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For Immediate Release: April 13, 2007

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### ITALIAN ART FORGERIES SUBJECT OF PRESENTATION AT THE MUSEUM

The Museum of Texas Tech University Association (MOTTUA) as part of its Art Lecture Series, presents **“A REPUTATION FOR DECEPTION: ICILIO JONI, ART FORGERY, AND THE MARKET IN ITALY”** with Dr. Carol Helstosky, Associate Professor of History, University of Denver, on Thursday, April 19, at 7pm in the Helen DeVitt Jones Sculpture Court at the Museum of TTU, located at 3301 4<sup>th</sup> Street (SE corner of 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Indiana Avenue), where ample free parking is available in the north and west parking lots.

The lecture and reception\* to follow are open to the Public, and free of charge.

Dr. Helstosky is an associate professor of history at the University of Denver, where she has taught since 1997. She published her first book, *Garlic and Oil Food and Politics in Italy* in 2004, as well as numerous articles on the history of food in Italy. Her current research is on the history of art forgery and the art market in late 19th and early 20th century Italy. She has been the recipient of numerous grants from the Fulbright Foundation, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the German Marshall Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Regarding her Art Lecture, Dr. Helstosky writes:

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the so-called “Golden Age” of forgery in the European art market, several Italians (Giovanni Bastianini, Icilio Joni, Alceo Dossena) gained international fame for their imitations of and tributes to Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance styles. Countless other artists and dealers were similarly labeled forgers and Italy became known as “one vast workshop of adulterated antiquities” according to French critic Paul Eudel, writing in 1887.

The reputation Italians gained for perpetrating and allowing art forgery at this time was first generated by tourists and journalists and later reinforced by historians and art historians; many experts viewed the increase in forgeries as a logical outgrowth of excessive demand for Italian works, but a number of notable experts in Italian art—John Pope-Hennessy and Bernard Berenson, for example—also attributed forgery to a timelessly unscrupulous Italian character. What followed the observations of Berenson and Pope-Hennessy were uncritical condemnations of Italians as deceivers, uncritical in the sense that few observers acknowledged the conditions that they themselves created to facilitate or encourage the production of forgeries.

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MUSEUM OF TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY: Open 10 AM -5 PM Tue-Sat, open until 8:30 PM on Thu, 1-5 PM Sun. Closed Monday. **ADMISSION FREE**  
MOODY PLANETARIUM - STAR SHOWS: \$2 adults, \$1 students & 60+, 5 or less Free; LASER SHOWS: \$2 adults, \$1 students & 60+, 5 or less Free.  
LUBBOCK LAKE LANDMARK: Open 9 AM -5 PM Tuesday-Saturday, 1-5 PM Sunday. Closed Monday • At N. Loop 289 & Clovis Hwy. **ADMISSION FREE.**

This presentation examines the status of the market for Italian antiquities at the turn of the last century. Using the international debate and controversy over the forgeries of Icilio Joni and his followers, I discuss the growing demand for Italian art among Americans and the varied responses to this demand.

Joni's flamboyant lifestyle attracted a great deal of media attention and encouraged critics to depict Italian artists in an overwhelmingly negative light. The attention accorded to "Joni the forger" obscured a greater crisis confronting Italy: namely the excessive demand for inexpensive yet authentic antiquities. This presentation compares the international debate over Joni's forgeries to debates within Italy over the status of the national artistic patrimony in order to historicize or properly contextualize Italian art forgery.

The practice of forgery, I argue, was more than a way to be clever or become wealthy (very few Italians could manipulate the art market to their financial advantage), it constituted a logical response to a demand not only for art but also for the representation of Italy as the site of an emotional discovery of an authentic artistic object or a fragment from history. Under these circumstances, then, forgery is not necessarily excusable, but it should be more correctly understood as a reaction to the colonial enterprises of tourism and art collecting.

For more information or to request special assistance, contact the MOTTU Association Office at 806.742.2443. Stay up to date with MOTTU exhibitions and events at [www.museum.ttu.edu](http://www.museum.ttu.edu).

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*"There's something for everyone at the Museum."*

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\* The reception with Dr. Carol Helstosky is generously provided by The Helen Jones Foundation, Inc.