

Examining Art Fraud

Duncan Chappell

Honorary Professor of University of Sydney,
and Conjoint Professor of University of NSW

Kenneth Polk

University of Melbourne

Tuesday 24 January 2017, 13:00-14:30

Academic Conference Room, 11/F

Cheng Yu Tung Tower, Centennial Campus

The University of Hong Kong



This lecture will address the topic of art that is deemed to be non-authentic, art that in other discussions might be referred to as “fakes” or “forgeries” (although it will be explained why criminologists prefer to avoid these terms). How can we be sure that any given art object is “authentic”? Conventionally, there are three approaches suggested as aids for examining claims about the authenticity of a given art object. First, one can submit the work to some form of scientific investigation to assess its origins. Second, the art object can be examined by known experts who have experience with the art in question, who as connoisseurs might be able to assess the claims made for the art. Third, the provenance, or ownership history, of the art can be examined to determine if a clear trail can be drawn from the time it was created by the original artist to the present time. Using case studies, this lecture will consider the strengths and weaknesses of each of these approaches, drawing some conclusions about their relevance and import in a contemporary environment where art fraud is said to be at disturbing levels.

Duncan Chappell is an Australian lawyer and criminologist, who currently serves as an Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Sydney, and a Conjoint Professor in the School of Psychiatry at the University of NSW. He has published widely in the area of art crime and trafficking in cultural property, among which includes his recent book, *Crime in the Art and Antiquities World: Illegal Trafficking in Cultural Property* (with Stefano Manacorda, Springer, 2011). Professor Chappell is also a member of the Australian Law Reform Commission and the Australian Government’s National Cultural Heritage Committee.

Kenneth Polk is a Professor of Criminology at the University of Melbourne, who received his BA from San Diego State, MA from Northwestern University and PhD from UCLA. Among his previous books were *When Men Kill* (Cambridge University Press) and *Children as Victims of Homicide* (with Dr Christine Alder, Cambridge University Press). Professor Polk is a former member of the Australian Government’s National Cultural Heritage Committee and although retired from teaching, he continues to write on topics related to crime in the art market.

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For Inquiries, Please email Joyce Fung at joycef@hku.hk

