# Part 1

## Topic: Why has the traditional assumption of scholars in Art History – that

## great works of art (“originals”) were created by “singular geniuses”

## (famous artists) and that all other works were mere copies or even

## forgeries – been rejected recently as an inaccurate and outdated

## approach to studying art? How has the concept of the “original” also

## proved to be a problem for art restoration projects?

Today’s art market is often driven by the value an art piece has. This also created a market where fakes, copies and forgeries are everywhere. Trying to find these has been hard through the history of art. Some think that having copies and forgeries is a good thing, but in the early history it was looked down on and considered very controversial. It still is but not as much. The idea that a piece of art should be original and have one “singular genius” behind it, is being rejected as an idea, as it has been proved that imitations and forgeries can be as good.

The concept of authentic original came because we created art history. Through out the history of humankind, very little cultures kept track and remembered their art history. The Greeks were the first, followed later by the European, Chinese and Japanese art history. Having an original piece meant knowing the artist, who were usually forgotten after their death. As the concept of art history grew, so did the value of authenticity and originality. Many cases are known from ancient Greece, where poets and sculptors call out fake art pieces.

The concept of an “singular genius” came in he 18th century, which explains that a new art piece that has come out of the artists mind, is the only original. It came out of a singular artist and all the other pieces that followed it were copies. Several big and known artists have created several “copies” of their original pieces, with small, detailed variations between each other. An example would be the series Venus and Adonis by Titian, where he made several versions of the painting modifying small details. Another example would be Rembrandt, where after several research projects it was found that not everything signed by him was done exclusively by him. Rembrandt’s students were the ones that painted the pieces with the supervision of Rembrandt. Again, with little, small details differing from each other. This changed the concept of uniqueness as having a variation within a series. In the case of Rembrandt, a new category was created; called the School of Rembrandt. On top of that, artists and experts started calling them “multiple originals” throwing away the notion of having only one original.

The introduction and popularization of multiple originals created a lot of controversy in the art community. As such many called them just copies, but on the other hand, the concept of “Repetition” was suggested by Eik Kahng. Kahng wanted to show that a piece that had the ability to be reproduced many times influenced its value, be it good or bad influence. As such painters started to move away from having only one singular masterpiece, and focusing more on commercial repeated pieces, with unique characteristics between each other. Others called them “Imitations”, but this concept removed the unique characteristic a piece might have. Later it was changed to “Replica” and “Repetition” depending on the piece. As said by Maria Loh, repetition is directed at a restricted public of connoisseurs and commissioning patrons, who are against the “fetishization of the original”. Copies and can be as good as the originals and sometimes better. Its just that the market gives them a monetary value, which make them undesirable by some.

Forgeries, also known as fake copies, try to imitate original pieces without telling anyone it’s a copy. It’s done in such a way to be undistinguishable from the original and profit from it. Expert nowadays focus more on finding these fakes, and there have been many times where they couldn’t find anything. It requires a good artist to make a good and believable fake. An example would be St. Catherine, where the expert said it was real, and since he was trusted in the art field it was believed. Later on a rumor surfaced that a German artist, named Christian Goler, was the one that painted the piece. As soon as it was confirmed, the expert described the painting as “falling to pieces”. Now most experts, collectors and art enthusiast will also tell you than when their judgement is wrong about a piece. Another story, that puts experts in worse bad light, was the legend of the saga of the Modigliani heads. In the legend Modigliani threw some head sculptures in the river out of spite, the local museum decided to search for them and after a week they found some head which were immediately believed they were real. Some time later it was announced that they were done by some art students that wanted to show the world that experts are looking only at the monetary value of the pieces and that they are easily faked. Some forgeries and fakes last only a generation, but how many would this case last if it was not uncovered by the students.

On the topic of preserving the original and forgery we have, Restoration. Restoration is done when you take an art piece and try to restore it to its original state, this is unlike Conservation, where the goal is to keep and maintain the present state of the piece. There have been cases where restoration was not perceived in a good light. If originality matters that much then people would try to restore every artwork possible, but some think that keeping the current state is better than restoring it. Some interesting cases come up like, the restorations of Black Madonna and the Sistine Chapel. The Black Madonna got the name from the black face the statue has, after its restoration it was seen that it didn’t have one on its original form. The black face was done after ears of exposure to the candles in the church. People would think that it lost its meaning, and it doesn’t have the same value as before. For locals it had a religious value to them that nothing could change it. There are several Black Madonnas around the world, and some that have been restored, have been painted black again to retain the meaning and value of the statue. On the other hand, the restoration of the Sistine Chapel had an even bigger controversy than the Black Madonna. It changed how we looked the art style of Michelangelo, from dark colors to bright ones. Some didn’t even want the restoration to happen, because who knew what part was mural or fresco, since murals usually get removed after restoration. These and many other cases changed the concept that original is always better. Another restoration attempt is the restoration of Knossos, very little is known about the Minoan Civilization, so the restorers tried to create an original art style for Knossos with what little they had. Many think that what we are shown of Knossos today, is what actually the art looked at the time, but we would never know.

To conclude, the concept of originals and authenticity has changed several times through the art history and is still changing. There are no singular geniuses, as we don’t always know the full story behind the artist. Many tried to use originals in their own advantage and some even made fakes to sell. Some experts and artist don’t even use the term anymore and have gone to other more categorizing ones like, multiple originals, imitations and so on. Restoration being one of the main factors on returning pieces to the original state and even changing the mindset that original is better in some cases.

# Part 2

## Compare/contrast the two paintings below in terms of how the artist has used 1) composition, 2) perspective, 3) color and 4) chiaroscuro (shadowing, light &amp; dark to delineate 3-D form):

## Painting “A”

## Raphael – “Madonna in the Meadow” (p.606)

## Painting “B”

## Paul Gauguin – “Vision after the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel)” (p.815)

Painting A Madonna in the Meadow, shows a woman with two children, which are the Virgin Mary holding Jesus and the other child is John the Baptist. Painting B Vision after the Sermon shows Jacob wrestling an angel in the background, with some women in the foreground watching and praying. If we look at Raphael’s painting we can see that softer colors are used, and the composition of the subjects makes it so it creates an invisible triangle that flows your eyes across the painting. The background is, what appears to be, a river or lake with a town, but it’s done un such a way so it wont steal the main subjects’ importance. There is no physical struggle unlike painting B, so it shows more peace and harmony. Paul’s painting is more chaotic with vibrant coloring, and can be called unrealistic. There are exaggerated shapes to show the struggles of the 2 men fighting. Painting A has depth while B we can’t really tell at first glance. The way painting A uses colors make the Virgin Mary pop, the background is mainly monochrome green, as a result the vibrant colors of the dress really pull our eyes to the subject. The different colors in Painting B make it hard to know were to focus first, it makes it so you have to stop take a good look at the painting for it to make sense.