

Han van Meegeren

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This lie resulted from a classic case of wanting to please the critics. Han van Meegeren was an artist who felt underappreciated and thought he could trick art experts into admitting his genius.

In the early 20th century, scholars were 1) _____ about whether the great Vermeer had painted a series of works depicting biblical scenes. Van Meegeren 2) _____ on this opportunity and set to work carefully 3) _____ one such disputed work, "The Disciples at Emmaus." With tireless attention to detail, he faked the cracks and aged hardness of a centuries-old painting. He intentionally played on **the confirmation bias** of critics who wanted to believe that Vermeer painted these scenes.

It worked: Experts 4) _____ the painting as authentic, and van Meegeren made out like a bandit producing and selling more fake Vermeers. Greed apparently overcame his desire for praise, as he decided not to out himself. In fact, he "earned" the equivalent of \$30 million via the 5) _____ paintings.

However, van Meegeren, who was working in the 1930s and '40s, made one major mistake. He sold a painting to a prominent member of the Nazi party in Germany. After the war, Allies considered him a conspirator for selling a "national treasure" to the enemy. In a curious change of events, van Meegeren had to paint for his freedom. In order to help prove that the painting was no national treasure, he 6) _____ forged another in the presence of authorities. He escaped with a light sentence of one year in prison, but van Meegeren died of a heart attack two months after his trial.

