

WHAT DAVID STEIN SAID

Probably the most disconcerting thing about the phenomenon of art forgery is the fact that the best forgers have been able to imitate the style and manner of so many different artists (Tom Keating boasted over 100). What does this say about the originality or individuality of any one particular style? It is just a matter of skill, and since there was no lack of skilled painters working away in 17th-century Amsterdam, no wonder we have a problem with "Rembrandt" paintings today.

David Stein, convicted art-forgery, said that copying a signature *painted with a brush* was the easiest part of the forgery process (see opposite). All other things being equal, there is no guaranteed, objective method to determine whether a given signature came from the same hand as the one that painted the picture on which it appears. The statistical solutions of the forensic experts, high-tech art historians, and visionary mathematicians (see entries 20 and 57) turns art-collecting into a form of gambling. *Caveat emptor!*



Note: this film still, which comes from Alexander Korda and Carl Zuckmayer's Rembrandt (1937), is a good demonstration of the taboo against copying Rembrandt's—or anyone else's—signature: not even a layperson would be fooled.

photo: jmc