer. The original marble was often chiseled and polished for better adherence with the new additions, which were usually fabricated from marble of different geological origins. The finished work was patinated with a variety of methods to impart “the ancient color” (Conti and Longhi 1973:37).

The creative restorations of great masters such as Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti (1475–1564) and Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) represented the concept of authenticity of their time, one could almost say examples of adaptive reuse for the cultural norms then prevalent. The additions they made, even if proportionally correct, were invariably completely foreign to the original meaning and iconography of the ancient
The Ludovisi Ares

sculptures. The apparent necessity to give a
title to a work of art, directly related to the ne-
cessity of its completeness, led to the creation
of something completely new, a pastiche of
modern art and ancient fragment, a creation
of the contemporary master that, as creator
and Homo ludens, “imposes its own condi-
tion,” revealing “his notion of beauty, what he
finds worthwhile and life-giving.” With rest-
oration he “subjectively reviewed the work
of art” (Howard 1990:17). This can be seen
as a different intention than the supposed an-
onymity that the famous eighteenth-century
sculptor Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (1716–1799),
responsible for the extensive restoration of
many sculptures (Podany 1994a; 2003), stat-
ed as his aim. Supposedly, this typified the
more modern approach to restoration prac-
tices (Howard 1990:24), where the intention
of the restorer is not to assume the same cre-
ative power of the original artist.

The Ludovisi Ares

An example of the issues surrounding the
authentic appearance of sculpture is the
Ludovisi Ares, a marble copy from the
Antonine period of an original Greek work,
associated with well-known artists such as
Skopas and Lysippos (Haskell and Penny
1981; Marvin 2003) and now displayed at the
Altemps Palace, part of the National Roman
Museum in Rome. It was acquired by the
Ludovisi family in 1622.

In the same year, the sculpture was re-
stored by Bernini, who added, among other
things, a hilt and a Cupid, which accorded
with the Baroque taste of that period (Haskell
and Penny 1981:260). The sculpture was
originally recognized as an Adonis in the
restoration document in 1622. Subsequently
its identity changed to a seated gladiator and
later a seated Mars; the added Cupid seemed
appropriate in every case as it symbolized
the submission to love (Haskell and Penny
1981). There is no documentation or other
evidence that could justify its presence in the
group. Public reactions regarding the resto-
rations were varied. In the bronze copy made
by Giovanni Francesco Susini (1587–1653) in
the seventeenth century (Haskell and Penny
1981:260), as well as in the print collection of
carved and illustrated prints Raccolta di statue antiche e modern,
published in 1704 by Paolo Alessandro Maffei (1653–1716), the restorations do not appear, which could be viewed as a new hermeneutic approach to past restorations and the nature of their authenticity.

On the other hand, the restorations led to many theories regarding the identity of the statue, which helped spread its fame (Giometti 2012:228; Haskell and Penny 1981:159). In three portraits of rich English Lords painted by Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787) in the late eighteenth century—Portrait of John Talbot, Portrait of John Staples, and Portrait of Anthony Ashley-Cooper—the statue is represented as complete, with the hilt and Cupid, meaning that appreciation for the sculpture was not diminished by the inauthentic seventeenth-century restorations. The additions are still maintained today and will probably not be removed, even though they cannot be distinguished from the original. They represent a part of the history of the sculpture and the beliefs of European culture of past centuries. The ethics of revealing the original in terms of conservation theory or practice and the desire for the authenticity of the fragment have been overruled by the historical regard for the past and the altered biography of the sculpture. Here conceptual and aesthetic authenticity are considered more important than the material authenticity of the original.

The Laocoön

The Laocoön is a good example of authenticity problems in terms of its contested, fragmented, and performative states, as the account below reveals. The Laocoön is displayed in the Belvedere Courtyard at the Vatican Museums and represents the Trojan priest Laocoön and his children, who were strangled to death by snakes as a divine punishment for having tried to warn the Trojans about the wooden horse sent by the Greeks (Beard 2013). This sculpture, one of the most famous and controversial works of art with regard to its authenticity, provenance, and restoration, owes some of its fame to the circumstances of its discovery. It was found in a fragmentary state in 1506 near Santa Maria Maggiore during excavations in the vineyard of Felice de Fredis (Haskell and Penny 1981; Volpe and Parisi 2013). The sculpture immediately drew the attention of the most famous sculptors of the time. Pope Julius II sent Giuliano da Sangallo (circa 1445–1516) to look at the sculpture (Barkan 1990; Brilliant 2000; Haskell and Penny 1981:243; Settis 1999). He recognized it as il Laocoonte di cui fa menzione Plinio. In a passage often quoted by Renaissance scholars, Pliny specifically mentions that an ancient and much-admired marble sculpture, the Laocoön, had been created by three related artists (Book XXXVI. iv. 37):

Such is the case with the Laocoön, for example, in the palace of the Emperor Titus, a work that may be looked upon as preferable to any other production of the art of painting or of [bronze] statuary. It is sculptured from a single block, both the main figure as well as the children, and the serpents with their marvellous folds. This group was made in concert by three most eminent artists, Agesander, Polydorus, and Athenodorus, natives of Rhodes.

As is common with debates concerning the nature of an “original” work of art, it may be that the “original” illustrated in Figure 8.4 is in fact a marble copy of a lost earlier bronze original or of a marble version that was already altered in antiquity, but that will never be known for certain. When the sculpture was discovered, as shown by early
representations, it was missing the right arm of the father, the right arm and lower leg of the eldest child, and the fingers of the youngest child (Bober et al. 2010:153). The greatest problem for the restorers was in the rendering of the arm of the father, understood since its discovery as a bent arm, as demonstrated by a wax version fabricated by Bartolommeo Bandinelli (1493–1560) between 1520 and 1525 (Conti and Longhi 1973:33; Haskell and Penny 1981:246). The wax arm of Bandinelli was substituted with a terra-cotta version by Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli (1493–1560), and representations since 1540 depict the Laocoön with the new arm diagonally stretched upward, which became the canonical image until the nineteenth century.

The restoration was so regarded that when Agostino Cornacchini (1686–1754) replaced the terra-cotta arm with one in marble in 1725–1727, he fabricated an identical copy to that used in the old restoration. In 1906 Ludwig Pollack (1868–1943) found the missing original marble arm, unearthed in the same place as the Laocoön, in the shop of a Roman stonecutter. This arm was regarded as a forgery and thought by art historians to be a copy made by Pollack himself. It was not until 1950 that it was recognized as the authentic original by museum authorities, at which point the sculpture was de-restored and then rerestored with the original arm by the restorer Filippo Magi, who also modified the position of the elder son, now moved farther from the father (Haskell and Penny 1981:246).

There were even suggestions, as late as 2005, that the entire sculpture, far from being an ancient Roman original, was in fact a forgery created by Michelangelo to accumulate yet more wealth (Catterson 2005). This startling claim is based on a number of circumstantial evidential factors, carefully researched by Catterson. The carving Apostle Matthew, which Michelangelo began shortly after the discovery of the Laocoön, is held by Catterson (2005) to have been started before the Laocoön and is therefore a conceptual link to the creation of the forged Laocoön rather than a work inspired by the Laocoön itself. Catterson (2005) also produces evidence to show that Michelangelo had ordered more marble blocks than the known sculptures that could have been carved from them, that there was no shortage of Greek marble available in Rome, that receipts for monies due were in excess of amounts that could reasonably be accounted for, and that this Laocoön was not the first to be found: In 1488 Lorenzo de’ Medici (1449–1492) received a letter from agents in Rome telling him about their efforts to acquire “three beautiful little fauns on a marble base, all three encircled by a great snake,” without the male figure, which Michelangelo could have used for a model for the forgery.

Although Michelangelo was certainly capable of forging drawings (which he passed off as originals) as well as marbles, there is considerable doubt about the veracity of Catterson’s thesis, which is not accepted by many other Renaissance scholars, despite the suspicions she raises concerning the sequence of events in Michelangelo’s life at the time. The authenticity of the Laocoön cannot be solved by an art-historical debate. Once something has been condemned as a forgery, it is often difficult to resuscitate its unsullied reputation. In the case of the Laocoön, it may be possible, through scientific connoisseurship, to show beyond reasonable doubt that the sculpture is not a forgery by Michelangelo but an ancient masterpiece, although there seems to be no current impetus to undertake this study.
The statement of Giuliano da Sangallo, the correspondence of the place of the excavation with that mentioned by Pliny, and the existence of such an important historical reference “allowed the conversion of marble pieces into an artwork . . . and bestowed on the reconstituted Laocoön the status of a masterpiece” (Brilliant 2000:30). Thanks to the expressive power of the carved bodies and the variety and intensity of emotion expressed by the composition of the figures, the sculpture soon became an emblem of pain and suffering, an exemplum doloris, that was able to inspire an empathetic, corporal-emotional

Figure 8.4. The derestored version of the Laocoön with the right forearm and earlier restorations of the arms of the boys removed, and with adjustments to the positions of the figures. The original work was described as a masterpiece by Pliny. The marble version may be a copy after a Hellenistic original, or from an earlier bronze original. Thought to date from about 200 BC, in the collection of the Pio-Clementino Museum at the Vatican in Rome (Inv 1059-1064-1067). Height 2.4 m. (Photograph courtesy of Marie-Lan Nguyen, 2009, licensed by Wikimedia Commons)
The production of so many copies manifests the desire for appropriation of the conceptual authenticity of the work as well as engenders competition with the ancient masterpiece. Michelangelo, who was present at the moment of its identification, was probably involved in the initial restoration, as many references to the marble group exist in his work. In effect, he established “a kind of ownership of the image” and “his own personal vision will in a short time make it
impossible for his contemporaries (and us) to look at the Laocoön except as always having been a work by Michelangelo. . . . The great sculptural forms that he created out of this inspiration, are not imitation but responses to a set of qualities in the Laocoön that he has himself defined,” thus “his status canonizes the vision while rendering it almost inimitable” (Barkan 1990:14). In view of the contention by Catterson that the entire work is a forgery by Michelangelo, Barkan’s statement that Michelangelo assumed a kind of ownership has ironic overtones.

The appropriation of the sculpture’s image by Michelangelo as an expressive vehicle and his authority as an inventor of expressive body imagery transformed the Laocoön into “the mainstream of Renaissance and baroque art and led to the creation of the ‘Laocoön’ motif, or ‘Laocoönism,’ which means an emphasis on the mature, male body under stress whether incomplete (as in the case of the Belvedere Torso) or restored” (Brilliant 2000:38). Bandinelli, who also carried out restoration on the sculpture, was commissioned to make a life-size marble copy for the king of France, Francis I, who had demanded that the pope give the original to him or at least “one so like that there shall be no difference” (Barkan 1990:10). Bandinelli boasted that he could make one that was not merely equal to but even surpassing the perfection of the original.

The Laocoön was considered “exchangeable for diplomatic goods and services and also interchangeable with other Laocoöns” (Barkan 1990:34). The political symbolism of ownership was not lost on European sensibility. In the eighteenth century, the statue was ripped away from its Belvedere Courtyard as part of the Napoleonic looting of Italian masterpieces and was removed to France. It was returned thanks to hard work on the part of Antonio Canova (1757–1822), who lobbied for its restitution (Haskell and Penny 1981:114).

Bandinelli’s replica, which was often itself copied and distributed in the form of small bronzes, is in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, the pope having decided that it was too good to send to Francis I as originally intended. Instead Francis I was sent a bronze casting, made at Fontainebleau, from a mold taken from the original under the supervision of Primaticcio, which is now in the Musée du Louvre. Many copies are still extant; a well-known one is in the Grand Palace of the Knights of Saint John in Rhodes. Some still show the earlier version of the restoration (Brilliant 2000).

The facts concerning the arm and its belated discovery seem opposed to the view by Catterson (2005) that the entire sculpture should be regarded as a forgery. It makes little sense that Michelangelo would have carved the entire sculpture and broken off parts, such as the arm found in 1906, leaving parts lying about the area as additional original work by himself. The more reasonable conclusion is that the late discovery of the missing arm is additional confirmation of the authenticity of the sculpture as an ancient work. In fact, the rerestoration of the Laocoön took place about the same time as the discovery of four fragmentary ancient marble sculptures unearthed from the seaside grotto of Sperlonga (Brilliant 2000:10), a coastal town between Rome and Naples, which had formed part of a lavish villa belonging to the Emperor Tiberius (42 B.C.E.–37 C.E.). These sculptures included Scylla’s Attack on His Ship and the Blinding of Polyphemus, which in their dramatic style bear a strong relationship to the style of the Laocoön (Brilliant 2000:11). Remarkably, Pliny’s statement, given above, that the Laocoön had been carved by three eminent craftsmen of Rhodes was confirmed.
The Laocoön

by the discovery at Sperlonga of text on part of Odysseus's ship in the Scylla group, which read: “Athenadorus, son of Hagesandros, Hagesandros, son of Paionios and Polydoros, son of Polydoros, the Rhodians made it.”

The new rerestoration of the Laocoön had a substantial impact on perception of the sculpture and its context, as well as its dating. The result was a “heightened drama and . . . implicit narrativity” (Brilliant 2000:10) and the loss of its previous relief-like composition, typical of High Renaissance restoration in which “the scene is not primarily a physical struggle . . . but an exposition on the classic theme of tragedy: the hubris of the individual, man, punished by uncompromising authority, the gods . . . showing . . . from left to right . . . a scene of inevitable destruction” (Howard 1959:368).

The authentic relationship of the figures is still in contention: Howard proposes a re-rerestoration to correct mistakes made in the last restorations (Brilliant 1990:64; Howard 1959:365). In this proposal, the eldest son is hidden from the scene, thanks to a rotation of 90 degrees, causing the axis from which the group should be observed to shift by 45 degrees. This means a change in the traditional point of view of the observer, who is now forced to turn the sculpture around to fully appreciate the work instead of looking at it from a single viewpoint. This fact, related to discovery of the sculpture of the Sperlonga grotto, suggests that the Laocoön was made at the same atelier for Tiberius and could “have been part of a complex decorative program, similar to the one at Sperlonga, perhaps standing with other sculptures linked to the story of Troy” (Volpe and Parisi 2013).

These discoveries and renewed interpretations did not solve the problem of authenticity and dating but instead led to more debates concerning the original context or the possibility of the existence of a hypothetical original prototype, which cast doubt on the meaning of the sculpture (Brilliant 2000:64–68).

There are two versions of the Laocoön on exhibition in the Belvedere Courtyard. One is a cast of the restoration made before 1950, and the other is the version with rerestorations made after 1950. Yet another plaster version, with the younger son moved farther away, is kept in storage in the Vatican. People’s perception of the rerestoration is clear from the confusion most visitors experience in front of the two Laocoöns. The cast represents the canonical Laocoön of past centuries; many tourists recognize this old, “still authoritative and authentic” version as the original because of its familiar image in older textbooks and reproductions, descriptions of “authorities” such as Winckelmann, and the rich literature concerning the topic. The new restoration is less appreciated and less recognizable than the traditional Laocoön (Beard 2013; Brilliant 2000).

The contested nature of the authenticity of the sculpture has led Brilliant (2000:18) to list the many instantiations of the work. The (modified) list includes: (1) A posited bronze version of the sculpture may have represented the Greek original; (2) A marble copy may have been produced by Rhodian sculptors; (3) The work was excavated in 1506 in a damaged state and was restored, becoming absorbed into Michelangelo’s oeuvre; (4) The sculpture was praised and recontextualized by Winckelmann and later art historians as part of a new inquiry into the hermeneutics of art; (5) The sculpture was restored in the 1950s and is now considered to be more authentic in virtue of closer resemblance to instantiation 2, an intertextuality of interpretation that continues the discourse surrounding the work into the twenty-first century.
The different authenticities of the Laocoön weave an interesting commentary on the three principal authenticities enumerated in chapter 2: the material, the historical/aesthetic, and the conceptual, as well as problems of the contested, performative, and fragmented nature of our inquiries into authenticity. Even the authenticity of instantiation 2 has been contested by several scholars, from Howard (1959) to Catterson (2005). The performative aspects of the Laocoön are seen in its iconic relationships both to Michelangelo and to Winckelmann’s powerful description of the emotive force of the sculpture. The concept of Laocoönism has an independent existence qua the Laocoön itself. The material authenticity of the sculpture is contested not only because of arguments as to its original period of fabrication but also because of alterations of the sculpture as a consequence of creative restorations, derestorations, and rerestorations. The decision of the Vatican to display the Laocoön in its material states 3 and 5 is laudatory, allowing the viewer to contemplate the different physical morphologies of the sculpture, which have in turn evoked a number of responses in the canon of Western art.

The many representations and appropriations of the image in modern times gives the iconic work a whole range of meanings. For Karl Marx (1818–1883) it was a symbol of capitalism (Marx 2008 [1887]). For cartoonists it is a symbol of political trouble. Charles Dickens (1812–1870) compared it to Scrooge struggling with his stockings. Brilliant writes that one of these different Laocoöns constitutes a visible idea, not always labelled, but whose much tested imagery is sufficiently conventionalized to retain the requisite effect, when applied, while the other . . . presents itself only in the work, a damaged survivor of antiquity, an antiquity like the Vatican Laocoön, less and less familiar to the modern public. This “second” Laocoön has to be seen and seen again in order to avoid that ignorance, indifference . . . aesthetic distance and lack of “adequate references” diminish its aesthetical value, its prestige and [its] authority, so that it can retrieve its status of masterpiece (Brilliant 2000:106).

In terms of the authenticity of display, Phillips (1997) would surely have approved of the duality of the publicly exhibited versions as an honest referent to how different states of authenticity pertain to a work of art that has been diachronically reinterpreted and its intertextuality. To reveal how restoration has interacted with the remains of the originally fragmented work, a further series of illustrated pictures, analogous to those provided for Leda and the Swan in the Getty Museum (discussed in chapter 4), should be provided.

The Farnese Herakles

A final example of sculpture, the Farnese Herakles, shares similar issues with the Laocoön, such as the existence of a hypothetical original and problems with substitutions and restorations. The Farnese Herakles, a huge sculpture representing a weary Herakles resting after one of his many labors (Brilliant 2005:19), was found in the Baths of Caracalla by Alessandro Farnese (1520–1589) in 1546. It became a valuable artwork in the collection of the wealthy Farnese family. It is now in Naples, where it is displayed at the National Archaeological Museum (Haskell and Penny 1981:229).

The sculpture, according to Aldrovandi (1522–1605), was missing both legs and...
both arms at the time of its discovery, and these were created as new restorations by Guglielmo Dalla Porta (circa 1500–1577) on the recommendation of Michelangelo. Dalla Porta also added an apple of the Hesperides to enhance the meaning of the subject and the pose adopted, which is possibly why Winckelmann described Herakles as resting after fetching the apples (Howard 1990:63).

When the original legs were discovered in 1560, the restored legs fabricated by Dalla Porta were surprisingly not removed, both because they were probably much appreciated by contemporaries and because of the influence of Michelangelo, who suggested that the legs made by Dalla Porta be kept “to show that works of modern sculpture can stand comparison with those of the ancient” (Haskell and Penny 1981:230). Thus they could be “a testament to the restorer’s ability” (Howard 1990:65). As had occurred with the Laocoön, the opinions of authorities and masters such as Michelangelo had considerable influence in how restoration was undertaken. The fact that the work of Dalla Porta was considered equal in skillfulness to that of the original artist underlines an important aspect of the approach to authenticity typical of Renaissance restorations. The intention was not the faithful restitution of

Figure 8.6. The Farnese Herakles in the National Archaeological Museum, Naples. The sculpture shows the hero, having performed one of his last labors, getting the golden apples of the Hesperides. It is now displayed with its original legs, which turned up later, rather than with the legs carved by Guglielmo Dalla Porta around 1550, which have been lost. (Image courtesy of www.morrissmithtravels.com)
the sculpture but the aesthetic improvement achievable with the newly completed work, often finished with imaginative additions. The sixteenth-century restorer, with his ability and his status as an artist, was able to modify the work without diminishing the values and meanings associated with it.

Eighteenth-century attitudes did not accord with this view. In 1787 the legs carved by Dalla Porta were removed (Haskell and Penny 1981:230), and the original ones were restored in place by Carlo Albacini (circa 1737–1807). During the eighteenth century, interest had shifted toward a historically and stylistically authentic integration of fragmentary works based on documentary information, an attitude inspired by the philological work of Winckelmann in dating Greco-Roman sculpture. Interestingly, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) commented on this restoration: “One cannot understand why, for years and years, people found the substitute one of Dalla Porta so good” (Haskell and Penny 1981:230). These comments reflect the negative opinion that now prevails regarding the sixteenth-century additions. The Dalla Porta legs actually were lost soon after the restoration, as they were considered “an addition in an outmoded taste” (Howard 1991:210).

There are familiar difficulties with a hypothetical Greek original prototype, whose presumed presence, especially evident in the past, decreases the value of a sculpture, even if the original has been lost or its existence is not proven by any document or other source (Brilliant 2005:21). In the case of the Farnese Herakles, which bore the signature of Glykon, a copyist active in Rome in the early third century C.E., the name of the original author and thus its status as an authentic work of art was overshadowed by the fact that the sculpture could have been a copy of a “lost original“ made by the great Greek sculptor Lysippos, active in the mid-fourth century B.C.E.

There are no surviving works of Lysippos. Thus the existence, the original condition, and the fame over the past century of this alleged prototype was determined only on the phenomenological association of other copies with a coherent iconography. As Brilliant (2005:21) writes: “It would seem that Lysippos’s Herakles has triumphed over Glykon’s Hercules in the agonistic confrontation between a hypothetical Greek original and a Roman copy, as if the true touchstone of aesthetic value were determined by the greater ‘authenticity’ of the alleged original as marking the first entrance of the work and its imagery into the antique sculptural tradition.” The historical importance of replicas is also represented by the fact that they not only instantiate unique remnants of a once rich culture of artistic production but also record the predilections of Roman taste. Thus “the very process of replication, of reproduction, inevitably bore the signs of contemporary fashion, of the requirements of site-specific display and patronage” (Brilliant 2005:21). The new sculpture, recognized as Greek thanks to the fame of the familiar image, became a completely different work of art, not only because it was removed from the original conditions, contexts, and authorship of its first appearance but also because, in the passage from bronze to marble, “new formal solutions were needed, including leg side-props, often in the shape of tree trunks, and supportive arm struts, not required in the original transforming the copy to something aesthetically different as well, since it was no longer governed by the same principles of design that determined the reception of the original” (Brilliant 2005:22).
Restoration and the Renaissance: The Sistine Chapel Frescoes

One of the most famous controversies concerning the authentic appearance of a work of art concerns Michelangelo's frescoes on the Sistine Chapel, which generated heated arguments concerning the secco additions to the buon fresco of the ceiling, the layers of glue additions, and whether these had been added by Michelangelo as part of the artist's intention (Beck and Daley 1996; Colalucci 1987, 1997; Colalucci and Mancinelli 1983; Mancinelli 1986). The removal of the animal glue and other obscuring layers revealed a completely different Michelangelo than that judged as authentic by many art historians prior to the cleaning. The restoration sought to create a more authentic appearance for the frescoes without adding the falsifications of historical-period taste so common in the past, such as naked bottoms and genitals painted over by more prudish generations or, as parts of Leonardo's Last Supper had suffered in the seventeenth century, being completely repainted to accord with the style of the time.

As Brandi says, the restorer must refrain from assuming that he can insert himself into the creative process of the artist, an all-too-common approach to restoration in the past. Once again this involves a dichotomy between the modern conservation philosophy of Salvador Muñoz-Viñas (2009a) and traditional truth-reliant conservation practices. If the stakeholders decided that a Michelangelo needed to be partially covered over with new paint, the postmodern view is that they are perfectly entitled to proceed with this action, since the art object is only viewed by those in the present as a semiotic process; it is authentic because that is what is required of it and that is the condition in which the work of art currently exists, as a repainted Michelangelo.

On the other hand, it might be argued that what Michelangelo actually painted himself is the authentic condition of the painting, not what is now discernible, and in that case all the repaint would be removed in the name of revealing the authentic work of art.

Paul Eggert (2009) discusses in detail the conservation effort undertaken at the Sistine Chapel as representative of the work of a generation of restorers who displayed an “arrogance of its new knowledge of materials-science systematically destroying what it professes to preserve.” He endorses Beck's view (Beck and Daley 1996) that the newly restored ceiling is a “chemical deceit” (Eggert 2009:93–94). These are serious allegations that deserve further debate here.

The relativism of postmodernist philosophies regarding conservation actions is in danger of creating a new divide between the scientific and humanistic approaches to conservation, à la C. P. Snow's two cultures. It is intellectually very fashionable to denigrate science and promote arguments based on a partisan reading of what conservators do, for few conservators have the time to undertake debate in the murky waters of postmodern thought, just as few humanities scholars have any clear conception of the range of activities that modern conservation encompasses.

The Sistine Chapel conservation work is just one example of many in which the cleaning of a work of art alters the viewer's perception of the nature of the original painted surface, creating a cause célèbre and resulting in yet more criticism of the actions of conservators.

The story of the cleaning of the ceiling is long and complex, (Colalucci 1987, 1997; Colalucci and Mancinelli 1983; Mancinelli 1987, 1996), but essentially the accretion of candle soot, dust, and grime, combined with old ill-considered attempts to improve the
surface appearance with glue coatings, created very darkened surfaces, seen on a smaller scale in scores of old panel paintings in Italian churches that were recoated with varnish, subsequently yellowed and darkened, and were recoated again to bring them back to life. These may await future conservation. In the meantime, they are often very hard to discern in the dimly lit interiors of many small Italian churches, as one of the paintings in the collections of the Brancacci Chapel, shown in Figure 8.7 and Figure 8.8, illustrates.

That is perfectly fine: They can await their turn for conservation in the future. Keeping them in this obscured state often does them no harm, but it hardly accords with what the artist painted as much of it cannot be seen clearly, as Figure 8.8 reveals.

Figure 8.7. Painting in the collections of the Brancacci Chapel, adjacent to Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence. Artist undetermined. Oil on canvas. (Photograph by the author)
Plenty of actions will be available to skilled conservators in the future, when the profession has made further advances in terms of the careful cleaning of surfaces. Eggert argues (2009) is that alterations or additions made in secco by Michelangelo would have been removed during cleaning because conservators would have been unaware of them, expecting only buon fresco. This is not the case, however, especially after skilled restorers spent more than a decade of close observation of the fresco from scaffolding specially erected for the task. Italian conservators have revealed original pentimenti by Michelangelo as well as, for example, the fact that Christ’s sword was painted in secco. There is no particular reason why the cleaning techniques would have resulted in the wholesale removal of any secco work. One published painting cross-section reveals a thin layer of dirt above the buon fresco and below subsequent glue layers. The use of such cross-sections is an invaluable scientific aid in determining the stratigraphy of paint layers and the relationships between varnish and dirt, pigment and ground.

Beck (Beck and Daley 1996) argued that the chiaroscuro technique of Michelangelo meant that that artist covered his entire ceiling with a layer of glue after the painting was completed to darken the surfaces in accordance with this art historical interpretation of the authentic appearance of the original. Not only is this quite improbable, but the task would have extraordinarily prolonged the time it took Michelangelo to complete the work on the ceiling. According to Beck, the question is: Did Michelangelo modify and embellish his frescoes after the application of the buon fresco layer with traditional secco media such as size or glue-based painting? Beck claims that supporters of the restoration have overturned centuries of observation in asserting that the darkening of the ceiling is the product of dust and soot.

Beck claims that The Creation of Adam, painted from 1508 to 1512, was in satisfactory condition without cleaning, yet Figure 8.9 and Figure 8.10 raise doubts in terms of its overall appearance.

God’s delicately transparent garment is now heavier, and the highlights have been displaced. Ronald Feldman, a prominent art historian from New York, decided to submit a petition to the Vatican to temporarily stop the cleaning. Feldman persuaded 14 prominent US artists to sign the petition, arguing that restorers were destroying the frescoes by removing layers of chiaroscuro applied by...
Michelangelo (Glueck 1987). His premise was based on detailed photographs before and after the restoration. Concentrating on one particular figure, Feldman compared the musculature and dimensionality of the figure in both photographs and pointed out that there was dramatically less depth and musculature in the restored image than in the pre-restored image (Glueck 1987). Feldman also argued that the brightness that was revealed was not what Michelangelo had intended and that other works by Michelangelo showed that he preferred dark, somber colors. However, the figures in *The Creation of Adam* before cleaning appear fuzzy. There is an odd patch of darker color across the top of God and Adam, and the smaller figures surrounding God are very difficult to see. Has this particular image been ruined by conservation treatment? It is hard to accept the premise that it has been ruined, especially after reading the detailed account provided by Colalucci (1997).

Beck proposed that some of the glue varnish found on the ceiling frescoes was applied by Michelangelo himself to achieve a sculptural effect. Art historians on the Vatican team disagreed, however, and removed all layers of glue found on the ceiling. Another art historian, Alexander Elliot, agreed with Beck and further proposed that the glue applied by Michelangelo was intended as a toning layer, although how one could distinguish between later layers of glue and an original not seen for hundreds of years is difficult to comprehend. Beck argued that the chiaroscuro much admired over the centuries was not due to oil and glue restorations but was part of Michelangelo’s original art.

Others argued that the glue layers obscured the fresco, and so the argument went around in its circular course. Art historian Nicholas Penny of the National Gallery, London, wrote in 1991 of the emergence of the new Michelangelo as one of the great revelations of our time. The transformation, he
claimed, was so absolutely amazing that it was bound to give people a shock.

Absent from Beck’s argument is the problem of the accretion of numerous prior restorations, dirt, grime, and soot over the centuries since the art was painted. He seems to ignore this aspect and is instead fixated on the origin of the glue layers. In general glue is not used in fresco work, especially on a ceiling, unless brushed over an original to hide defects, which would not have been necessary in this case.

Here some of our arguments can be invoked from the scientific examination of the paint cross-sections referred to above, which shows a thin layer of dirt under the glue layer. This dirt layer must have accumulated over time before it became necessary to brighten the appearance using a thin wash of glue over the surfaces. Another cross-section shows the original fresco covered with restoration work of the 1560s and 1570s, and this stratigraphy does not reveal a glue layer between the original fresco and the restoration, showing that glue was not applied at the time Michelangelo painted the work (Caple 2000:102). Crucially, this scientific evidence shows that the authentic appearance of the ceiling is not that of a darkened glue-encrusted surface but a brightly colored one, very similar in tonality to the panel painting by Michelangelo in the Uffizi. The evidence also suggests that the glue layer was applied after the restorations carried out in the sixteenth century. Indeed, one of the essential jobs of scientific examination is to analyze the microstratigraphy of the layers of ground and paint, by which means the technique, intentions, or modifications of the artist can be interrogated as an essential component of the work’s biography.

Thin washes of color were applied in fresco by Michelangelo, utilizing the sfumato technique advocated by Leonard da Vinci, with the brush held fanwise, which has helped the survival of the ceiling, since thick applications of pigment may well have resulted in still greater delamination of the surface.
because thick applications of paint tend to block the pores in lime plaster, rendering the transfer of moisture between interior and exterior surfaces much more difficult and therefore encouraging delamination over time.

Instead of repeating the application of further coatings of glue and vinegar, conservators chose to fully document the existing ceiling, to make sure that all concerned stakeholders were included in discussions as to which procedures to follow, and to conduct the cleaning of the dirt and grime with the least interference to any remaining pigment ed surfaces.

In discussion of the National Gallery cleaning controversy of the 1960s, even Ernst Gombrich, a critic of the National Gallery restoration policy at that time, noted, “Of course, when a varnish goes blind it has to be removed.” This is a common theme running through the conservation treatment of the great majority of Old Master works of art; they have been varnished, relined, cleaned, badly restored, varnished, and revarnished again and are now often illegible. Eggert (2009:122) castigates the restorers as “destroying what they profess to preserve.” Here lies the condemnation of the modern approach to the conservation of paintings in general, because materials science has presumably blinded restorers with an arrogance that allows them to ride roughshod over every ethical argument concerned with the practice of their craft. Eggert’s statement that

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

**Figure 8.11.** The creation scene on the Sistine Chapel ceiling after conservation in 1990. The brighter colors have not been well received by some art historians. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; in the public domain)
Michelangelo’s work is being destroyed by restorers who profess to be helping preserve what Michelangelo created is completely unsubstantiated.

In describing the restoration as a chemical deceit, Beck suggests that the restorers have created an inauthentic state by means of their chemical interactions with Michelangelo’s work. The term *chemical deceit* suggests a deliberate intent to deceive us with chemical reagents to produce an inauthentic appearance.

How has deceit been part of the chemical activity undertaken during the cleaning of Michelangelo’s frescoes? The deceit could be examined from various perspectives. Were the conservators deceitful about the chemicals used? How much local consolidation of the surface was required? Eggert puts forward no evidence to explain what is meant by a chemical deceit, but let us go through the possibilities one by one. The nature of the chemical substances used by the conservators was fully described, and the chemicals were made according to tested formulas used previously in Italy for the cleaning of frescoes in various locations. The aim of this cleaning was to remove as much grime and dirt as possible with the least possible effect on the painted surfaces. Cleaning per se is not an exact science. It is a matter of judgment and training. The best that conservators can do is to make choices about what to employ, evaluate the results of different cleaning operations, and decide which chemicals are safest to use on the artwork concerned. The scientific method as a guide to what cleaning agents to use represents an advance over the entirely subjective approach to cleaning a century ago, when conservation was just a craft activity.

In this case, the knowledge and skill of the restorers had been honed by years of training. Even the wash water from the cleaning process was saved and analyzed to see if any pigment had been removed along with the dirt, but none was found. The effects of the chemical cleaning agent on the surfaces of the fresco were fully recorded by a Japanese television team and by numerous photographs and field notes as part of the conservation documentation, which is now an essential act of conservation in its own right. Parts of the fresco required reattachment to the ceiling using adhesives that allow for retreatment of the affected areas at a later time should this become necessary. There is no deceit in following this practice.

One of the philosophical strengths of the scientific method, which is emphasized by Popper (1971), is that it acts to correct the mistakes or assumptions made by practitioners in the past but using new hypotheses, new cleaning methods, and new ways to evaluate the consequences. The materials science approach, which is now part of the essential training of painting conservators, reformulates methods and techniques based on a reassessment of what was used in the past and what effect it had on the work of art under treatment, moving forward with further refinements or alterations of how chemical or mechanical cleaning may be performed in the future.

This is the fundamental strength of the scientific method. Numerous scientific advances have been made in the aid of art historical research into how artists made their work and the attribution of those works. The artwork is not just what an observer can see but what can be determined from a thorough investigation of the materials of the work of art; how they age, degrade, alter in color, interact with binders, and retain patches of original glazes; and why paint delaminates.
One could argue that this is a semiotic process in itself, a mediated interaction between patina, pigment, degradation, the current appearance of an artwork and the ways in which these influence the conservator's evaluation of its condition. The problem with postmodern concepts of the mediated nature of knowledge is their deleterious impact on the empirical desire to know and understand the materials that constitute the materiality of art objects. Postmodern theory regards this desire as a fundamentally mistaken concept, because the Kantian separation of object and subject cannot be sustained in postmodernist critical theories of art. However, the nature of the materials of art has been a central concern of conservation and restoration for centuries. Objectivity concerning what can be known about the physical and chemical structure of an artwork becomes enmeshed in modern doubts about the separation of object and subject and the effect that observation of the art object has on the way the subject may come to regard the art, so that the interaction can never be dissociated. Even if that is the case, the underlying substructure of the work of art and its technical investigation cannot be ignored and dismissed philosophically as a simplistic event, which is the impression given by writers such as Eggert, who provide no technical analysis of semiotic events of this kind.

The large umbrella under which conservation operates may be an area of doubt, debate, and contextual problems in relation to how to approach the treatment of a complex object. But if the consequences of conservation investigation and what they mean in a particular case are examined, crucial information concerning an artwork can be provided or made manifest. The fact that blue wings of angels, painted in azurite in a trecento Renaissance painting on panel, have degraded to a greenish black over hundreds of years will affect the art historical interpretation of the purpose and character of the angels themselves. The art historian may develop fundamentally and empirically wrong theories resulting from the mediated interaction between observer and painting because the diachronic material degradation of the artwork has created an appearance entirely misleading to critical interpretation.

The authenticity of the interaction with the artwork is now negated by the chemical change from blue to black unless one has an epistemological understanding of the chemical alterations that have occurred. Here the chemical interactions of the artwork itself have deceived us regarding the original intention of the artist. In this case, the black wings will not be repainted as blue. Nor will there be an attempt to reverse the black back to the azurite blue color. The conservation documentation of what the appearance once was is enough to establish the authentic color. Repainting the wings of the angels cannot be justified, as this would again place the restorer in the same location as a surrogate for the original artist.

Just a year before he began work on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, Michelangelo painted, in tempera and oil, his Tondo Doni of 1506–1507, which is in the Uffizi in Florence. It is a holy family scene in which strong and bright whites, blues, greens, and yellows are seen. They are now remarkably similar in hue to the colors seen on the cleaned ceiling. Although the panel painting is in a different medium, namely tempera compared with fresco, there is really no great difference between painting in tempera and in the secco used on the ceiling and some other places. In tempera, paint is also applied to a set surface. The fact that the colors here are so similar in tonality and
hue suggests that the conservators did not create a chemical deceit; they revealed more of Michelangelo's visual intention than had been seen for hundreds of years.

Further evidence of the original appearance of the fresco is revealed in comments by Woods-Marsden (personal communication 2014), who writes: “The reason why it was impossible to take Beck et al seriously lies in the subsequent history of art, and the enormous influence that Michelangelo's colors there and elsewhere had on the work of the next generation, Pontormo and Rosso, which would have been impossible had Michelangelo covered his bright hues with dark glazes, which is not the way you paint a fresco anyway.”

If the conservator is defined as undertaking an action that is “authentic to aims and materials,” then the current state of the Sistine Chapel is more authentic to the original conception of the artist than the grimy and discolored surface that existed before the current conservation campaign. Even the implied criticism of potential removal of the paint layer itself is repeated by anthropologists without any evaluation of the context. For example, Holtorf (2013) quotes from an interview recorded by Fallon with the Irish artist William Crozier (1930–2011), who stated, “What they have taken away is the age of the paint.” Holtorf (2013) utilizes this accusation of the removal of age to vindicate his view that the pastness of the work has been damaged because the age of the paint has been compromised. In terms of the materiality of the work, the restorers were very aware of any potential criticisms arising from inadvertent or deliberate removal of original fresco pigmentation or even secco additions. In fact, in terms of pastness or respect for the essential nature of the original and the historical processes the painted layer itself has undergone, the conservator's determination that no pigment was removed in the cleaning process essentially refutes Crozier's point. The last thing to be taken away in any cleaning process of this ceiling is the painted surface, but that does not mean the painted surface has not aged both chemically and physically. It may have altered in ways that are visually imperceptible to us even if they are theoretically chemically determinable (Colalucci 1986; Pietrangeli 1994). Because the pigment particles are trapped in the fresco technique by carbonation of the fresco layer, there are bound to be diachronic interactions that cannot be reversed by a very careful cleaning strategy; the fresco painting preserves some of the subtle interactions between paint, media, and the viewer in assessing how the ceiling now appears. Bomford (2003:12) makes a salient point regarding the intercession of conservators as arbiters of an evolving narrative structure:

The narrative continues with cumulative events in the subsequent history of the work—aging, deterioration, accident, repair, intervention, adaptation, reinterpretation—positive and negative events. . . . The conservator as practitioner then has to decide which elements of these histories of creation and survival are most important: which aspects of the historical object must be maintained and kept visible, and which may be, for the time being, concealed. The conservator as narrator inevitably both interprets and intervenes in the narrative. The difference between attitudes of today and those of fifty years ago is that there is now much greater acceptance of visible aging—a more benign view of the past and a less active role for the present.
Holtorf (2013) sees the anthropological question as a dichotomy between materialist and constructivist approaches to the past, a dichotomy that has affected appreciation of issues of materiality regarding artifacts. Holtorf (2013) states that what is needed is a cultural concept of authenticity that can be linked to the materiality of a specific object while also avoiding assumptions about qualities that are inherent in the object. Authentic archaeological objects, writes Holtorf, are those that can be defined as possessing pastness. So are the assumptions concerning the qualities of the frescoes on the Sistine Chapel justified? That would depend on which qualities are required to be specified. Here the most pertinent are how well the fresco is adhered to the intonaco and the arriccio. How stable are the layers on the ceiling? One might want to know about aqueous qualities—how wet or dry the ceiling is. That could affect how the restoration work is carried out and even if the work can be carried out. How much paint has already been lost from the ceiling? What qualities would be appropriate or desired from a visual reintegration of parts of the image? Respecting the historical and aesthetic authenticity of the work, quality will be retained by completing the missing parts in watercolor using tratteggio, not completely solid pigmented areas that cannot be visually discerned from the decayed original. In that sense a visible reintegration could be regarded as a constructivist approach to a question of materialist concern (Colalucci 1987; Colalucci and Mancinelli 1983). Bomford’s 2009 assertion of the historical importance of the cumulative narrative of the work incorporates the three principal strands of authenticity proposed in this book: the historical, material, and conceptual. Pastness is not a panacea for the complexity of dealing with artifacts of the past. For example, the materiality of a specific object may be irrelevant in the case of objects or monuments ritually rebuilt every 50 years. There is no link to the materiality of the original, but in terms of conceptual or intangible authenticity, there is no problem with the event and the actions taken. The Nara Document, which discusses concerns regarding the conceptual aspects of authenticity at length, appears to be overlooked by anthropologists, but it could usefully be integrated into the debate concerning constructivist views of authenticity.

Some restorations have been made with the application of animal glue and other modifications to the buon fresco surface. In connection with the black shadowing of several figures, Colalucci (1997:199) writes:

The debate over the cleaning took as its point of departure the removal of the black shadows around the figures which had given them their sense of plastic relief, although in a monochromatic key. Some considered them authentic, because they seemed to respond to the sculptor’s sensibility. . . . These black shadows were added by past restorers in order to restore the modeling of the figures and to accentuate a chiaroscuro effect where they had faded beneath an accumulation of foreign material or had been flattened by timid and summary cleanings.

Questions regarding the restoration can still be debated, however. For example, scores of bottoms and genitals originally shown naked by Michelangelo have been covered up at various times due to the prudish view of many observers that these were unacceptable to the viewing public and had to be hidden.
Leonardo da Vinci and the Restoration of *The Last Supper*

Works of art completed by the innovative use of unsuitable materials bring with them problems of inherent vice. This is especially true of those that are not allowed to die a natural death and must be restored continuously for both present and future use. A prime example of a contested relationship between a work and the various instantiations it has represented over time is *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci, measuring 460 x 880 cm, “painted” on a wall at Santa Maria delle Grazie, a Dominican monastery in Milan, between 1482 and 1499. Its material authenticity was compromised at birth. The intonaco was covered with a fine layer of plaster containing an oil, which was then primed with a lead white layer. Leonardo then experimented by obscuring layers of paint. Should all these overpaintings be removed to better judge what Michelangelo painted himself? If the artist’s intention is invoked here, how could we not? Genitalia regarded as objectionable were overpainted after the death of Michelangelo by the Mannerist artist Daniele da Volterra (1509–1566), who thereafter was referred to as the “pants painter,” much to his chagrin.

The Council of Trent (1545–1563) concluded that 11 such depictions of genitals had to be covered over with paint to conceal them. In succeeding centuries, another 43 were painted over. The Italian restorers in the 1990s had to decide whether to keep these overpaintings in situ or whether they should be removed. The decision was reached to remove all restorations that postdated those ordered by the Council of Trent in 1563 and to keep those that the council had ordered because they were the only documented and historically verifiable interferences with the original frescoes. Do documented restorations that disguise original painting trump the artistic intention of the artist in the name of a historically definable veracity? One could have differing views regarding the justification for leaving the documented overpaintings in situ or the historical authenticity of leaving all the overpaintings as successively representative of the changing taste in contemplating nude flesh. However, it is not just overpaintings that have afflicted the original materiality of the work but pronouncements of the Council of Trent concerning the figures of Saint Catherine and Saint Blaise, which were described as “indecent nudes” and “a thousand heresies” (Colalucci 1997:194). Consequently, these figures were destroyed and were replaced by new fresco work by Daniele da Volterra. It is not quite accurate that all later restorations covering genitalia were removed. Colalucci (1997:197) remarks that some of the later repaintings were retained as documentation of later interventions, although he does not specify which ones. A pertinent question is why only 11 genitals and bottoms were ordered to be painted over by the Council of Trent. Why were these particularly censored while the rest were allowed to remain before those too were covered over in later centuries? We do not know the answer to this question, but it would be interesting to see via infrared reflectography what the objectionable parts that Michelangelo actually painted look like and to understand the entire discourse related to the partial restoration undertaken on the artwork. The intention of the artist may be seen as ahistorical, but the reality is that here it has been overridden by the historical imperative of retention of restorations that have nothing to do with Michelangelo’s intentions as an artist.

Leonardo da Vinci and the Restoration of *The Last Supper*

Colalucci (1997:197)
with a *tempera grassa* binder for his paints. *Tempera grassa* is egg tempera to which a certain amount of oil is added, no more than 1:1, possibly with water additions. The oil prolongs the working time of the tempera, although the paint can usually be applied only in thin layers and tends to undergo differential drying phenomena. Hence the work was neither created in *buon fresco*, as would have been customary, or in oils, which is what restorers before Luigi Cavenaghi believed was the case (Barcilon and Marani 2001).

With Leonardo painting in fits and starts, the project dragged on to the point where the monks threatened to lock him in until the work was finished. Legend has it that Leonardo retaliated by painting the abbot as the image of Judas. Visitors had already begun to notice that the admired masterpiece was in an actively decaying condition by 1517. In 1642 Scannelli noted that only confused vestiges of the figures remained (Scannelli 1657, quoted in Kemp 1990). The saga of endless restorations began in the eighteenth century, as the painting was still deteriorating markedly. In 1726 Michelangelo Bellotti (1691–1744) cleaned the work with caustic solvents and covered it with layers of oil and varnish. In 1770 Giuseppe Mazza removed the layers added by Bellotti and repainted much of the work in oils, which created a great deal of critical comment at the time. In 1853 Stefano Barelli, in one of the most alarming interventions, tried to detach the painting entirely from the wall. He failed and sought to consolidate the painting by gluing paint fragments back on the base. In 1903 Cavenaghi began a large-scale campaign of photographic documentation and established that the work was in tempera, not oil as previously supposed. From 1906 to 1908, Cavenaghi cleaned the surface and retouched missing areas of the original, leaving many earlier repaintings intact. In 1924 Oreste Silvestri removed further grime (Barcilon and Marani 2001).

In 1943 a British bomb destroyed the refectory in which the masterpiece had been painted, but the north wall, together with the mural, survived. From 1947 to 1949, Mauro Pelliccioli gave the painting another cleaning and eliminated the mildew covering part of the surface. He fixed the paint with shellac rather than glue, which would make subsequent restoration even harder. In 1979 Pinin Brambilla Barcilon began restoration work, which was to last for 20 years, under the auspices of Milan’s Superintendent for Artistic and Historic Heritage (Barcilon and Marani 2001). Barcilon’s primary task was to prevent further deterioration. Chemical analysis suggested that the overpainting, which remained in situ, was potentially damaging the remaining fragments of the original by delamination, taking original paint with it. One consequence of this discovery was the decision to remove everything that had been added after Leonardo finished the painting in 1498.

The restoration therefore demanded accuracy at the micron level and attention to the smallest details. A detailed examination showed that mold, glue, repaint, and atmospheric pollutants had badly affected the painting, while infrared reflectography enabled restorers to examine the artist’s original work under the layers of overpaint. Small-diameter coring surveys were also performed. Samples taken from the corings were analyzed to provide information on the colors and materials utilized by Leonardo. Miniature TV cameras inserted in the boreholes provided information on the cracks and cavities. Sonar and radar surveys provided information about the elastic and structural characteristics of the masonry and the base the painting resides on.
Using such technologically advanced analysis and employing the careful use of solvents, which enabled the removal of multiple layers, Barcilon faced an extremely slow and meticulous process. Often, only an area the size of a postage stamp was cleaned each day.

Once referring to The Last Supper as a sick patient, Barcilon proclaimed that she and her colleagues were able to give back “the expressive and chromatic intensity that we thought was lost forever.” Besides letting the original colors come through, she added basic color to blank areas, which in theory cannot be confused by the viewer with the original color. In certain areas, blank patches were left and were not retouched (Barcilon and Marani 2001).

Leonardo’s Last Supper was reopened to the public in May 1999. The painting is now preserved by a sophisticated air filtration system, a relative-humidity-monitored environment, and dust-filtering chambers. If one wishes to observe the work, the usual baleful restrictions apply: Visitors must make reservations in advance and groups are limited to 25 people for viewing times of only 15 minutes.

The most recent restoration, which took more than five times as long as Leonardo’s execution of the painting, has been trumpeted by many but also condemned by some in the art world. According to some critics, what is left is 30 percent Leonardo and 70 percent Barcilon. James Beck calls it 18 to 20 percent Leonardo and 80 percent Barcilon. Martin Kemp, a more mainstream critic than Beck, was also unhappy with the result, or at least the philosophical position taken by the restorer as regards the cleaning and removal of old repaintings. Kemp (1990) writes that the campaign of restoration involved a rigorous stripping of the mural to what were considered to be the remaining authentic fragments of Leonardo’s original paint and that this represents the most radically archaeological approach of the many attempts at restoration of the work. Kemp (1990) states:

Figure 8.12. The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci, late 1490s. Tempera on gesso with pitch and mastic; 460 x 800 cm. The mural, in Milan, was subject to a restoration controversy. (Image in the public domain)
This campaign raises, in the sharpest manner, questions about the assumptions, aesthetic and scientific, which underpin present practices, and their status with respect to previous approaches. It is argued that present techniques, for all their gloss of scientific objectivity, are based upon a questionable series of values and presumptions about works of art and how one looks at works of art. In this respect, it is suggested that the recent campaign is no less rooted in the values of the period than the past campaigns which are now so brusquely dismissed. It is argued that the aesthetic, perceptual, scientific, and institutional bases for the procedures need more rigorous scrutiny.

As far as the authentic original is concerned, Kemp worries about the difficulty of determining which pigments are truly original and the irreversible physical change in some of the materials and asks if the notion of recovering and retaining only that which is by Leonardo’s own hand is identical to reinstatement of the “real” Leonardo? How far can recovery of the fragmentary original be identified congruent with a respect for the artist’s intentions, if such intentions are reconstructable at all? Are we aiming, Kemp asks, to recapture the authentic experience of the original? Is there such a thing as an “authentic experience” to be reconstructed, in terms of either viewing The Last Supper in 1498 or the circumstances of the present-day spectator?

Kemp (1990:20) suggests using information contained in extant copies of The Last Supper to “the extent of a judicious but detectable infilling of general masses to tie the picture together.” Kemp basically objects to the fragmentary nature of the surviving end product of the conservation treatment and states that he would not have been inclined to strip the heads of Christ and the disciples down to “bare vacuous silhouettes.”

The first observation is that the material authenticity of the original is so badly degraded that very little of it remains; the authentic experience of perception of the original cannot be regained through conservation. The choice to be made depends on the extent to which the various campaigns of overpaint are valued as desirable aesthetic states in themselves. If, as Steinberg (2001:227) intimates, some of the campaigns of overpaint were influenced by erroneous copies, that defeats the argument that copies could be used to create a more sympathetic pastiche of Leonardo’s remnants with skillful overpaint. Besides, this approach could hardly be said to respect the intentions of Leonardo when changes to suit the taste of the time were made by artists who copied the original and other artists who repainted the original work itself. In this connection, Brandi’s stricture that the restorer cannot insert himself or herself into the mode of production of the artist and must refrain from any conjectural restorations is a sound philosophical principle, not considered in Kemp’s argument. No responsible restorer would be able to create a more authentic work by this kind of surrogacy. From the published pictures following Barcilon’s restoration, it appears that the restorer completed certain outlines of the work—for example, extending the outlines of fingers that the original remnants suggested but that were too decayed to visually complete; these have been inpainted in watercolor to allow for later removal should that become necessary or desirable.

There is no doubt that the physical, chemical, and biological degradation of the original work was so extreme in this particular case that there were really only two viable options
available regarding the restoration: Either leave the painting as it was, in a physical state from 1978, with attempts to adhere the decayed work to its support, or try to remove the various layers of overpaint and stabilize what was left.

The assertion of the restorer that the later overpaints were delaminating, taking the original with them, would seem to eliminate the possibility of leaving the work as it was, since its preservation into the future could not be guaranteed. In many cases, the removal of all old repaintings might be seen as compromising the historical and aesthetic authenticity of the work, but in the case of The Last Supper, the material degradation it has undergone overrides the historical concerns in a return, as far as possible, to the material authenticity of the original. It is not really a philosophical argument over the state of the patient; it is a matter of survival. However, in the process, the historical authenticity of the work has been lost, and this represents the restorative dilemma. What remains after the derestorations and rerestoration is a decayed work that has lost its aesthetic nature, according to critics such as Kemp. Only in the extensive documentation does a history of its altered states reside. The question is, what is more valued here: the fragmentary remains of Leonardo's faded masterpiece or the numerous readaptations that artist-restorers such as Mazza created? In ignoring the Brandian stricture that time is not reversible and that history cannot be abolished, has the restorer valorized the material authenticity at the expense of the historical/aesthetic authenticity of the work?

Because of the different approaches and meanings attached to the various instantiations of the work over the past 500 years, a compromise solution, as far as the art historian or general viewer is concerned, would be to respect the historical authenticity of the work by displaying a perfect replica of The Last Supper in its state in 1978, before the recent 20-year restoration, adjacent to the 1999 version of the work with overpaintings removed. As the example of the Laocoön illustrates, exhibition of the two instantiations would allow the authenticity of condition to be seen and allow aesthetic alterations over time to still be available for public view. Because the contested state of The Last Supper represents an extreme end of the spectrum of the work-being of the object and its various interpretations, the ability to contemplate both the original remnants with watercolor restorations and the historical document of its preconserved state with numerous oil, glue, and shellac restorations still in place would allow the material authenticity and the historical authenticity to be seen together in their materiality.

It is not quite true that the only surviving material would be documentation of the various instantiations of The Last Supper if the original were to completely decay. Steinberg (2001:227–253), notes that by 1810, Giuseppe Bossi (1777–1815) recorded the existence of 26 copies, including Bossi’s own full-scale “reconstruction,” which was owned by the viceroy of Italy and destroyed by German bombing in World War II. The fate of some of the copies has been dire. One by Antonio da Gessate of 1506, a detached fresco from the Ospedale Maggiore, Milan, described in 1810, was subsequently covered over with whitewash, revealed again in 1890, and displayed in the refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie until 1915. It was completely destroyed by British bombing in 1943. Some of the copies of the masterpiece were copied from other copies rather than from the original work. These copies were then employed...
as inauthentic points of reference for erroneous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century attempts at restoration of the original.

Steinberg (2001:228) writes that some of these copies perished in World War II; others donned new attributions or were identical to other copies long since translocated. By the 1970s, when Steinberg was trying to untie the Gordian knot of where and how many of these copies still existed, there was little interest in them anymore. Few were displayed except in unvisited sacristies, and those owned by museums such as the Louvre or the Royal Academy in London were in a state of neglect and deterioration. The copy in the Soprintendenza, Milan, had blistering and delaminating paint; the one in the Royal Academy was mysteriously cut down and put on semipermanent loan to Magdalen College, Oxford. By the time Steinberg was able to reassess the number of copies in the 1970s, the list had theoretically grown to about 43, although many were in appalling condition or had been destroyed. The fate of these copies or versions is a reflection of the aesthetic demotion of copies as unworthy of any appreciation in and of themselves—a historical affliction particularly prevalent from 1890 to 1970. As seen from the perspective of 2016, renewed interest in copies and the historical tradition they represent has resurrected them from obscurity to become part of a narrative on changing taste and cultural norms. The Last Supper with reinvented settings (by Giovan Pietro da Cemmo in 1507); free adaptations (by Tommaso Aleni in 1508); critical improvements in architectural detail and the position of limbs, with substantive haloes added (by an unknown individual in the early sixteenth century); immense broadening of Christ’s shoulders (by Fra Girolamo Bonsignori in 1513); and so on offer reflections on artistic practice, aesthetic taste, documentary sources, Christian ethics, and the cultural milieu prevalent at the time. The fact that the copies have undergone their own historical demise and degradation will paradoxically result in their reevaluation in years to come as valued creations in their own right. The twenty-first century will be the century of reevaluation of copies and replicas. In many ways, it has already become so.

Restorations and the Identity of Paintings

Changing taste, fashion, cultural norms, and religious dogmas resulted in many panel paintings of the Renaissance or medieval period being overpainted, repainted, altered in meaning, cut down in size, forgotten, censored, or destroyed. A prominent text concerning Renaissance practice is that of Conti, which has been translated by Helen Glanville (Conti 2007). It distinguishes between three variations on restoration of paintings: restoration as conservation—that is, abstention from action that would result in any change or employing an archaeological approach that respects all traces of original material; aesthetic restoration, or employing invisible retouching and completion of the image by analogy to other known works by the artist; and visible restoration, which is in harmony with the original yet leaves the restorations clearly visible. Restoration as conservation is defined as undertaking the structural stabilization of the work but not integrating the image with retouching or inpainting. This approach, a sine qua non as regards material authenticity, was championed by Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle (1819–1897) in the nineteenth century (Glanville 2007) and continued into the twentieth century. These three criteria interact with approaches regarding cleaning—namely, complete cleaning, selective cleaning, or partial cleaning. In
Restorations and the Identity of Paintings

**complete cleaning**, the aim is to remove all discolored coatings on the surface of the work in an attempt to return it to an assumed original state or appearance. In **selective cleaning**, areas or sections of the work are treated differently depending on evidence for retention of original varnishes, heavily degraded pigments, fragile binders, and so on, so that only some areas are cleaned. In **partial cleaning**, some of the patina resulting from interactions of the original material with its environment is kept in place. Cleaning in general terms has already been discussed in chapter 1.

This simplification is a useful categorization in cases where motives are invoked in isolation from individual works of art, which are then treated as a group phenomenon rather than as objects needing specifically tailored attention. For example, Seymour (1970) undertook total cleaning on fourteenth- and fifteenth-century panel paintings in the Yale University collections in the belief that the artwork would be left as a “fragment in its authentic state” (Seymour 1970:7) and that this authentic state was more instructive than a repainted image carried out in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. In fact, the total cleaning removed not only all nineteenth-century overpaint but also some of the original glazes, decayed pigment, binder, and varnish, leaving the paintings in a practically undisplayable condition in the name of a spurious authenticity of condition. This is not to say that total cleaning would necessarily result in a less authentic condition than that the artwork currently displays. For example, a Raphael on display in a grand house in Northumberland, thought to be a copy, was covered with very dirty varnish, so that features of the artwork were barely visible. When the painting was cleaned at the National Gallery, with the old varnish removed, the picture could be reassessed properly, at which point everyone agreed that it was not a copy of a Raphael but the lost original.

The complexity of dealing with the restoration of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century panel paintings cannot be undertaken by professors of art history but must be left to

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**Figure 8.13.** Varieties of approaches to the restoration of Renaissance works of art. (Diagram by the author after Conti 2007)
those properly trained in the art and science of picture restoration. Apart from a misguided philosophical conception, this is essentially what went wrong with the treatment of the paintings at Yale. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century panel paintings have to be restored with great care due to the extensive degradation they have undergone. They cannot be stripped back to represent the condition they would have presented in 1430 because of the alterations time itself has inflicted on them, even disregarding the problems created by later overpainting and retouching.

**Aesthetic Restoration**

Conserving wall paintings or frescoes by structurally stabilizing them and leaving missing areas blank, as seen in restoration work carried out by Italian restorers working for the Getty Conservation Institute's project in the Tomb of Queen Nefertari in Egypt, respects the archaeological veracity of the fragmentary images. Even here there may be problems with the concept of nonintervention on original images. For example, old restorations on the celestial cows in the tomb were not removed. The approach taken was that documentation will preserve knowledge of the earlier intervention, even if this is not obvious, or even explained, to the visitor to the tomb.

Material authenticity (McDonald 1996) of vestigial remains is of paramount importance in the sense of adhering to a philosophy of scientific empiricism, but it may be overridden by intangible concerns regarding meaning or context.

In aesthetic restoration, the aim is to produce an imagined authentic past that is re-created by the restorer in the present. The damages and aging inflicted on the work by time are erased, or rather masked, by the restorer's brush. As Conti says concerning the famous Italian restorer Pietro Edwards (1744–1821): “If the frame of reference for the restorer in his approach to the restoration of the work of art is the cultural context and taste of his own time rather than that of the artist himself, then the restoration will be a reflection of this . . . updating to new visual demands and because the frames of reference change with passing taste and generations” (Conti 2007:190–216).

Glanville (2007:xxii) invokes Heisenberg's “uncertainty principle” here. As an analogy of the “act of concentrating on the particle-like properties of a quantum entity (in this instance the painting), we gain a good sense of the isolated part at the expense of the whole; if we focus on the wave-like qualities we have a sense of the whole but lose our ability to focus on the part or the particular.” This is a strange way to interpret the uncertainty principle, which states that the more precisely the position of a particle is determined, the less precisely can its momentum be known and vice versa. The analogy with a painting that is undergoing an act of restoration is an eccentric way of examining the problem. Knowing where restorations are to be undertaken but being incapable of understanding the image as a whole, or understanding the entire picture but being unable to successfully integrate retouchings to harmonize with the entire painting is how Glanville utilizes the uncertainty principle. Ethical and unethical approaches to the aesthetic integration of the image are more fundamental here. Chapter 1 gives an example of a painting by van der Weyden of which only about 25 percent was left, the remaining 75 percent being aesthetically restored—in this case invented by the restorer and art forger Jef van der Veken. If a viewer cannot distinguish visually between what has been restored and the vestigial original, is that tantamount to art forgery?
In general, the consensus is yes, and the division between ethical restoration and unethical restoration is a moving target, depending on cultural norms, museum practice, curatorial preferences, how the past is evaluated, and public opinion prevailing at the time. Even in the same institution, approaches to restoration can vary over chronologies as short as 20 years, resulting in very different decisions being made as to how an artwork should look. In the commercial art market, if a Renaissance portrait is complete but has a missing upraised arm, the position of the arm will be invented by the restorer to complete an aesthetic image, with the monetary value of the work at auction being greatly enhanced.

For these reasons, restorers now complete artworks in a media that can be distinguished from the original under ultraviolet light (most of the time). This is why tratteggio, a concept introduced in chapter 1, is a clearly delineated choice in restoration practice to eliminate these ethical difficulties. This is part of the concept of the third approach to restoration, visible restoration, which in some cases might be comparable to the conservator’s compensation for loss.

Gestalt psychology maintained that completion of the expected image by the observer would ensure that neutral areas of fill or inpainting would recede in the viewer’s perception so that the artwork could be completed by the mind and contemplated as a whole, rather than the fills being seen as obtrusive or becoming more visible in perceptual terms than the art object itself. With some artworks, such as Giotto’s (circa 1266–1337) frescoes in Padua, the utilization of tratteggio is very successful in completing images without the appearance of blank areas of fill, deceptive restorations, or nonconformance with a Gestalt, but not all artworks can benefit from this approach. One could argue that the image in Figure 8.14 would benefit aesthetically from a visible restoration rather than restoration as conservation, since filling in the missing parts of the face with neutral tones creates a visually disturbing image.

Figure 8.14. Restored wall painting from the Tomb of Queen Nefertari, completed by the Getty Conservation Institute at a total cost of $11 million. The purist adherence to restoration as conservation by the Italian conservators is perfectly understandable but creates a disturbing image of the masterful painting, since the face of Osiris is hard to differentiate from the background. (Image courtesy of the Getty Conservation Institute; rephotographed by the author)
Glanville (2007) states that the use of invisible retouching media, for example, imposes on a work of art the viewpoint of one observer and that by eliminating individual evaluation, the use of ready-made solutions carried out on behalf of the individual limits his or her choices, analogous to restrictions of political missives of a nanny-state society. This likens restoration and its evaluation to a paternalistic government, an analogy which the author does not agree with.

Does the use of invisible retouching media impose on a work of art the viewpoint of one observer? First of all, retouching performed by a professionally trained paintings conservator in the twenty-first century is removable retouching. In the best case scenario, it does not invent but visually completes missing gaps in the image. If the various stakeholders do not like how the retouching has altered the perceptible properties of the painting, the retouching can be removed and substituted with a different version. It is the theoretically reversible nature of such retouchings that accords with the ethical principles of modern conservation norms; the viewpoint of one observer can always be changed in the future. Secondly, the aesthetic ability to react to a completed image of a face in which the retouching cannot be visually discerned is very different from reacting to a visibly retouched face, where one’s attention is all too often drawn to the area of retouching, marveling at the skill of the restorer; mentally criticizing the choice of color, hue, tone, or line; or becoming distracted by contemplation of the extent of damage and its historical causes rather than giving due attention to the work of art itself. It is better if changes brought about by retouching are perceptible by using special lighting equipment rather than detecting the retouching by eye under ambient viewing conditions. The old 6-inch/6-foot rule for the retouching of broken pottery could be used. This means that the repainting is not visible from 6 feet away but is visible from 6 inches. But this rule is less successful for paintings, since observers are often only 12 to 15 inches away from the surface of the work.

Visible restoration has become less popular over the past 50 years, perhaps spurred by the huge increase in museum visitors in that time. They might prefer to see aesthetically pleasing works skillfully restored rather than incomplete images lauded by the conservation elite for their ethical purity, but the desire for aesthetic reintegration may go too far for some tastes. Refraining from using the same pigments and binding media as the original artist is a sine qua non of modern restoration practice. But even if restorations cannot be visually distinguished from originals, they can be detected by the use of infrared or ultraviolet illumination.

**The Restoration of Titian’s Bacchus and Ariadne**

Numerous cleaning controversies have afflicted this painting in the National Gallery, London—stretching back to the 1850s and most recently in the 1960s when the painting was cleaned again. According to Glanville (2009), the invisible retouching of every loss has created a kind of fictional state for this picture and the scientifically rigorous cleaning it has undergone has dramatically shifted its color balance. The painting is one of a famous series by Bellini (circa 1430–1516), Titian (?–1576), and the Ferrarese artist Dosso Dossi commissioned for the Camerino d’Alabastro (1490–1542) (Alabaster Room) in the Ducal Palace, Ferrara, by Alfonso d’Este, duke of Ferrara, who around 1510 tried to include Michelangelo (1476–1534) and
Raphael (1483–1520) among the contributors. Titian’s painting was in fact a substitute for one with a similar subject that the duke had commissioned from Raphael. Bellini’s *Feast of the Gods* for this room is dated 1514, and the three works by Titian were painted between the 1518 and 1525.

Lucas and Plesters (1979) produced a detailed article on the painting. There is no doubt that earlier attempts to clean and restore works of art were less sympathetic to the retention of vestiges of age than the approach taken today, because today’s restorers have access to scientific connoisseurship and readily removable high-class retouching media. Nevertheless, the evidence adduced by Lucas and Plesters (1979) and the very striking difference in appearance of the picture before the recent restoration and after the restoration of 1969 were bound to come as a shock, as the blue of the sky and the colors employed by Titian can be clearly seen. It is these differences that resulted in tremendous criticism regarding the change in appearance of the painting. Lucas and Plesters (1979:36) write,

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**Figure 8.15.** *Bacchus and Ariadne* by Titian, 1520–1523; 176.5 x 191 cm. Theseus has left Ariadne on Naxos. Bacchus arrives, jumps from his chariot drawn by two cheetahs, and falls in love with Ariadne. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)
Of the many differences revealed by cleaning one of the most important has been the re-establishment of the effect of recession. The nineteenth century varnish, by blurring the transitions from blue to green in an all-over muddy tone, had the effect of diminishing the distances within the picture. The intensity of the blue of the sky can be seen to vary, as it does in nature, being more intensely blue overhead.

These dramatic changes in appearance have created the view that the authenticity of what Titian painted has been ruined through restoration, when in fact the poor condition of the work and the activities of previous restorers are responsible for the muddy brown varnish that so obscures the actual work. The Gestalt view that Glanville proposes results in the present condition of the painting being seen in a pejorative light. However, if, as Lucas and Plesters (1979) maintain, the alteration of the balance of colors in the painting is not a desirable effect of aging but a deceptive appearance produced by a thick layer of discolored varnish, then the argument revolves around whether the cleaning was too “harsh” in not attempting to leave traces of the original surface of the work, if that can be thought of as a kind of patina.

**Categories of Authentic Paintings**

In attempting to formulate categories of artistic practice that proceed from the more authentic to the less, Marijnissen (1985, 2011) describes a spectrum of works, ranging from those that can be confidently attributed to an individual artist all the way to commercial re-productions created by mechanical or digital means. In terms of paintings, this progression takes us from the individual expression of an artist to entirely spurious works that lack any authenticity.

The first category is illustrated by self-portraits executed solely by the artist. An example is shown in Figure 8.16. Often these self-portraits are painted for the artist by the artist, and they depict the painter as he or she was in life. In that sense they are a personal reflection on the artist as an authentic creator. Reflection is sometimes too literally a problem. For example, in the Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669) self-portrait in Kenwood House, Hampstead Heath, London, the artist shows himself as holding brushes and an easel in his left hand, with the right hand raised toward the canvas. But in the X-ray radiograph of the picture, the underdrawing reveals that Rembrandt painted himself with his brushes and easel in the right hand, with his left hand toward the canvas. The artist had originally painted his reflection as it appeared in the mirror, not as his image would have appeared to a viewer looking at him. When he realized his mistake, he had to correct the picture and swap the arms; any other asymmetry would have to stay as the mirror reflection of itself (Bomford 1997). Because of numerous copyists producing their own versions of Rembrandt self-portraits, the authentic nature of the Kenwood self-portrait is confirmed by the X-ray radiograph, showing the hidden narrative of the creation of the work of art. The originality of the painting is revealed by the X-ray radiograph, uniquely identifying the work as that of Rembrandt.

The second category concerns paintings left unfinished and completed by another artist contemporaneous with the first. Marijnissen (1985:20) gives the example of one of the Justice Panels unfinished by Dieric Bouts (1415–1475) at the time of his death in 1475. Jacob Jordaens (1593–1678) was...
commissioned to complete the panel. All too often, the information necessary to establish completion by another artist is not known or has to be surmised from an art historical and scientific study.

The third category is *paintings executed with the aid of the artist’s own assistants*, whose collaboration is integrated into the master’s style and craftsmanship. This was the norm from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century in the Low Countries. Marijnissen gives as an example some works by Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640): *Prometheus Bound*, with an eagle painted by Frans Snyders (1579–1657), and *Last Judgment*, a copy begun by a student but retouched by Rubens so that the painting could pass as an original work by the master himself.

The next category is *paintings resulting from an agreement between two or more artists to collaborate on their creation and execution*. An example is *Pomone*, painted by Abraham Janssens (circa 1567–1632), with a landscape by Jan Breughel the Elder (1568–1625) and fruit by Adriaen van Utrecht (1599–1652). The collaboration between Rubens and Jan Breughel is well-known, and their collaborative paintings were much admired at the time. Rubens and Breughel had trouble keeping up with demand for their work, despite the fact that their paintings were very expensive. The insatiable demand led

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**Figure 8.16.** Self-portrait by Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694–1752), 1734. Pastel on paper; 98.1 x 80 cm. Self-portraits are often not commissioned and may be authentic autographic works painted by artists themselves, although numerous copies of self-portraits were produced later. (Image courtesy of Getty Open Content Program, Getty Museum, accession no. 97.PC.19)
to an usual consequence. Numerous copies by lesser artists were produced, and even though it was generally recognized that these were indeed only copies, they were purchased with enthusiasm.

Marijnissen (1985:20) continues his categories with a replica of a painting by the artist himself. Successful artists often had copies or replicas produced by assistants, but in the case of the

Figure 8.17. Prometheus Bound by Peter Paul Rubens, completed 1618; oil on canvas. The work was painted by Rubens but with the eagle entirely painted by Frans Snyders. Philadelphia Museum of Art. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)
René Magritte (1898–1967) painting shown in Figure 2.9, identical copies were produced by the artist himself, a typically ironic Magritte statement on uniqueness and repetition.

The next category is studio replicas, repeat works executed under supervision of the master himself or works that the master helped fabricate. Examples are the numerous castings and marble sculptures by Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) and the painting studio practices of Rembrandt and van der Weyden.

Then there are works produced in series, possibly using industrial methods, such as silk-screen paintings by Andy Warhol (1928–1987). Next comes more or less faithful copies of paintings—there are endless examples of these. With study copies, artists were often interested in creating the artistic effects of admired predecessors. The intent was not to produce forgeries for sale but to emulate the master concerned. Imitations may or may not have closely resembled the original. For example, Elaine Sturtevant’s imitation of Claes Oldenburg’s pies had the style of the originals but were not

Figure 8.18. *Virgin and Child in Flower Garland with Angels* by Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder, circa 1616. Oil on oak; 243.8 x 209.5 cm. This is a perfectly authentic work, despite being the product of two painters. (Image courtesy of Alte Pinakothek, BayerischeStaat; in the public domain. Photograph by DcoetzeeBot, Wikimedia Commons)
identical. The next category is entirely authentic works to which something has been added to mislead or deceive. The most common example is a false signature added to a lesser artist’s work to increase its monetary value or reputation. Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978) apparently signed contemporary forgeries of his own work in keeping with the surrealist’s abnegation of the reality of the bourgeoisie. Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) said that he signed copies of his work “because it devalues them so.” Copies made by other artists and signed by de Chirico as originals assume an ambivalent status but are not uncommon. Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot (1796–1875) signed many imitative works by artists he knew so they could be sold as Corot originals to help the artists financially. The standard joke is that there are 2,000 genuine Corots—8,000 of which are found in America alone. The artist’s intention in signing the forgeries is a subversive act in different senses for Corot and Duchamp. In the case of Corot, the aim was to disseminate forgeries created by others to imbue them with enhanced monetary value and perhaps to spread his fame to ever wider circles. In the case of Duchamp, the intent was to devalue them through repetition, to subvert the uniqueness of artistic production.

Another category is paintings that have been changed significantly. Many earlier paintings have been altered to accord to the taste of the time (Giannattasio 2013). The problem is inextricably linked with the cultural zeitgeist of the period: To what degree are the alterations judged to be significant or insignificant, and who decides on whether they are so judged? A good example of signification of alteration of works of art is the removal of an infant Christ child from the triptych The Virgin Mary with Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Paul by Florentine painter Bernardo Daddi (circa 1280–1348), painted in about 1330. It is shown in Figure 8.19 with the Christ child still intact and in Figure 8.20 with the child removed.

This was a hard decision for Rothe (2003), the former Getty paintings restorer, to make. Technical examination showed that the Christ child was added later, probably in the sixteenth century, to alter the meaning of the work, and that it was painted over the original, which was in excellent condition for a work from 1330. Frequently, paintings restorers overpaint alterations judged to be significant changes to the concept of the original to restore the prior appearance of the work, but here the condition of the original was so good that any attempt to paint over the Christ child would have remained visible in painted relief, so the decision was made to remove the infant entirely. A mysterious total overpainting of the blue robe of the Virgin with a dull, dark-brown color was probably carried out at the same time the infant was added, perhaps to make her raiment more modest rather than to improve on the fine ultramarine pigment of the original, which would have been very expensive; perhaps for symbolic reasons or religious associations.

Differentiation between material authenticity and historical authenticity should be on view to the observer, and one way to achieve that would be to include the image in Figure 8.19 in the gallery contiguous with the painting in its rerestored condition. This approach would at least provide a glimpse of the work-being, the ongoing development of authenticity as a historical event, which Heidegger proposes as integral to any preservation.

Attitudes about the significance of the work-being have changed, even over the past 30 years. For example, Saint John the Baptist with Saint John the Evangelist and Saint James, an altarpiece in the National Gallery, London, by Nardo di Cione (?–circa 1366),
circa 1365, tempera on poplar, would originally have been framed with a predella, columns, tracery, pinnacles, and crockets, but all that was lost when it was removed from Florence (Bomford 2003). In the Victorian period, an elaborate gilded frame in imitation of the supposed original framing was fabricated. This was removed in pieces in a 1983 restoration (Gordon et al. 1985). The frame replaced with a plain gilt molding

Figure 8.19. *The Virgin Mary with Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Paul* by Bernardo Daddi, circa 1330, before rerestoration. Tempera with gold leaf on panel; 121.6 x 113 cm. The Christ child is a significant addition that will either be removed or overpainted. A very similar triptych by Daddi has been dismembered. Part of it is in Rome and other parts are in Bern; the sad fate of many triptychs is to be scattered across the globe. (Image courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles)
that attempted to present a purely neutral, functional containment for the altarpiece, as if it were almost incidental to the intended aesthetic of the material authenticity of the original.

As seen from the perspective of 2003, when a review of this restoration was published by Bomford, a reassessment might well regard the *disiecta membra* of the Victorian creation as a disputed act. The Victorian

**Figure 8.20.** *The Virgin Mary with Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Paul* by Bernardo Daddi after restoration, with the Christ child removed. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, framed with the original engaged frame; 121.6 x 113 cm. This version represents the original material authenticity of the work but does not honor the historical authenticity of the painting over time. (Image courtesy of the Getty Museum, Los Angeles)
conception of what the frame might have looked like, the continuation of its work-being, was more authentic to the origination of the artwork than a truncated minimalist approach that attempts to valorize only the object-being of the altarpiece. From the perspective of 2016, this is still the case. If anything, additions made in the Victorian period, as a narrative on the mores of Victorian taste and interpretation, are even more valued than they were 30 years ago. If the work were restored at the National Gallery today, allowing for amelioration of structural problems the Victorian addition created for the altarpiece, the frame would not be removed. Once again, a didactic panel in the gallery with a photograph showing how the painting looked in the Victorian period would help repair and bring together the historical authenticity of the altarpiece and its current material authenticity, but as of my last visit to the gallery, this had not been included.

Paintings that have undergone significant physical alterations over time present difficulties in terms of their treatment. There is no uniform philosophy that can be applied in such cases. An example is the portrait *Young Woman with Unicorn* in the Galleria Borghese in Rome, circa 1506. In 1760 it was identified as a portrait of Saint Catherine of Alexandria holding a Catherine wheel and was attributed to Pietro Perugino (circa 1446/50–1523). A restoration in 1934–1936 showed that the painting was in fact by Raphael and that it was not a portrait of Saint Catherine (Meyer zur Capellen 2001). But in 1959 a reexamination of the underdrawing showed there was no unicorn at all and that Raphael had actually painted a small dog. The painting that Raphael created was *Lady with Lap-Dog*. The unicorn still appears on this painting, even though this is not what Raphael painted (Seracini 2012). So in this case, the Catherine wheel has been removed to reveal the unicorn, but the unicorn has not been removed to reveal the dog. The intention of the artist has presumably been ignored because of the popularity and exoticism associated with small unicorns. There is no indication in the Galleria Borghese of these important historical transfigurations.

Marijnissen (1985:22) next cites *industrially manufactured reproductions disguised to appear as paintings*. These can indeed be very deceptive. Even Philip Mould, a well-known London art dealer with a respected eye and finely developed skills in the detection of fakes and sleepers (a painting neglected or misattributed that a skilled connoisseur might recognize as a bargain purchase), once purchased a gilt-framed and varnished Renaissance painting that was a reproduction on paper stuck to thick card (Mould and Bruce 2012). Next come *integral forgeries produced with modern materials only*. This is very common in the world of fakes and forgeries, since procuring of the right materials, those which would have been used by the original artist, is far too difficult, expensive, and time-consuming to contemplate for the vast majority of forgers, as the examples below illustrate.

**The Forgeries of Icilio Frederico Joni and Umberto Giunti: Renaissance Pictures of the Twentieth Century**

Two Italian forgers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Icilio Frederico Joni (1866–1946) and Umberto Giunti (1886–1970), together with Alceo Dossena (discussed in chapter 7) and Giovanni Bastianini (1830–1868), created some of the most admired forgeries of trecento and quattrocento artists. While these forgers reused the frames...
and gesso layers of old panels, they did not worry unduly about scientific connoisseurship and made little attempt to avoid pigments with a post quem date of introduction long past the quattrocento period.

What was important was the overall appearance of age, created by the use of old wood panels, the stylistic mimicry of earlier artists, and the creation of a convincing craquelure or general damage to create the illusion of centuries of wear and tear. Joni, whose work formed an important part of a 2004 exhibition (Mazzoni 2004), worked as an apprentice, learning the trade of gilding. Later, when settled into his life as a restorer and forger, he raised falcons in his studio in Siena, played the mandolin, staged many pageants, and enjoyed a picaresque lifestyle. Apart from Sienese paintings of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, Joni was very skilled in the creation of illustrated book covers. Despite his humble origins, meager education, riotous gang-like adolescence, and rollicking time in his early adulthood, Joni’s accomplishments in the fine art of fakery have come to be much admired (Mazzoni 2001, 2004; Mazzoni and Olivetti 1993). In a sense his background is like that of the later English forger of Renaissance drawings, the working-class Eric Hebborn (1934–1996), who once tried to set fire to his school and whose works have come to be collectible in their own right.

For a street-smart kid without the benefit of a solid education in the arts, Joni showed a deep appreciation of stamps, coats-of-arms, insignia, and other fine details, worthy of the best art historians of the period, such as Bernard Berenson (1865–1959) and Frederick Mason Perkins (1874–1955). Joni’s work began to be collected as real trecento and quattrocento paintings, although whether he promulgated them as such or let others come to their own erroneous conclusions, as Hebborn is alleged to have done, is not clear. Berenson originally thought Joni’s work was authentically old, until doubts began to surface and he asked a restorer in Milan for his views on the paintings. The Milan restorer told him that they were probably painted by Joni.

According to Joni’s autobiography (1936), Berenson was at first fooled by his forgeries when he started to buy them in Florence. Following the lead from the Milan restorer, Berenson traveled to Siena and found Joni working in an isolated farmhouse with four comrades. One did the underdrawing, another painted in the pigments, another did the gold tooling, and the fourth did the artificial aging and made the frame. Berenson was by this time inextricably involved with the dubious practices of the English art dealer Joseph Duveen (the first Baron Duveen, 1869–1939), who kept Berenson on a retainer and used him to authenticate works, some of which also were probably not what they were claimed to be. Duveen’s sister once remarked that some of Duveen’s Old Masters reeked of fresh oil paint. Several works by Joni were subsequently funneled through Duveen to collections in the United States and Europe. Berenson kept two of Joni’s fakes, probably to test the acumen of his rivals or to remind himself of the problems of his own attributions. Joni once took a genuine fourteenth-century panel to Berenson, who would not see him later in life. Berenson sent back a message: “Tell Senor Joni that his work continues to improve.” Joni countered, “When I take him originals he calls them a fake and when I get a fake past him, it then becomes an original.” Hebborn did exactly the same thing with the Colnaghi Gallery in London after his exposure as a
The Forgeries of Icilio Frederico Joni and Umberto Giunti

forger of Old Master drawings and he met with the same kind of response.

When the trade learned that Joni was intent on writing his autobiography, he was offered a substantial sum of money to desist, but Joni, true to the communal mode of production of his work and pride in his achievements, had no interest in such suppression. Like many skilled artisans, Joni considered the paintings he produced, modified, or restored to be authentic artworks. Joni (1936:338) writes: “An artist who creates a work of art of his own, in imitation of the style of an old master, is not a forger; he is at worst an imitator, and he is creating something of his own. And if he produces something that merely reflects the style of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, without limitation, it is something really and truly creative.”

When the autobiography was published in English in 1936, it was censored, with some names removed (such as Lord Duveen’s). Copies of the work rapidly disappeared from bookshops. It was rumored that Lord Duveen bought up every copy he could find and had them destroyed.

Joni makes few comments concerning the technical aspects of his craft in his autobiography. In one passage he says that he ground up his own colors until Windsor and Newton began to supply the powder pigments, which would not of course have been those actually used in the Renaissance period. For the punch work decoration, he first used knitting needles of varying thicknesses, which he stuck in and drew out with pincers so that the holes remained intact. Later on, he discovered a way of making holes with a small drill. He made the bronze bosses at the corners of the cover look old by bathing them in ammonia. For the iron plates he used tincture of iodine, which rusted them in just the right way. He chemically aged his work using ammonia, says the Bruce Museum catalog, but that was for only the copper and bronze components, not for the pigments. After exposure of the finished painting to the air and sun, a chamois or kid glove was used to rub the surface with sepia dust or very finely crushed pumice to give it the worn look of an antique painting. A blunt instrument was then employed to make the marks and damages expected on an old work (Joni 1936; Mazzoni 2001).

The artistic abilities of a forger such as Joni, whose art is part of his life, are hardly compatible with writing a scientifically objective account of his working practices. Consider, for example, what Joni says about his punches. An investigation of a Joni pastiche in imitation of a busy crucifixion scene consisting of 23 figures (Muir and Khandekar 2006) by the fourteenth-century northern Italian painter Altichiero da Verona (circa 1330–circa 1390), also known as Aldighieri da Zevio, in the collections of the Fogg Museum, Harvard University, showed that the gold halos had been punched with a six-sided flower-shaped motif. Frinta (1978, 1982) linked together several forgeries whose restored areas showed the recurring use of the same punch, from different periods, all attributed to Joni. Skaug (1994) has subsequently shown how useful these punches can be in terms of attributions, although none in his catalog match those used by Joni. Many of the pigments examined in the study by Muir and Khandekar (2006) proved to be modern, and an astute appraisal by Zeri (1968) suggested that new gilding had been applied to the panel and cracked with the aid of a pin, a fact confirmed by Muir and Khandekar in their technical examination. This is the same Zeri who resigned as a Getty trustee when the purchase of the disputed Getty Kouros went ahead, against his advice, some years later.
Many admired forgeries can be traced back to Joni and his coworkers. These include *Madonna and Child with Saints Michael, Caterina d’Alessandria, and an Angel* in the style of Benvenuto di Giovanni (circa 1436–1509/18), in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore; a fine triptych in the Courtauld Institute of Art in London; *Madonna and Child with Saints Mary Magdalene and Sebastian* in the manner of Neroccio di Bartolomeo de’ Landi (1447–1500); and a copy of the Agnano Polyptych (circa 1386–1395) from the church of Saint Jacopo Apostolo in Agnano near Pisa, made around 1936 by Joni. It has an interesting story: The fourteenth-century original, by Cecco di Pietro (circa 1330–circa 1401), and its copy are now the property of the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Pisa. Joni’s polyptych, which, unknown to the authorities, replaced the fourteenth-century altarpiece in the church in Agnano, was recovered from the rubble left by wartime bombing. It was later believed to be the original and mistakenly published as such by several illustrious scholars. A fragment of a panel depicting Saint Ansanus, in the possession of the heirs of the antiquarian Carlo De Carlo of Florence, also created problems. It was thought to be by a painter akin to Duccio di Buoninsegna (1255–1319), the “Master of Tabernacle Number 35,” whose oeuvre was defined by US scholar James H. Stubblebine in his essential monograph *Duccio di Buoninsegna and His School* (Stubblebine 1979). It is, in fact, by Joni. Even recognized as imitations, his work had great cachet. Lady Harriet Sarah Wantage (1837–1920) commissioned several decorated bookbindings from Joni, knowing that they were fake, imaginative copies of bindings from the ancient Biccherne of the commune of Siena. According to Nixon (1969) and Foot (1985), at least 14 examples of his illustrated book covers are known, with many more probably in circulation and regarded as authentic.

Joni painted *Madonna and Child with Angels*, ostensibly by Sano di Pietro (1406–1481), an early Renaissance painter from Siena. It was exposed as a forgery in 1948 and is now in the Cleveland Museum of Art. Joni’s painting is noteworthy for its use of color and its tender portrayal of its subjects, says the Cleveland Museum website, not mentioning the apparent attribution problems. There is another *Madonna and Child* in the Umbrian-Sienese tradition of the quattrocento in the collection of the Berenson Foundation at Harvard University. A particularly evolutionary phase in Joni’s production took place around 1910–1915, when he painted *Madonna and Child with Saints Mary Magdalene and Sebastian* in the style of Neroccio di Bartolomeo de’ Landi. This, together with three fragments from a predella in the style of Sano di Pietro, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

*Portrait of a Young Lady*, an excellent copy of a work by Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449–1494) of circa 1490 in the collections of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, was produced by Joni. Joni’s *Portrait of a Young Lady* is in the collection of Chigi Saracini in Italy. The principal difference between the two paintings is the hairstyle and crown worn by the Joni fake, but otherwise his work is practically identical to the Ghirlandaio original.

Close comparison of the two works shows just how well Joni captured the style of the master. Many works by Joni probably remain unknown in collections to this day, waiting to be unmasked in the future.

Joni (1936) ends his autobiography with a rhyme, sage advice to museum curators investigating his work. It is taken from a canto...
of Aristo, in which a sorcerer tries to persuade Rinaldo to drink from a cup that bears this inscription:

If you are the one who wears the Cuckold's crest,
My wine shall spill and scatter on your breast,
Ere a drop pass your lips; but if it so be
Your wife is faithful, you shall drink from me.
But the wise Paladin the cup declined:
Tis mad to seek what it were pain to find;
Thus far by faith alone my life is blest;
What should I gain by putting it to test?

In one sense, the extract from the canto of Aristo captures the nature of the problem of deciding on the authenticity of the paintings that passed through his workshop. What is to be gained from putting them to the test? There is a whole spectrum of fakes, from lightly restored fourteenth-century panels to pastiche works, from heavily restored panels all the way to completely fabricated paintings in the style of early Renaissance masters, such as Joni's version of Ghirlandaio's Portrait of a Young Lady. To what extent does the reworking of an authentic fourteenth-century panel invalidate the authenticity of the original? From the point of view of the material authenticity of the work, it has been heavily compromised. The conceptual and aesthetic/historical dimensions of authenticity are a different matter. If Joni's work is admired as a beautiful work of art, and if the decayed original cannot be retrieved from a repainted fourteenth-century panel, there is little point in removing the later overpaint. As Appadurai reminds us in The Social Life of Things, meanings ascribed to objects change diachronically and become commodified in turn as different epochs find different aspects to value. The historical period in which Joni worked is now appreciated or of interest to us on its own terms, the Heidegger work-being having become valorized in terms of the progression of events since the 1920s. The hermeneutic dialogue between the original Ghirlandaio and Joni's version is now seen in more nuanced terms, because our attitude to these copies in the twenty-first century does not have the same foundational pejorative view of copies that prevailed during most of the twentieth century.

If the apparent aesthetic authenticity is now seen as desirable by a viewer, the philosophical justification is not dissimilar to Joni's
own assertion regarding the nature of his creative work, quoted above. In terms of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutics, the three paradigms of the methodological analysis involve (Radnóti 1999:116):

The understanding of the author’s intentions; to understand them better than the author himself and finally to combine these elements into a circular understanding, which Gadamer calls the “merger” of the respective horizons of the author and the interpreter— in cases where the author is of the past and forms part of the tradition, this means the merger of historically different horizons.

Gadamer is here essentially following Heidegger in stating that every work of art has a history of effect (Wirkungsgeschichte). Radnóti (1999:117) adds a forth paradigm, namely the appropriation of tradition, of direct relevance since Mazzoni (2001) thinks of Joni as influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, the fascination with the work of the Pre-Raphaelites at the time he was painting, and the studious interest of his contemporaries for the techniques of early Italian panel paintings. The hermeneutics of appropriation apply to Joni and his stated intention that an artist who creates a work of art of his own, in imitation of an Old Master, is not a forger. If a claim is made to understand that intention, and to honor the appropriation of tradition, then Joni’s work occupies an increasingly privileged position in the world of authentic fakes.

Philosophers have tended to assume that forgeries proceed forward in time from initial acclamation, followed by a period of doubt and calling into question, leading to universal condemnation (Mackenzie 1986). This is a natural progression in many cases but not all. Historically, this can already be seen to be false. The necessity of some forgeries to create a history that should have existed, a sine qua non for authenticity, has already been exampled in the case of Venice, discussed above in the section dealing with intentionality and the production of fakes. In that case, historical research showed the direct relationship between Venice and Saint Mark to be fabricated, but this did not result in universal condemnation. In the case of forgeries by the likes of Joni or Dossena, the aesthetic authenticity of the works led to a hermeneutic inquiry into how the past can be understood through the present, how the horizon of the forger himself is now distant from us, as Mazzoni (2001, 2004) points out, and a new horizon has to encompass these three horizons in 2016. These inform us, not only in terms of what was desired or performed by the forgeries or pastiches in 1920 but in terms of our own historical recognition of their phenomenology.

An inquiry into Joni’s intention in this paradigm is relevant. He writes: “I had often said to Berenson that I should like to try to sell my things for what they were, on their own merit; in this way, as he himself said, I should cut out the possibility of others making illicit profits out of them” (Joni 1936:120). The problem here is the tension between the stated intention of the artist and the historical milieu in which selling his works as his own, rather than as the work of an Old Master, would be feasible. In 2016 Joni’s fakes would be in great demand, but in 1932 public interest was severely limited and the concept was economically unsustainable, which effectively prevented Joni from pursuing this path for his admired authentic fakes.
A substantial series of fake fresco fragments in the fifteenth-century style, from the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin and the National Museum of Warsaw, is representative of another talented forger, Umberto Giunti, who created many fakes between 1907 and 1925. Giunti painted an admired work in the style of Botticelli during the 1920s, at the height of his career. Other impressive works are a large panel in the style of Sano di Pietro and *Ritratto Virile* in an “Antonellian” style in the Collezione Bologna-Buonsignori of the Societie di Pie Disposizioni of Siena. Other known works include *Madonna and Child with Saint Catherine of Alexandria* in the style of Matteo di Giovanni (circa 1430–1495), which was left to the Academia di San Luca in Rome in the legacy of Baron Michele Lazzaroni, an ambiguous *marchand-amateur* figure. The “baron” was responsible for the hyper-restoration of several works of art, including a Ghirlandaio in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Francesco Sassetti and His Son Teodoro*, in which the father’s face was completely overpainted, figures in the background were removed, and other unnecessary emendations were carried out (Secrest 2013:251). It was said that the baron’s hyper-restorations were so similar in their effect that his pictures all looked alike.

A painting of the Montefeltro family of Urbino in the National Gallery, London, attributed to the late fifteenth-century artist Melozzo da Forli (1438–1494), has caused a great deal of trouble. The expert restorer at the National Gallery pronounced the work authentic in the 1930s. But it was not actually the work of Melozzo da Forli. It was painted around 1920, probably by Joni or Giunti (Wieseman 2010:36–38).

 Apparently the raised cuff carries folds that defy gravity, while the extent of cloth above the elbow is too liberal. To the expert eye, the checkered cap is tilted back too far for the period. The armorial badge stamped into the gesso at upper right, a very sophisticated touch, suggests that the sitters were members of the Montefeltro family. In the gallery’s 1951 catalog of early Italian paintings, opinion had shifted. Curator Martin Davies concluded that “this picture appears to be modern.” Further evidence of the modern origins of the portrait group emerged in 1960, when costume historian Stella Mary Newton demonstrated that the garments worn by the figures were both anachronistic and structurally impossible. In fact, the man’s checkered cap was inspired by a distinctive woman’s fashion of about 1913. The painting’s curious technical aspects were
explored yet again in 1996, when a scientific investigation was launched to determine how the forgery was crafted (Wieseman 2010:36–38). It was painted on a thin wood panel that was stuck onto a thicker panel of old wood and artificially cracked to heighten the impression of great age. Although the traditional gesso ground and egg tempera medium were used, the latter confirmed by gas chromatography-mass spectrometry analysis, Fourier transform infrared microscopy, and scanning electron microscopy with energy-dispersive analysis of X-rays, identified a number of modern pigments in the samples: cobalt blue, cadmium yellow, viridian, and chrome yellow. None of these were available before the nineteenth century, and Joni or Giunti, unlike van Meegeren, were not bothered by or especially interested in these technical niceties. Giunti’s creations follow the same paradigm as Joni’s: admired fakes of the twentieth century.