THE SECRET WORLD
OF ART FORGER ELMYR DE HORY:
HIS PORTRAITURE ON IBIZA

Hillstrom Museum of Art

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February 17 through April 19, 2020

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THE SECRET WORLD OF ART FORGER ELMYR DE HORY:

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The exploits of numerous infamous art forgers have been widely recounted, and one of the most fascinating and notorious cases is that of Hungarian-born artist Elmyr de Hory (1906–1976).
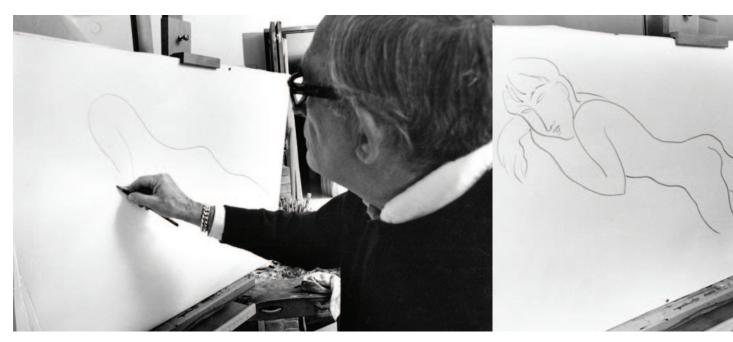
It was almost by accident, and related to his penurious circumstances following World War II, that de Hory began offering works he had created in the style of other artists as genuine works by them. A wealthy acquaintance visiting his Paris studio in 1946 noted a drawing he had made in the manner of Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) and offered to buy it. De Hory sold it to her knowing she believed it to be a Picasso. This, the artist claimed, started his career in forgery, which ultimately resulted in hundreds or perhaps even over a thousand of his paintings and drawings—fakes of modern masters that also included Henri Matisse (1869–1954), Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920), and others—being accepted into museums and prominent collections in the U.S. and abroad.

After a chance meeting with de Hory in 1969, Mark Forgy became an assistant and close friend—and eventual heir— to the artist, living with him in his home, villa La Falaise, on the Spanish island of Ibiza, until de Hory's death by suicide in late 1976. Forgy has lent all the works for this exhibition, most of which the artist gave or bequeathed to him; many of the works have never been shown before. The Hillstrom Museum of Art is grateful to Forgy and his wife Alice Doll for sharing works from the Forgy Collection, and to Forgy for sharing his insights on his friends and the works on views, and for presenting a public lecture in conjunction with the exhibit, titled "The Secret Life of Art Forger Elmyr de Hory—His Struggle to Emerge from Infamy" (at 3:30 p.m. on March 22, 2020 in Bjorling Concert Hall, Gustavus Adolphus College).

Portraiture, the subject of this exhibition, is a fascinating genre of art. As Mark Forgy has noted, it was a fundamental part of Elmyr de Hory's artistic practice, one that was not directly related to his activities in forgery. De Hory created many portraits, from quick pencil images sketched of people he happened upon at the Café Montesol in Ibiza Town, to more detailed oil sketches and watercolors, to fully developed oil painting portraits such as the *Self-Portrait* and two portraits of Forgy in this exhibit. The artist's true passion, according to Forgy, was less the art he created and more the interactions this *bon vivant* had with people, whether old friends of many years, casual acquaintances, or chance encounters. All of these types provided subjects for de Hory's portraiture.

The history of portraiture is one of ups and downs. It may be the basis of some of the earliest known artistic images, since cave paintings of hunters may have represented specific person. Portraiture was widely practiced in ancient cultures including by the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, though in the Western world it fell out of favor to a large extent in the early Christian era. It was revitalized in the Renaissance period, in emulation of ancient Rome, and by

Elmyr de Hory, creating a drawing with figures in the style of Modigliani, Picasso, and Matisse, photographed by Pierre Boulat for a February 6, 1970 *Life Magazine* article, at de Hory's villa La Falaise, Ibiza
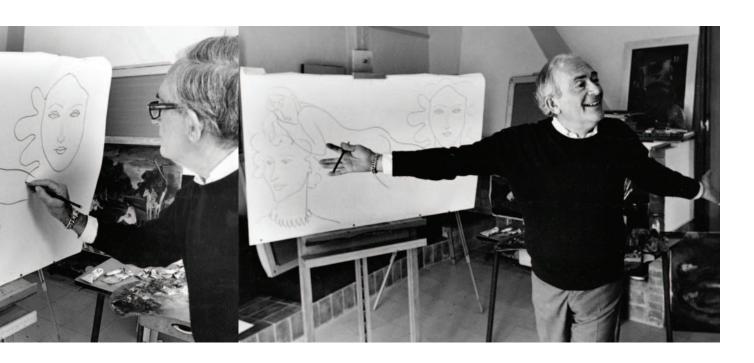
LENDER'S STATEMENT

The Portraiture of Elmyr de Hory— An Art Forger Revealed

Elmyr de Hory, painting in the style of Amedeo Modigliani, photographed c.1974 in his studio at his villa La Falaise, Ibiza

It seems counterintuitive that an artist would use extreme measures to hide his creative identity. An art forger, however, must sublimate any indicator of that singularity. Deception is less an elective than a survival strategy in a murky world that mingles reality and illusion. By necessity, such an illicit career is a tightrope of stealth, risk, and threatening consequences. This was the nervous existence of Hungarian-born artist and faker Elmyr de Hory (1906–1976), whose saga was a mix of self-made myth and even more extraordinary truth. His decades-long foray to the dark side of art altered the oeuvres of modern masters he imitated such as Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Henri Matisse (1869–1954), Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919), Raoul Dufy (1877–1953), André Derain (1880–1954), Edgar Degas (1834–1917), Kees van Dongen (1877–1968), and others.

In 1967 his life on the run—eluding detection, living by his wits, constantly changing aliases, being an illegal alien and refugee—descended into infamy with his exposure as the author of countless forgeries, after a painting by Elmyr that had been offered for sale in France (outside Paris) as a 1906 work by Maurice de Vlaminck (1876–1958) was recognized as a forgery— because it was not completely dry. This was the first inkling of the activities of Elmyr and his associates who placed on the art market the works he created at his home on the Spanish island Ibiza. It led to the greatest art scandal of the 20th century, which revealed the fallibility of experts, museum curators, art dealers, collectors, auction houses, marketplace practices, as
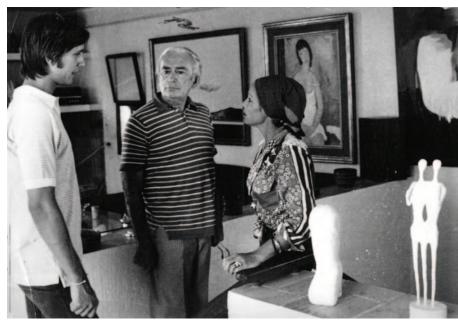
well as the indomitability of self-interest that contributed to de Hory's successful criminal activity.

While his dubious exploits would normally earn a long prison sentence, Elmyr was able to evade the predictable outcome through an ironic twist of events. According to French police, in order to prosecute de Hory, they needed three witnesses: one to attest that he created the spurious artwork, one who saw him sign the works with the phony signatures, and one who saw him sell the art as originals. These requisites made it impossible to construct a successful case against him.

Instead of facing incarceration, Elmyr's disrepute bore another side effect, fame. He became a bad-boy media darling, the object of public curiosity and international press coverage. When I first met him, he was still uneasy with his newfound notoriety, emerging from the shadows, transitioning from fakery to the rigors of making a legitimate living. All the while he remained steadfast in his conviction that he *was* a talented artist and would

Elmyr de Hory with Ursula Andress and Mark Forgy, photographed c.1970 at de Hory's villa La Falaise, Ibiza

eventually earn the recognition he deserved. What he found was a demand for his pastiches of works in the styles of others—not his own avant-garde style. While he finally accrued name recognition and financial security for the first time in his life, these accomplishments were not accompanied by the artistic vindication he desired. It was a cruel irony he endured until his death on December 11, 1976.

In the autumn of 1969 he offered me a job as his personal assistant, living with him in Ibiza. My knowledge then of art and most everything else was slight. He became my tutor, mentor, and best friend. What I observed in Elmyr surprised me. Art was not his *raison d'être*. Instead, it was his love of people. This was where his heart was. Moreover, he had an uncanny ability to capture the soul of people in his portraits, whether brief sketches or more detailed studies. Once, standing with him in front of a portrait by Rembrandt, he said to me, "You can see how his figures drip with humanity." For all the education, culture, and worldliness I absorbed in his company, what endeared him to me was his sense of empathy for others, the quality that drew him many friends and earned him great respect.

Elmyr de Hory and Mark Forgy, photographed c.1971 on Ibiza by de Hory's lawyer Arnold Weisberger

Mark Forgy in 2019

Elmyr's sense of humanity is on full display in this new exhibition, which is the first-ever in-depth look at his portraiture. Always a disciplined draftsman, Elmyr insisted that drawing was the "beginning of everything" in figurative art. Many of the works selected for this exhibit are drawings or sketches, and most of them have never been publicly viewed. Here, there is no attempt on his part to deceive, no impersonation; the works are simply honest reflections of the artist and his private world.

Mark Forgy

ELMYR DE HORY (1906–1976)

1906 Born Elemér Albert Hoffmann on April 14, 1906 in Budapest, Hungary.

1924–1928 Received formal art training at the Akademie Heimann in Munich, Germany, and Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Paris, France.

1926–1939 Made Paris his home.

1939–1946 Returned to Budapest at the outbreak of World War II. He was arrested by the Nazis for associating with a British reporter whom they believed to be a spy and sent to an internment camp, released, and then rearrested. He was sent to another prison camp outside Berlin. The Gestapo broke his leg during interrogation, then sent him to a hospital for treatment. He escaped and returned to Budapest with the help of friends in Berlin. Once more he was captured, this time by the invading Russian troops; he was saved from a "death march" only by family connections with an influential Russian general. In the aftermath of the war he returned to Paris, a refugee without the family wealth he previously enjoyed. He struggled to re-establish himself as an artist. One day a titled English woman came to his studio and saw pinned on the wall a drawing she mistook for a work of Pablo Picasso (1881–1973). He didn't disabuse her of her assumption, and by accident discovered a talent that launched a new career.

1946–1947 After successful forays in England, Holland, Switzerland and Scandinavia selling "Picasso drawings," he flew to Rio de Janiero, spending a year in South America.

1947–1959 De Hory went to New York on a three-month tourist visa and stayed illegally for 12 years in the United States. Here the scope of his illicit output greatly increased, and he began selling his works to galleries and museums throughout the U.S. In the mid 1950s, he formed an uneasy alliance with Fernand Legros, who became his point man for sales. At Legros' urging, he began doing more oil paintings to "maximize profits."

1960–1967 He returned to Europe after deciding to dissolve his business partnership with Legros, whom he was convinced was pocketing the lion's share of the profits from picture sales. In the early 1960s, he discovered the quaint Mediterranean island of Ibiza, deciding it was where he finally wanted to settle down. An accidental encounter while visiting Paris reconnected him with Legros, who had established himself in Paris as an art dealer on profits gleaned from his artwork. His former partner charmed him back into a business arrangement and the sales kept pace with a burgeoning worldwide art market. In 1967, Legros placed a number of his works in an auction outside of Paris. A work listed as a 1906 oil painting by Maurice de Vlaminck (1876–1958) was found to be not thoroughly dried. The ensuing scandal signaled the end to Elmyr's career as the most successful art forger of the 20th century.

1968–1976 In 1968, he was jailed for two months on Ibiza, not for art forgery, which was difficult to prove, but for "consorting with criminal elements, having no visible means of support, and homosexuality." He was expelled from the island for 12 months after his release. Two months after his return to Ibiza, Mark Forgy met him, in the fall of 1969. In this period, he became a bad-boy media darling, especially after the release of Clifford Irving's bestselling 1969 biography *Fake! The Story of Elmyr de Hory, the Greatest Art Forger of Our Time*. The world press made him a popular folk hero for exploiting the fallibility of art experts and the rampant profiteering of the art market. By 1969, his reputation helped him launch a new career, selling his own work as well as works in the styles of others signed with his own name. As he finally enjoyed a long-awaited recognition of his talent as an artist in his own right, his former partner, the devious and harmful Legros, could not abide his success. Legros consequently orchestrated demands for Elmyr's extradition from Spain on trumped-up charges, culminating in the Spanish government's decision to extradite him to France. Elmyr had reason to believe that Legros would have him killed if he ever went to prison in France, and, rather than awaiting that fate, he committed suicide on December 11, 1976.

Compiled by Mark Forgy

THE SECRET WORLD OF ART FORGER ELMYR DE HORY:

Self-Portrait, c.1973
Oil on canvas, 36 x 28 inches

This, the only known self-portrait by de Hory as an adult, is a provocative work and an object of curiosity. It is atypical of his portraiture in being a paradigm of what works in the genre ought *not* to be, and is in direct opposition to his general inclination to provide insights into his subjects (such as his depiction of the hauteur of Ibiza's café society, or the nobility of a weather-worn face). Here typical visual cues are absent. The artist's right hand, the one used to create his works, is hidden in a pocket. His soft brown eyes are almost-impenetrable opaque recesses and his expression is glum and uninviting. The image seems designed to be unrevealing. This is a man who wishes to remain hidden. The impulse to obfuscate speaks to an existence that was rich in secrets, an artist perhaps for whom a life of impersonation has obscured a sense of his own identity.

All works from the Collection of Mark Forgy, and, with the exception of the bronze bust below, all are by Elmyr de Hory.

James Goodbrand (born 1940)
Portrait of Elmyr de Hory, modeled 1977, cast 2013
Bronze, height 15 inches (without base)

Goodbrand, born in British Columbia, Canada, instead of pursuing medical studies as he was urged to do by his father, elected to travel to Europe. It was there, in Spain, where in the early 1960s he met de Hory, who recognized the young man's nascent artistic talent and fostered it. Their friendship, which resulted in numerous portraits of Goodbrand by de Hory (see pages 16–17), lasted until de Hory's death on December 11, 1976. As a tribute to his friend and protector, Goodbrand six months later created a wax bust of de Hory, which was cast into bronze in 2013 at the behest of Mark Forgy, who had also formed a friendship with Goodbrand. In contrast to the inscrutability of the de Hory *Self-Portrait*, Goodbrand presents the artist's humanity in a Buddha-like serenity. The image is of someone with calm, self-possessed confidence who is capable of giving and receiving love.

Portrait of Mark Forgy, 1972
Oil on canvas, 36 x 28 inches

This portrait of de Hory's friend and assistant (and eventual heir) was completed in the artist's studio in his home on the island of Ibiza in 1972. The artist's West Highland White Terrier, named Mudi, is shown in Forgy's lap. While many of de Hory's portraits were quickly-executed "snapshots," those that display more painterly detail often refect the degree of engagement he had with his subject. Here, the tenderness and affection he felt for his friend and protégé are fully revealed, in tandem with a sense of Forgy's humanity.

Portrait of Mark Forgy, 1969
Oil on canvas, 22 ½ x 18 ½ inches

Portrait of Mark Forgy, 1970
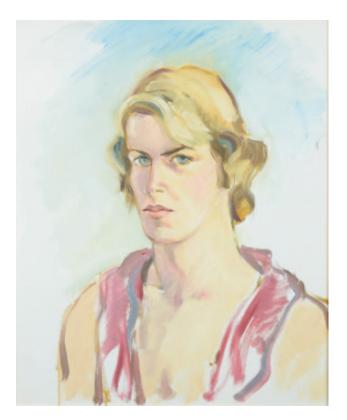Oil on canvas, 18 x 14 ½ inches

Portrait of Mark Forgy, c.1970
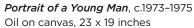Pencil on paper, 9 ¾ x 7 inches

Small Portrait of Mark Forgy, c.1971
Pencil on paper, 8 x 5 inches

Portrait of Mark Forgy, c.1972
Pencil on paper, 9 x 6 inches

Portrait of a Young Man, c.1973–1975
Oil on canvas, 23 x 19 inches

De Hory captures this unidentified subject's youthful beauty and the intensity of his riveting regard, qualities that also inform the related drawing below from the same period.

Portrait of a Young Man, c.1973–1975
Pencil on paper, 7 x 10 inches

Portrait of English Actor Peter McEnery, c.1971
Oil on canvas, 23 ½ x 17 inches

McEnery was a friend of Elmyr de Hory and a fellow resident of Ibiza. He portrayed artist Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920) in a 1970 BBC documentary titled *A Requiem for Modigliani*. De Hory's portrait of him echoes the techniques of Modigliani, in whose style de Hory frequently worked: the opaque eyes, the elongated neck, and an infusion of the melancholy that marked Modigliani's life and work.

THE SECRET WORLD OF ART FORGER ELMYR DE HORY:

Portrait of German Actress Winnie Markus, c.1970–1972
Oil on canvas, 17 ½ x 14 inches

Markus was a resident of Ibiza and a longtime friend of de Hory. The expression in this portrait is wistful. She and the artist, both Central Europeans, often reminisced about wartime hardships.

Portrait of Swiss Actress Ursula Andress, c.1972
Oil on canvas, 17 x 12 inches

Andress, like de Hory, lived on the Spanish Balearic Island of Ibiza. She was a longtime friend of the artist, even before she became the first "Bond Girl" in the 1962 James Bond movie *Dr. No*.
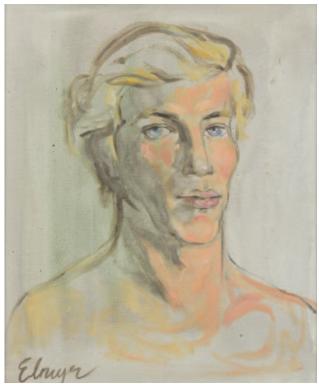
Portrait of a Woman, c.1973
Oil on canvas, 21 x 14 inches

This portrait of an unidentified woman, like many de Hory
executed, is a painterly equivalent to a snapshot, meant more as
a visual record of his interaction with her than as an in-depth,
detailed study. It most likely reflects the degree of importance he
attributed to her.

Portrait of a Young Man, c.1965–1968
Oil on canvas, 15 x 12 inches

No matter how long or short the duration of these casual
acquaintances was in Elmyr de Hory's life, they all are mile
markers of his personal journey. Here the artist once again
focuses on the man's thought-provoking expression that
suggests he is looking into the future in perhaps an
unconscious plea to not be forgotten.

THE SECRET WORLD of ART FORGER ELMYR de HORY:

Portrait of a Man, c.1972
Oil on canvas, 17 ½ x 14 ½ inches

De Hory here outlines his sitter's most prominent features: his rugged and confident masculinity that yet is tempered by eyes that betray a tenderness perhaps less assertive than his demeanor suggests.

Portrait of a Young Man, c.1974
Oil on canvas, 17 ½ x 12 ½ inches

This portrait's inscription indicates that it is a "Souvenir" of Ibiza, and it is another example of a snapshot-like painting by the artist. De Hory was consistently drawn to people for their beauty, for some compelling feature that led him to record these persons he encountered.

Portrait of a Man, c.1974
Oil on canvas, 17 x 12 inches

This is another "snapshot" portrait. Paintings of this nature demonstrate the ease and speed with which de Hory created them, typically in one sitting of perhaps 20 minutes.

Portrait of Fueny, 1961
Pencil on paper, 11 x 16 inches

This portrait is an example of de Hory's wispy lines capturing his subject in an instant. Fueny was the daughter of the Duchess de la Torre, portrayed in the drawing below.

Portrait of the Duchess de la Torre, c.1961
Pencil on paper, 11 x 16 inches

This is an even quicker sketch than in de Hory's image of the Duchess de la Torre's daughter Fueny in the portrait above.

Portrait of Anna and Patrick at a Café, c.1961–1963
Pencil on paper, 16 x 11 inches

De Hory here depicts a sidewalk café glimpse of two acquaintances at the Hotel Montesol in Ibiza.

THE SECRET WORLD OF ART FORGER ELMYR DE HORY:

Portrait of James Goodbrand, c.1963
Watercolor on paper, 15 x 11 inches

Artist James Goodbrand, de Hory's friend and protégé (and later a friend of Mark Forgy) was portrayed by de Hory perhaps more often than any other portrait subject. Goodbrand is the creator of the portrait bust of de Hory, which he modelled in wax a few months after de Hory's death.

Portrait of James Goodbrand, c.1961–1963
Pencil on paper, 11 x 16 inches

Portrait of James Goodbrand Reading a Book,
c.1961–1963
Pencil and watercolor on paper, 11 x 16 inches

Portrait of James Goodbrand Reading a Book,
c.1961–1963
Pencil on paper, 11 x 16 inches

The special attention de Hory gives in this drawing suggests his greater attachment to his subject than is found in some of the "snapshot" portraits.

Portrait of James Goodbrand Sketching, c.1961–1963
Pencil on paper, 11 x 16 inches

In this drawing, de Hory has caught his artist protégé in the act of drawing.

Portrait of James Goodbrand Reclining, c.1961–1963
Pencil on paper, 17 x 14 inches

This is thought to be a quickly-made portrait of de Hory's friend and protégé, artist Jamie Goodbrand, rendered with confident, assured pencil strokes.

Portrait of James Goodbrand Reclining, c.1961–1963
Pencil on paper, 16 x 11 inches

The surety of de Hory's draftsmanship, with quick and decisive lines, is on full display in this lovingly-depicted image of his friend.

THE SECRET WORLD OF ART FORGER ELMYR DE HORY:

Portraits of a Man at a Table, c.1961–1964
Pencil on paper, 16 x 11 inches

This study of a café patron exemplifies the speed with which de Hory could capture his subjects. The man was most likely of interest to the artist for his world-weary face and the rich history that seems to lurk behind his tired eyes.

Portrait of a Man Playing Chess, c.1963
Crayon on paper, 11 ½ x 16 inches

Portrait of a Man in Profile, c.1965–1969
Pencil and (crayon?) on paper, 12 x 9 inches

This line drawing bears echoes of the work of the great French artist Honoré Daumier (1808–1879), who was a master of such fluid strokes and was admired by de Hory.

Portrait of a Man, c.1962–1963
Pencil on paper, 11 x 16 inches

Here, de Hory displays his not-so-hidden Matisse-like manner in an image of sparse lines that yet express the essence of his subject.

Portrait of a Man Wearing a Hat, c.1965
Pencil on paper, 8 ¼ x 7 inches

This quick, linear sketch of a man wearing a hat and a cape likely depicts a denizen of the Café Montesol, a nexus of the café society in Ibiza Town where de Hory was a habitué. There he frequently captured the likeness of anyone whom he thought "had an interesting face."

Portrait of a Seated Man, c.1961–1963
Pencil on paper, 11 x 16 inches

This quick sketch defines what linear economy is all about. The brevity of the drawing shows de Hory's command of his medium.

THE SECRET WORLD OF ART FORGER ELMYR DE HORY:

Portrait of a Man Reading a Newspaper, c.1961–1963
Pencil on paper, 11 x 16 inches

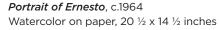This is another example of de Hory's mastery of speedy rendering of a subject.

Portrait of a Man with Green Hair, c.1964
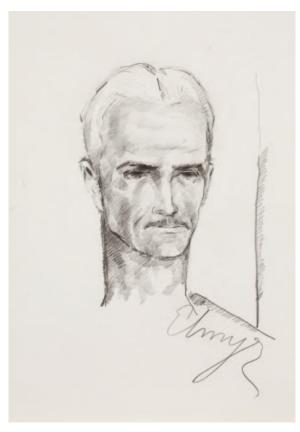Watercolor on paper, 20 ½ x 14 ½ inches

Portrait of a Man in the Blue Hat, c.1963
Watercolor on paper, 15 ½ x 12 ½ inches

Portrait of Ernesto, c.1964
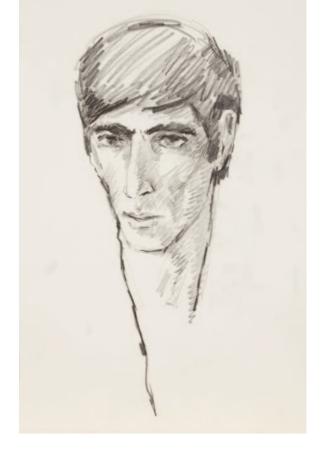Watercolor on paper, 20 ½ x 14 ½ inches

Ernesto was a fellow artist on Ibiza. Once at a lunch party at de Hory's house, Ernesto declared that the famous 1937 painting *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) was "crap." Mark Forgy relates that all present were stunned by this statement. Ernesto then explained that he himself was from Guernica, and that they were all so poor there that they had no horses (like the anguished one depicted near the center of Picasso's huge work).
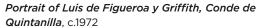

Portrait of Howard Hughes, c.1972
Pencil on paper, 16 x 11 inches

Mark Forgy recalls that this portrait, based on a photograph, was done at the request of Orson Welles for his 1973 film *F for Fake* (released in 1974), which is largely about de Hory and his activities (and in which Forgy appears). Welles in his film also considers the fakery of author Clifford Irving who after writing his 1969 *Fake! The Story of Elmyr de Hory, the Greatest Art Forger of Our Time*, had emulated his erstwhile protagonist in perpetrating a literary hoax, his fake biography of Hughes.

Portrait of a Local Bartender, c.1970
Pencil on paper, 13 ½ x 6 ½ inches

THE SECRET WORLD OF ART FORGER ELMYR DE HORY:

Portrait of Luis de Figueroa y Griffith, Conde de Quintanilla, c.1972
Pencil on paper, 7 x 10 inches

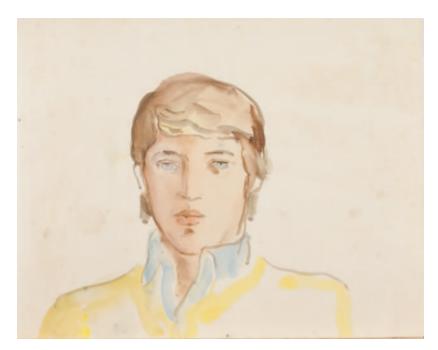This portrait successfully indicates the gentle innocence and dignity of the young count.

Portrait of Juan, 1974
Pencil on paper, 17 x 13 inches

This drawing and the nearly identical one of the same subject, Juan, to the left, have a haunting history. In 1974, de Hory's former partner and dealer Fernand Legros, conjured a criminal complaint against him that resulted in the artist's arrest and a six-week imprisonment in Palma, Mallorca until the charges were dismissed. These penetrating drawings are the only works that can be specifically identified from that period. The last part of the inscription on this work tells of the fate of its subject: "Juan, 19 years old, dead two days later."

Portrait of Juan, 1974
Pencil on paper, 17 x 13 inches

Portrait of a Young Man in Yellow Sweater, c.1963
Watercolor on paper,
13 ½ x 17 ½ inches

Portrait of a Young Man in a Sweater, c.1961–1963
Pencil on paper, 11 x 10 inches

Portrait of a Young Man, c.1962–1964
Pencil on paper, 10 ½ x 14 inches

If ever there was a haunting regard in portraiture, this image is it.

THE SECRET WORLD OF ART FORGER ELMYR DE HORY:

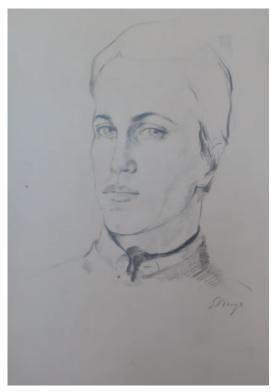***Portrait of a Young Man***, c.1970–1975
Pencil on paper, 15 ¼ x 9 ½ inches

This subject exhibits the self-confidence that is often a trait of youth.

Portrait of a Young Man, c.1973
Pencil on paper, 13 x 9 inches

Portrait of a Young Man Wearing an Ascot, c.1974
Pencil on paper, 12 x 10 inches

Portrait of a Woman with Blonde Hair, c.1964
Watercolor on paper, 20 ½ x 14 ½ inches

Portrait of a Woman Wearing a Hat, c.1970
Pencil on paper, 6 ⅝ x 7 ⅜ inches

Portrait of a Woman Wearing a Hat, c.1970-1975
Pen and ink on paper, 15 x 11 inches

This drawing, done in the manner of French artist Henri Matisse (1869–1954) is one of many that show how de Hory's years of emulating and forging the great French masters had a residual effect in his work.

THE SECRET WORLD OF ART FORGER ELMYR DE HORY:

Portrait of a Young Man with a Book, 1974
Pencil and gouache with a blue wash background on paper, 17 x 12 inches
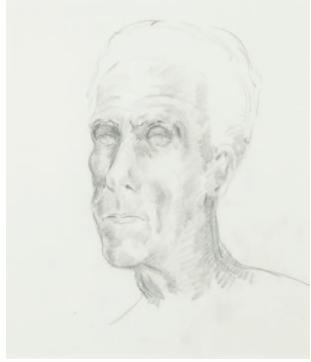
In this work, de Hory followed a practice dating back hundreds of years: he has placed his signature on the book held by the young man.
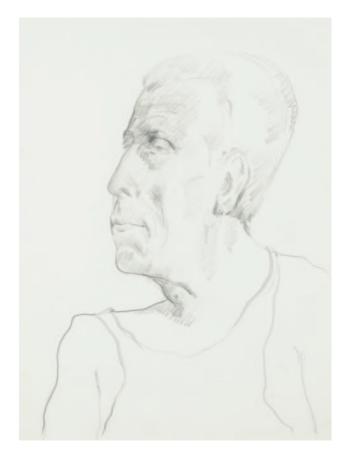
Portrait of an Old Man, c.1961–1963
Pencil on paper, 13 x 10 inches

De Hory had numerous aristocratic friends and acquaintances, but in this drawing the subject's nobility may have nothing to do with a title.

Portrait of an Old Man, c.1961–1963
Pencil on paper, 12 x 14 inches

This image of an almost skeletal man, with piercing eyes, taut lips, and a defiant expression, seems to suggest that the man harbors a hard-earned wisdom—one that might remain unshared.

Portrait of an Old Man, c.1961-1963
Pencil on paper, 19 x14 inches

De Hory honors the dignity in this old man's visage. His subject exhibits a visible self-possessed "hauteur," or perhaps a serene demeanor that wisdom imparts.

Portrait of a Man, c.1961-1963
Pencil on paper, 11 x 14 inches

This subject's pensive expression, aptly depicted by de Hory, invites speculation.

Portrait of a Woman with Long Hair, c.1961-1963
Pencil on paper, 11 x 16 inches
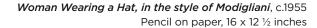
De Hory indicates the regal carriage of this subject, whose beauty needs no reaffirmation.

THE SECRET WORLD OF ART FORGER ELMYR DE HORY:

Woman, in the style of Modigliani, c.1955
Pencil on paper, 13 x 7 ¾ inches

This drawing is a "bonafide" fake by de Hory, which he drew in the manner of one of the artists he most frequently forged, Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920). It was made in the mid 1950s when he lived in Miami Beach, Florida, like the drawing below. Both works were purchased by Mark Forgy (and were not in de Hory's estate when he died) and were in a collection that also included an oil painting in Modigliani's style that hung in a Miami art museum for about a decade until its authorship by de Hory was recognized. Like that painting, this drawing and the one below are signed "Modigliani," conflicting with de Hory's longstanding insistence that he never signed his fakes.

Woman Wearing a Hat, in the style of Modigliani, c.1955
Pencil on paper, 16 x 12 ½ inches

Both this and the drawing above exhibit the facility of line de Hory shared with Modigliani. It is in the graphic works that the detection of detection of his fakes remains problematic, not only because of the quality of his line. If, for example, de Hory used period-specific papers (from old books, for instance), forensic analysis may not be the useful tool that it often is in detecting fake paintings, where it can discover the use of anomalous pigments.

Unknown Artist, with faces overpainted by Elmyr de Hory (1906-1976)
Portrait of Elmyr de Hory and his Brother Istvan, probably before 1939
Oil on canvas, 48 x 32 ½ inches

This painting purports to be a family portrait by famed Hungarian artist Philip Alexius de László (1869–1937), portraitist to kings and presidents. It shows young Elmyr de Hory leaning into his older brother, both dressed in sailor suits of the sort worn by children of upper-class society. X-ray and infrared photography has revealed, however, that the black signature "P. A. de László" was painted over an original, indistinct signature in black, and examination of the facture of the painting has revealed that the heads of the two boys are thicker than in the rest of the painting, indicating that they also are overpainting, covering the original heads in the painting.

    This work is significant for two reasons. First, it was an important prop de Hory used to support his longstanding claim to be a member of the Hungarian landed gentry—which he was not. Second, the alteration of the signature and the faces on the original painting—presumably done by de Hory—likely predates his time in post-war Paris, when, according to his oft-repeated story, he had his initial foray into fakery, thus leading to the conclusion that de Hory's activity as a forger may have been much longer than he asserted.

Elmyr de Hory with Orson Welles, photographed in 1972 by Richard Drewett, producer of the 1970 BBC documentary *Elmyr: The True Picture?*, at de Hory's villa La Falaise, Ibiza

the late 16th and early 17th centuries it was codified in European art academies as the second most important type of painting, second only to "History Painting" and ranking above the third through fifth types, "Genre Painting," "Landscape," and "Still Life." Portraiture was deemed to share with History Painting the ability to provide a moral exemplar (through stories of past heroes or Biblical figures or, in the case of portraiture, by depicting virtuous people). By the 20th century, however, portraiture was less well-regarded by many, who considered commissioned portraiture as a form of art detrimental to creativity, due to its narrow focus and to it requiring a certain level of verisimilitude.

There is an intimacy to portraiture that can be disconcerting, and that quality perhaps is related to the hesitancy of some artists and some art viewers to be interested in it. But portraits are often rich and worthy of close attention. One basic aspect of portraiture has to do with the specificity of the person portrayed. Art historian Richard Brilliant, in his seminal 1991 volume *Portraiture*, noted the difficulty of thinking about portraits, even ones by great artists, "...as art and not thinking about them primarily as something else, the person represented." This association with a person who is separate from both the artist and the viewer can be problematic, as if the viewer is an uninvited and uncomfortable witness of a personal interaction between artist and subject. An additional fundamental aspect of portraiture has to do with them as works of art rather than representations of individuals, and Brilliant points out that "...the oscillation between art object and human subject, represented so personally, is what gives portraits their extraordinary grasp on our imagination."

The Hillstrom Museum of Art invites consideration of the works in *The Secret World of Art Forger Elmyr de Hory: His Portraiture on Ibiza* as both art works and as records of the personal transactions between Elmyr de Hory and the many individuals, whether friends or acquaintances, he portrayed.

For those interested in further exploration of the story of Elmyr de Hory, there are numerous resources. In 1969, a short time before de Hory and Mark Forgy met, a book titled *Fake! The Story of Elmyr de Hory, the Greatest Art Forger of Our Time* appeared, written by Clifford Irving (just a short time before creating his own forgery, the spurious biography of Howard Hughes that was to have been published in 1972 before it was revealed to be fake). Irving's book on de Hory led to articles about him in *Look* and *Life* magazines (December 10, 1968 and February 6, 1970, respectively), as well as to a 1970 BBC documentary by French director François Reichenbach titled *Elmyr: The True Picture?*, and *F for Fake*, a 1973 film by the great Orson Welles about de Hory and the nature of faking (Forgy appears in both the BBC film and the one by Welles, which was released in 1974). A 1997 film by Norwegian Knut Jorfald titled *Masterpiece or Forgery? The Story of Elmyr de Hory* is, according to Forgy (who appears in it as well), problematic in its off-base speculation about the true identity of de Hory.

Forgy is the acknowledged expert on de Hory and his work. The Forgy Collection was also the basis of a 2010 exhibition at the Hillstrom Museum of Art titled *Elmyr de Hory, Artist and Faker* (the catalogue for which is available on the Museum webpage at www.gustavus.edu/hillstrom). Following that exhibit, in 2012 Forgy published his memoir of de Hory, *The Forger's Apprentice: Life with the World's Most Notorious Artist*. It was adapted as a play that debuted in summer of 2013 and as a full-length musical that appeared in 2015; the play was co-written with Kevin Bowen, and the musical was written by Forgy, Bowen, and C. S. McNerlin. Forgy has lectured extensively on de Hory, including as keynote speaker for a 2016 Cultural Heritage and Art Crime Symposium held at New York University, and he has collaborated in other exhibits featuring works by de Hory, notable among them the 2014–2015 exhibit *Intent to Deceive: Fakes and Forgeries in the Art World*, organized and circulated by International Arts and Artists. Forgy also maintains the Elmyr de Hory website at www.elmyr.net and he watches the art market for fake de Hory fakes, which have become a cottage industry. In addition to his 2012 memoir, Forgy has recounted his time with de Hory in a podcast from October 2019, titled "Elmyr de Hory—the 20th century's most successful art forger" and available online at: https://soundcloud.com/user-643945235/elmyr-de-hory/.

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