

True Copy review at Brighton Festival – ‘ingenious caper about a true-life art forger’



Geert Jan Jansen (left) and cast in True Copy at Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts, Brighton. Photo: Jen O'Brien

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by [Bella Todd](#) - May 24, 2019

“A good background story increases a work’s value,” says Geert Jan Jansen in this ingenious caper about his life as a master art forger. In 1994, the Dutchman was seized along with 1,600 works supposedly by the likes of Picasso, Dali and Matisse – but most of which Jansen had painted himself.

Jansen’s story proved irresistible to ‘genre-curious’ Belgian theatremakers BERLIN, who met him while creating 2014’s *Perhaps All the Dragons*. Now BERLIN returns to Brighton Festival with a show that competes with the current golden age of docudramas that relate compelling ‘true narratives’, while interrogating the nature of forgery in a manner that only theatre could pull off.

Jansen exposed a scandalous truth about the art world. At least 20% of art on sale is estimated to be fake. With such a fallible authentication culture, are we sure who is the expert and who is the forger? *True Copy* revels in these questions. But it’s also

brilliant fun, as Jansen gives us his tips for “ageing” paintings, and auctions off one of his ‘Picassos’ to the audience.

When devising True Copy, BERLIN asked if Jansen would forge an artwork live on stage. He declined, saying he had to feel “at home”. So, we are told, they built him a studio behind the stage – where BERLIN’s trademark live video work allows us to follow.

How much disbelief are we willing to suspend to own a Picasso? And what lengths has BERLIN really gone to in order to ‘get’ its show? In the end, as a piece of theatre, True Copy reveals itself to be so much more than just a good story.

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Verdict

Ingeniously staged, philosophically probing caper about a true-life master art forger



(source: <https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2019/true-copy-review-at-brighton-festival-ingeniously-staged-caper-about-a-true-life-art-forger/>)