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ART MEDIA AND PERFORMANCE / EVENT

True Copy

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The Dutchman Geert Jan Jansen (Waalre, 1943) is an art forger who was exposed and arrested in 1994. He was, for example, so familiar with Karel Appel's style that the artist himself could not see the difference between an original and a counterfeit work. The multimedia theater company BERLIN has built its play *True Copy* around Jansen after he had previously played a small role in their play *Perhaps All The Dragons*. The central question is where the boundaries lie between real and fake. In *True Copy*, quite relevantly, nothing is as it seems.



The evening starts just like an interview in a snappy late-night talk show, but Jansen quickly takes over from the host. He shares his trade secrets with us as if it were a YouTube tutorial. A 'good' counterfeit is more than just a matter of style: you have to consider the right type of paint and canvas, select the right frame, and forge archival documents. Once the painting materials are prepared, Jansen enters an enclosed booth on stage, where the public can only watch him via camera footage.

Gradually, more and more biographical elements come forward, culminating in the unmasking of the art forger. Very prosaically, it was not a stylistic but a linguistic error, in a falsified Chagall certificate, that exposed Jansen. An enthusiastic intern smelled trouble and went exploring (a successful internship can truly give you a nice place in cultural history!). The police came over to Jansen's castle and he ended up in jail for six months. However, the public prosecutor found nobody willing to stand as a civil party. Jansen had, allegedly, no dissatisfied customers.

In this way, he passes on the blame: not he, but the art world is corrupt. It is currently estimated that up to forty percent of paintings in circulation are counterfeit. Painters, buyers, auction houses, connoisseurs and historians cover each other as nobody wants to admit their mistake. To illustrate how easy this is, Jansen auctions a Picasso of his hand on the spot. In Overpelt, after some encouragement, it was sold for 2800 euros.

<https://berlinberlin.be/nl/project/true-copy/> (https://berlinberlin.be/nl/project/true-copy/)

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