

# Art History Department Screens Movie on Counterfeiting

🕒 October 17, 2019    👤 Danielle Walpole    📁 A&E    💬 0

On Thursday, Oct. 10, the New Paltz Art History Department hosted a screening of the 2014 film “Art and Craft” in the Lecture Center. “Art and Craft,” directed by Sam Cullman and Jennifer Grausman, details the longterm con-job operation led by artist Mark Landis, who “donated” immaculately forged pieces of art to a number of art museums throughout the United States under the guise of philanthropy.

“We chose this film because [forgery is] actually a topic that we don’t cover in our classes in the Art History department,” said Associate Professor and Chair of the Art History Department Jaclynne J. Kerner. “We try to do co-curricular programming that aligns with what we do teach, but that isn’t necessarily a subject that we have a class on.”

Throughout the documentary, the viewer is exposed not only to Landis’ counterfeiting operation, but his eccentric ways: his offputting, gentle way of speaking, his Norman Bates-like obsession with his late mother and his complete moral indifference to his work as an art forger. Landis’ forgery is impressive and odd in that he never earned any monetary gain from his scheming.

According to the documentary and the site “Intent to Deceive,” curated by International Arts and Artists (IA&A), Landis’ desire to forge is

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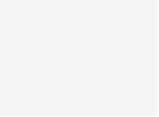
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symptomatic of his schizophrenic or bipolar tendencies, which had him admitted to the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas at age 17.

Landis sees no issue with his forgeries, expressing throughout the documentary that “ethical behavior doesn’t pay off,” and, “Where would the church be if St. Peter didn’t lie?” The film even opens with Landis actively forging a piece of art, while saying “Nothing’s original under the sun. Everything comes back to something.” He then proceeds to take a swig of booze, and walks, disguised, into the office of an art exhibit.

The documentary culminates in Landis being found out, and eventually, his works of forgery are curated into a gallery in Cincinnati, which he visits and wanders around the rotunda, shaking hands and speaking to industry professionals in his breathy, shaky manner.

Though Landis—shockingly—did not break any laws throughout his escapades, his success with counterfeiting can demonstrate to art students at New Paltz how prevalent the practice of counterfeiting is, and what the repercussions can be.

“This is a notorious case,” Kerner said. “The artist has made the news for the last few years, so it’s kind of of topical interest, current interest.”

Because Landis’ life and work has captured the attention of so many, the department hopes to screen the documentary again, so that more student artists on campus can get the chance to view it. You can watch “Art and Craft” for free with an Amazon Prime subscription, or elsewhere online. To learn more about the SUNY New Paltz Art History Department, visit [newpaltz.edu/arhistory/](http://newpaltz.edu/arhistory/).

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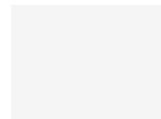
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