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Friend or Faux: Imitation and Invention from Innocent to Fraudulent
at the Rosenbach Museum & Library
Exhibition explores the stories behind a wide range of
fakes, copies, imitations, and forgeries
November 11, 2009 – July 11, 2010

PHILADELPHIA – *Friend or Faux: Imitation and Invention from Innocent to Fraudulent* will explore the attractions and pitfalls of authenticity, in a major exhibition at the **Rosenbach Museum & Library**. On view from **November 11, 2009 – July 11, 2010**, the exhibition will engage visitors in the stories behind a wide range of fakes, copies, imitations, and forgeries, bringing together over forty paintings, manuscripts, books, and decorative arts objects from the museum's collection. Who created them? Why were they acquired? The exhibition will address these questions and more, demonstrating that both friend and faux can be useful tools for understanding the past.

The Rosenbach Museum & Library is located at 2008-2010 Delancey Place in Philadelphia and is open Tuesday through Sunday. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and groups of 10 or more, \$5 for students and children ages 5-18, and free for children under 5. For more information, please call **(215) 732-1600** or visit www.rosenbach.org.

Objects featured in *Friend or Faux* date from the fifteenth to the twentieth century, spanning over five hundred years of history. Exhibition highlights include the Rosenbach's genuine copy of the 1640 **Bay Psalm Book**, the first book printed in what is now the United States, which provided forensic evidence in a notorious forgery case that included two murders. **Joseph Cosey's** forged manuscript of **Edgar Allen Poe's** *Fall of the House of Usher* will also be on display. Cosey's productions are now collectibles in their own right, and have themselves been the subject of forgeries.

"People often think of the word 'copy' as derogatory. In this exhibition, we'll show that in the museum and library context, copies are not only benign, but sometimes unique windows into history that we treasure in our collections," says **Judith M. Guston**, Curator and Director of Collections at the Rosenbach. "Likewise, while we know forgeries are intentional and sometimes dangerous deceptions, we are bound to ask what we can learn from the role they played in the artistic, economic, and legal worlds during and since their production. But, moreover, *Friend or Faux* is about storytelling. Every object has a story that's waiting to be told. Some of these stories just need a lot more unraveling than others, and those are the stories in this exhibition."

Friend or Faux will present the museum's collection of originals, altered originals, copies, artistic homages, and illegal forgeries intended to fool even the most seasoned scholar, in five sections across two galleries. **Copies** will explore objects made without the intent to deceive, such as a family memento,

an artist's homage to a mentor, or a replacement for a missing object. **Local Legends** will look at how some objects take on stories through no fault of their own. Objects created with the intent to deceive will be exposed in **Forgeries**, while **How much is real?** questions when an object is no longer what it purports to be (if a missing page in a hundred-page book is replaced, the book is mostly authentic; what if twenty were replaced?). **Attribution** takes on how works are attributed to an artist, author, or period of manufacture.

Some of the items featured in *Friend or Faux* were acquired with full knowledge of their history while others may have fooled even **Dr. A.S.W. Rosenbach**, co-founder of the Rosenbach Museum & Library, himself. **Objects on display include:**

- **William Henry Ireland's** infamous forgeries of **Shakespeare**, which range from love letters to entire manuscripts of plays. Ireland found many people ready to believe in his fabricated Shakespeare documents.
- **Thomas Sully's** portrait of renowned Philadelphia merchant **Michael Gratz**, and a copy of it made by Sully's own daughter.
- **Herman Melville's** *Moby Dick*, from the library of his friend **Nathaniel Hawthorne**.
- Manuscript facsimiles of rare American pamphlets made by Dr. Rosenbach's uncle.
- A Bellarmine jug, a genuine Elizabethan object, which by the mid-20th century had an unusual legend attached to the piece. It was claimed to be the "**Earl of Oxford's** jug," owned by **Edward de Vere**, whom some insist was the true author behind **Shakespeare's** works. Under scrutiny, this legend falls apart.

A second rotation of objects will be installed in the exhibition on **March 16, 2010**, providing a unique experience with each set of objects.

Friend or Faux is collaboratively curated by the Rosenbach Museum & Library's **Judith M. Guston**, Curator and Director of Collections, **Elizabeth E. Fuller**, Librarian, and **Kathy Haas**, Curatorial Assistant.

The Rosenbach curatorial team will be joined by a group of experts who will provide commentary on some of the objects and exhibition themes. Project experts include: **Nicolas Barker**, editor, *The Book Collector*, co-author of the 1990 British Library exhibition catalog *Fake: The Art of Deception*; **Jack Lynch**, Associate Professor of English, Rutgers University, author of *Becoming Shakespeare: The unlikely afterlife that turned a provincial playwright into the bard*, which includes chapters on Shakespeare forgeries; **Jude Robison**, Philadelphia Center for the Book, an expert on artists' books; **Ed Redmond**, reference specialist at the Library of Congress; **Carol Soltis**, Consulting Curator, Center for American Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, a specialist on the paintings of Thomas Sully and his circle; and **Anne Verplanck**, Consulting Curator and former Curator of Prints and Paintings at Winterthur.

Friend or Faux and related programming was made possible, in part, by a grant from the Hirsig Family Fund of the Philadelphia Foundation; by endowment support received from the Marilyn M. Simpson Charitable Trust, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Otto Haas Charitable Trust; and by the trustees and members of the Rosenbach Museum & Library.

SCHEDULE OF PROGRAMS & EVENTS

All events are free with museum admission. Additional programs and events will be announced in 2010.

Exhibition: *Friend or Faux: Imitation and Invention from Innocent to Fraudulent*

Wednesday, November 11, 2009

Exhibition opens to the public.

Seminar Series: *Friend or Faux*

In conjunction with *Friend of Faux*, the Rosenbach will present a series of seminars designed for non-experts that will explore the process through which objects are authenticated. The seminars will be led by an expert in the field and will be open to the public. Registration is requested. Please call 215-732-1600, ext 123 or email rsvp@rosenbach.org.

Silver

Saturday, November 14, 2009, 12:00 – 2:00pm

This seminar is the first in a series of four that complement the exhibition *Friend or Faux: Imitation and Invention from Innocent to Fraudulent*. **David Barquist**, Curator of American Decorative Arts at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, will present methods through which a piece of silver can be attributed to a particular maker or historical period.

Forthcoming seminar subjects

Paintings: Saturday, January 9, 2010, 12:00-2:00pm

Manuscripts: Saturday, March 6, 2010, 12:00-2:00pm

Books and Prints: Saturday, May 8, 2010, 12:00-2:00pm

Gallery Talk: *Friend or Faux: Provenance*

Thursday, December 17, 6:00pm

Join Curator and Director of Collections Judy Guston in exploring objects from early America on display in *Friend or Faux*. We'll discuss the Bay Psalm Book's role in solving a forgery (and murder) mystery, George Washington's retained copies of letters, a portrait painted by Thomas Sully and copied by his own daughter, and more. We'll ask what's real, what's not, what's in the space in between, and whether it matters. No RSVP required, but space is limited. Free with museum admission.

Monday, March 16, 2010

A second rotation of objects will be installed, providing a unique experience with each set of objects.

Sunday, July 11, 2010

Exhibition closing day.

Where: The Rosenbach Museum & Library
2008-2010 Delancey Place, Philadelphia, PA 19103

Hours: Tuesday: 12-5pm; Wednesday & Thursday: 12-8pm
Friday: 12-5pm; Saturday & Sunday: 12-6pm
Closed Mondays and National Holidays

Admission: Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, \$5 for students and free for children under 5.

Information: (215) 732-1600 or visit www.rosenbach.org.

ABOUT THE ROSENBACH

The Rosenbach Museum & Library seeks to inspire curiosity, inquiry and creativity by engaging broad audiences in exhibitions, programs and research based on its remarkable and expanding collections. The museum was founded by legendary book dealer A.S.W. Rosenbach and his brother and business partner Philip. With an outstanding collection of rare books, manuscripts, furniture and art, the Rosenbach is a museum and world-renowned research library, set within two historic 1865 townhouses, that reflects an age when great collectors lived among their treasures.

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To request more information, interviews and images, please contact:

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