Framing Forgeries: Art and Deception (Ghent, 11-12 May 27)

Ghent, Museum voor Schone Kunsten, May 11–12, 2027
Deadline: Dec 14, 2026

Anna Tummers

Although forgeries present a complex and pressing challenge to the art world, their context, technical features, evolution, intricate history, legal framework, and impact on the art market are seldom examined systematically. This conference invites contributions that explore painted forgeries in the broadest sense. We welcome papers that uncover understudied aspects of forgery, identify visible and contextual patterns, challenge existing assumptions, or reflect on innovative methodologies and best practices.

Hosted within the framework of the ERC-funded Project ARTDETECT at Ghent University, the conference will bring together art historians, curators, conservators, scientists, legal specialists, and other experts for two days of interdisciplinary exchange.

Selected contributions will be considered for publication in a peer-reviewed open-access edited volume.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:
• The Mystery of Forgery Theory
Defining the versatile phenomenon of art forgery is an ongoing challenge. How to establish deception, for example, and deal with the issue of (historical) intentionality? Is forgery a permanent state, or an issue of perception? And how can the gap between the philosophy
and theory of forgery and its practice, i.e. the difficult applicability of most typologies to actual objects, be overcome?
• The Creation and Circulation of Forgeries
What can individual cases teach us about the production, circulation and reception of various forms of deceitful imitation? By shedding light on which prototypes were imitated, to what extent forgers had access to the original(s), and what techniques were used to enhance the impression of authenticity and age, we aim to deduce broader patterns of deceit, as well as cultural and aesthetic preferences.
• Forgery Detection: Patterns and Clues
This session explores both the micro- and the macro- characteristics of art forgery, i.e. the specific material, socio-economic, stylistic features and other indicators that distinguish a deliberate forgery from an original. It challenges the validity of existing forgery detection dogma’s (such as Friedländer's assertions that forgeries can only convincingly deceive for a generation after their creation) while exploring the potential of new detection strategies and scientific research techniques.

• The Future of Forgery Research: Innovation and Education
This session addresses the broader challenges in the field, including the scale and complexity of the current deceit, and innovative ways to mitigate these challenges. It will also discuss best practices in educating the next generation of forgery specialists.
• Framing the Forger: Context and Perception
Which socio-artistic and societal conditions form optimal preconditions for the phenomenon of forgery to flourish, across time and space, from individual cases to forgery rings working on a very large scale? Building on recent studies, the aim is to critically assess existing stereotypes and narratives on forgers and their motivations.

We particularly encourage contributions that bridge disciplinary boundaries and offer new perspectives on the evolving phenomenon of art forgery.

HOW TO APPLY
Please send a paper title, an abstract of 300 words and a short academic bio with institutional affiliation to framingforgeriesconference@ugent.be by Monday 14 December 2026. Applicants will be notified on Wednesday 20 January 2027.

Presentations should be in English and 20 minutes in length.

Please feel free to circulate this call among colleagues and students who might be interested.

This call is issued on behalf of Prof. Dr. Anna Tummers (Ghent University) and the team of the ERC Consolidator Grant Project ARTDETECT. The organizing committee further includes Luna Bergmans, Dr. Lingxi Liu, Lotte Kokkedee, Boris Nollet and Dr. Elizabeth Vandeweghe.

Please refer to the official ARTDETECT website for latest updates and upcoming news: https://research.flw.ugent.be/nl/projects/artdetect-new-connoisseurship-smart-waysdetect-forgeries

For any enquiries, please reach out to framingforgeriesconference@ugent.be

Reference:
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