



**Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)**

L International Colloquium on Art History

**The ambiguity of authenticity and the productivity of falsehood: forgeries, copies, replicas, reuses,
and controversial restorations**

October 6 - 9, 2026

Zacatecas, Zacatecas, México

The *Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* of the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (UNAM) invites to participate in the L International Colloquium on Art History, to be held **from October 6 to 9, 2026**. This edition proposes to reflect on the ambiguity of the authentic and the productivity of the false.

One of the original areas of knowledge in art history centers on the techniques, methods, and discourses used to determine the authenticity or identification of works of art. In recent decades, authentication practices have been reformulated, leading to substantial advances in historical knowledge about materiality, often with the assistance of, or in conjunction with, the so-called “natural” or “hard” sciences. However, in Mexico and Latin America, a growing presence of forgeries and misattributed works in the market and in collections coexists with insufficient research on forgery practices and a lack of theorizing about the cultural and artistic significance of producing replicas, copies, or modified works. While scientific advances raise expectations of reliable instruments to determine the legitimacy and origin of objects, further studies on the concepts and practices of forgery, replication, and restoration or restitution are needed to enable an informed, complex debate on the thorny issue of the “authenticity” of works of art.

There is some general and monographic research on this topic in relation to Latin America. Among the former, it is worth mentioning a volume from *Artes de México*, *La falsificación y sus espejos* (Forgery and its Mirrors), from 1995, which includes part of a colloquium organized by the journal *Curare* in 1994, and Daniel Schavélzon's book, *Arte y falsificación en América Latina* (Art and Forgery in Latin America) (FCE, 2009). Among the monographic studies, *Real Fake: The Story of a Zapotec Urn* (2018), edited by Justin Jennings and Adam T. Sellen, and the “fake” documentary *Ruins* (1999), by Jesse Lerner, are noteworthy. Equally relevant are works on the emulation and appropriation of European art in the American viceroyalties, as well as Sandra Rozental's studies of replicas of the Coatlinchan Stone. Annotated catalogues are few in the output of academia and museums. The lack of reference studies is compounded by fears of legal and political repercussions arising

from doubts about authenticity, and by the issue's simplistic treatment in the public sphere. All of this contributes to academics maintaining a distance from discussions of questionable works.

This colloquium aims to bring together a variety of studies on deliberate forgery, the production of imitations, and replica practices, both by elaborating historical and contemporary case studies and by reflecting on their conceptualization and the order of these practices. The examination of complex, little-known cases, the initiation of research into possible agents and authors of dubious productions, self-reflection on the practices of artistic reinvention by institutions and communities, and the value of the growing body of knowledge and techniques concerning the materials of artistic production are branches of research that we believe will be particularly productive at this academic gathering. We encourage colleagues to submit papers with case studies, as these are essential for a broader theorization of these issues and our practices.

We also seek to broaden the scope of theoretical and ethical debate, aiming to develop conceptual tools that foster productive research, and to reflect on various legal and ethical frameworks that often lag a reality that specialists lament but in which they do not always actively engage. Rather than contrasting facts with an abstract norm, which, precisely because of its apparent ideal nature, is constantly transgressed in practice, we seek to expand public understanding of the ambiguous way the criterion of "authenticity" operates in the artistic field, as well as the wealth of concepts and situations that challenge the very assumption of authenticity.

In terms of the deontology and phenomenology of authenticity and falsity of works of art, the scope of inquiry expands considerably. We must question the vitalist ideologies that underpin our understanding of "the authentic," which lead us to speak of the "life" and "death" of objects, thoroughly analyzing the "Pygmalion effect" and the fetishism of modern society, which not only attributes but also seeks to instigate a "vital principle" in cultural products. We must also examine the mystified way in which conservation criteria are alluded to, both in public opinion and among specialists, who always seem to refer to legislation invoked with an authority as unquestionable as that of the tablets of Moses, and even attempt to claim that in the West, there are cultural criteria for preserving ruins and objects that are superior to those of other cultures. Paradoxically, these very ideologies may foster controversial and imaginative restorations. At the same time, the material history of art flourishes alongside the exacerbation of technical reproducibility, in a world where most of the global population already carries electronic devices and cybernetic media in their pockets, allowing them to observe, analyze, transform, manufacture, and circulate images. In these circumstances, the analysis of the categories that construct authenticity becomes urgent, since the material conditions of new reproductions and forgeries have transformed their material basis. The issue of the falsity or authenticity of images has ceased to be a matter confined to the artistic field, becoming a defining issue for the future of the public sphere and global politics. Among other things, this colloquium aims to explore "the false" as a source of knowledge.

Thematic Lines

1. *The Invented Pre-Columbian*: Styles and attributions from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century.
2. *Reinventing “the Colonial”*: Exotic copies, remote production of styles during the first wave of globalization, and the construction of the stereotype of colonial art.
3. *The Retroactive Invention of National Art*: Nationalist works shaped by modern taste; the role of the colonial and the Indigenous in the construction of Latin American nationalisms.
4. *Posthumous Proliferation*: Forgery and the falsification of the modern and contemporary canon.
5. *Controversial Restoration*: The reinvention of a past absent from the original.
6. *Authorized Copies and Scientific Forgeries*: Copies, replicas, or reinventions produced for historical, touristic, commercial, museographic, or conservation purposes.
7. *Latin American Art in the Age of Mass Forgery*: Markets and fakes in the global sphere.
8. *El arte latinoamericano en la época de la falsificación masiva*: mercado y falsos en el mundo global.
9. *Notions of Authenticity in Indigenous Art*: Conservation practices, debates with Western institutions, and critiques of stereotypes of “authentic Indigeneity”.
10. *Diverse Concepts of Conservation*: Authenticity in non-European geographies; conservation in diverse communities; the reinvention of “the authentic”.

Guidelines

1. Those interested in presenting a paper must complete the registration at <https://www.esteticas.unam.mx/> beginning **March 2, 2026**. The submission deadline is **May 11, 2026**.
2. Proposals may be submitted in Spanish or English and must include a tentative title and a 500-word abstract outlining the proposed research. Only one proposal per individual or collective group will be accepted.
3. Proposals must be original and may not have been previously presented at another academic colloquium.
4. Applicants must explicitly indicate the thematic line(s) under which their proposal falls and attach a brief biographical note (maximum 150 words) highlighting their main academic contributions and institutional affiliation.
5. The Colloquium’s Scientific Committee will evaluate proposals based on scholarly quality and thematic relevance.
6. Results will be announced on **June 23, 2026**, on www.esteticas.unam.mx. Decisions are final.
7. Accepted speakers commit to presenting their paper in person on the assigned date and time during the 50th International Colloquium on Art History, to be held **October 6–9, 2026**, in Zacatecas, Zacatecas, México.
8. A preliminary written version of the paper must be submitted no later than **September 18, 2026**, to allow commentators to prepare their remarks.

9. Speakers will also be required to complete a form regarding image copyright and authorization for online transmission on the day of their presentation.
10. The Scientific Committee will resolve any matter not addressed in this call in consultation with the Institute's Directorate.

Ciudad Universitaria, UNAM

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