Copy / False / Fake

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Call for paper

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In 2018, a video appeared on the internet in which President Barack Obama was saying some unlikely phrases: a demonstration – and at the same time a warning – of the capacity of Artificial Intelligence technologies to produce a realistic dynamic image in real time from just any audio track. It was a *deepfake* application, a new frontier of digital communication based on GAN neural networks, already known in the early nineties and used in cinema (Bregler, Covell,& Slaney, 1997) and so widespread today that many smartphone apps allow users to see themselves as actors in famous movies. But falsification in political visual communication is not a recent invention, nor is it an exclusively digital practice. The fake invests the political sphere, because in the hands of authority it becomes a convenient tool, a powerful weapon capable of deceiving an entire society. The French General Staff of the 1890s, respectable and respected, was at the origin of one of the most famous false historians, the one who sent Captain Dreyfus, innocent of the crime of treason, to the *Île du Diable*. And, at the beginning of the last century, the stabilization of Stalinism was also advanced by the spread of numerous altered official photos, in which political figures that were no longer to appear among the founders of the regime were removed. Thus, dozens of important officials of the Communist Party disappeared one after the other, in a parallelism as systematic as it is disturbing between images and real life: the disappearance occurs not only in photos manipulated for purposes of propaganda but in civil life as well, at best through the limitation of personal freedom. (King, 1997).

The distinction between true and false has long been guaranteed by the authority of governments, when, for example, forgers who reproduced the officially minted coins suffered cruel punishment because they undermined the authority of the prince himself (Béaur, Bonin, & Lemercier, 2007). A dual meaning of false, however, because the same monarchs ended up altering the quantity of gold or silver in the coins, then legalizing the fraud with the power of their own authority.

The concept of the *false* runs through history and the arts. For example, the era of eclectic revival in the second half of the 19th century produced illustrious architectural works such as the façade of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, built in neo-Gothic style in the aftermath of the Unification of Italy, or the even more mimetic alterations of the historic city centre of Bologna celebrated by Alfonso Rubbiani in *Di Bologna riabbellita* (1913). In the private dimension of 19th century Paris, the manufacture of *bijoux en faux* elected the imitation of the real as a symbol of the rising social status of the petty bourgeoisie, which saw its role increase at little cost to itself (Gaillard, 2000). Again, the theorisation of the false is the basis for the eternal debate sealed by the slogan *"com'era, dov'era"* – coined to support the reconstruction of the Bon bell tower in St. Mark's Square in Venice– consolidated in the devastation following World War II and still relevant today in the critical discourse on post-earthquake reconstruction or on the protection of the cultural heritage following actions of intentional destruction (Cormier & Thom, 2016; Ciccopiedi 2018).

At the origin of the false is the copy which, particularly in the history of the visual arts, takes on opposite and changing meanings: virtuous, if one considers that the masterpieces of Greek statuary are known to us only because of the copies made in Roman times (Barbanera 2011), ambiguous, if the artistic discourse still revolves around the distinction between false and authentic (Casarin, 2015; Charney, 2020). And it is precisely on the de-signification of the authentic that it is possible to resort to the *"précession du simulacre"* theorized by Jean Baudrillard (1981): the simulacrum renounces any claim to objectivity and replaces its real counterpart, assuming its own completely autonomous value. The copy, however, plays an irreplaceable role in the didactics of the arts, as becomes clearly apparent in Cennino Cennini's book *Libro dell'arte*, in which he urges the exercise of replicating the works of the masters, recognizing furthermore the need to concentrate on a single author to avoid any risk of cultural dispersion (Cennini, 1375): in this sense, copying is never a mechanical action and becomes an archaeological reading of the author's poietic action, carried out in retracing the phases of conception and realization of the artworks.

Potentially everything can be copied, falsified or faked, perhaps in a conforming manner but still distinct from the factual reality. The qualification of the copy/false/fake triad is necessary in this sense, in order to pursue it or to reject it, but in any case, to search for the existence of the authentic, the true, the real, which can nourish consensus and consolidate relations between individuals (Veray, 1999). On the other hand, legal evidence is also undergoing profound upheaval as a result of the proliferation of copies, false and fakes. (Maras & Alexandrou, 2018).

Issue04 of **img** journal intends to explore the copy/false/fake triad, through interventions aimed at investigating, by way of example but not exhaustively:

- the scale of values that separates copy, false and fake from authentic, true and real, their intent – stated or not– to reproduce or mystify the author's intentionality, which involves ethical codes and can generate social and judicial consent or rejection;
- the influence exerted on the evolution of knowledge by copy, false and fake obtained through digital technologies (e.g. the rematerialisation through virtual and/or physical reproduction of different objects, from works of art to cultural heritage in the broadest sense, up to the not yet fully expressed potential linked to the experimentation of *digital twins*) and the contribution offered to the development of innovative lines of investigation;
- the importance of the creation of copy, false and fake objects (prototypes, archetypes, models and samples) in the artistic, architectural, cultural, design and economic evolution;
- the creative potential of copy, false and fake, intended as specifically conceived artifacts and not as subsequent manipulations not intended by the author, and their ability to influence the author's creative process;
- the criteria and different methods applied by the different disciplines to identify the true (be it an artefact or a statement) with respect to its reproduction, alteration, or falsification and to the triad copy/false/fake.

In addition to the types of documents accepted (essays, reviews and position papers) creative and artistic presentations with theoretical background, are welcome.

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