



Fake for Real:

A HISTORY OF FORGERY AND FALSIFICATION

A touring exhibition of the House of European History, Brussels

November 19, 2024 – February 16, 2025

According to myth, the ancient Greeks used a wooden horse to deceive their enemies and breach the walls of Troy. Throughout the centuries—in war, politics, the economy, and other spheres of human activity—forgery and deceit have been used to advance their creators' goals. Diligently crafted, these complex falsifications hide the facts in a maze of half-truths and complete fabrications. To get to the truth, one needs to follow the thread to the labyrinth's core, discovering and exposing every lie or forgery on the way.

The exhibition ***Fake for Real: A History of Forgery and Falsification*** explored these themes for more than a year at the **House of European History** in Brussels. This exhibition went on tour, and, with its third stop in Budapest at the **Blinken OSA Archivum**, it presents falsifications throughout European history, and offers a theatrical journey through the motives, impact, and exposure of fakes. While uncovering the fascinating world of forgery, fakes, and falsehoods, visitors will be swept along a dramatic narrative spanning from antiquity to the present day. Fake for Real describes the specific historical circumstances that explain their appearance, the interests and motives behind them, the impact they had, and how they were ultimately debunked.

Set across six themes and a chronological timeline, the exhibition offers a rich display of more than 100 artefacts originating from all over Europe. Each tells a compelling story of deceit; from the erased records of the Roman emperors, manipulated biographies of medieval saints, stories of travel that never happened, to a fake army used by the Allies in WWII. They also include documents of critical importance in our history, such as the Donation of Constantine and the letters used to accuse Dreyfus. The final part of the exhibition, *The Era of Post-Truth?*, is an interactive space with games and videos, where visitors can become “fact-checkers,” decide what to publish and what to censor. They can also play with an innovative “filter bubble” to explore how social media works, illustrating how emotions and personal beliefs can impact how we want to understand the world, or deliberately misrepresent it.

Curators: Joanna Urbanek, Simina Badica

Touring exhibition project manager: Raluca Neamu

Based on *Fake for Real: A History of Forgery and Falsification*, temporary exhibition, between October 2020 and January 2022

About the House of European History

The House of European History is a history museum in Brussels, Belgium, focusing on the recent history of the continent of Europe and the European integration process. It is an initiative of the European Parliament, which opened on May 6, 2017. The museum offers a unique perspective on the history of the continent. It takes a transnational approach to the main events and phenomena that have united and divided Europeans through time and the diverse legacies and interpretations of its history. While learning about Europe’s past, visitors are encouraged to think critically about its present in order to engage in its future.

Learning

The school workshop explores the concept of “fake,” one of today’s most widely discussed topics, as a common thread throughout history. This engaging workshop is designed for students aged 12 to 23 to foster media literacy. Participants will analyze, practice, and reflect on disinformation and their own reactions to it. Aligned with the Fake for Real exhibition, this workshop raises awareness on how facts, techniques, and emotions can be blended to influence our worldviews, both in the past and present. Students will unravel the complexities of media manipulation and develop critical skills needed to navigate the information landscape.

For more information about the educational programs contact: archivum@ceu.edu