

FAKE OR NOT FAKE? ANIMATION ART

The big question. And an important one when buying art online. We're going to go through a few common clues to watch out for that can help you decide whether animation art for sale online is Fake or Not-Fake! Generally, we use the following definition to answer this question: "not-fake" is something associated with a production or drawn by an actual animator in the pursuit of the production of a cartoon. Note: we'll also add to this guide over time as we think of more!

"From my personal collection" Answer: 50% FAKE/50% NOT-FAKE

Half the folks online who say that they are selling from their personal collection are in fact lying. That means of course that half are not - so sometimes it's a tough call. Check out their selling history. If they're selling off a few items OR if they're selling a lot and there's documentation for their large collection (a blog, publications, etc.) then they're probably telling the truth. Check how long they've been selling their "personal collection" because generally three years is too long! Also, often times the fibbers will say, "NOT a business but only selling from my personal collection." The "not a business" is a good clue. Check their buying history as well - there's one individual selling on ebay right now who says they're only selling from their personal collection who purchased about a quarter of their inventory LAST WEEK on ebay.

"Gag art" ANSWER: MOSTLY NOT FAKE

Picture yourself a talented animator - with the skills to draw whatever you like. Picture yourself at your desk, day in and day out doing the working grind - what would you do? Gag art is a nice tradition in animation circles so it is indeed a real and collectible thing. Of course like anything else there are forgeries - but if you see a drawing with Bambi shouting the name of a Disney animator and telling him to stop leaving his coffee cups in another animator's

office there's a very good chance that art is real.

“Fan Art” ANSWER: **FAKE (unless you like that sort of thing)**

So before you come at us with the pitch-forks, we think that there is a lot of gorgeous fan art out there. BUT it muddies the waters. So to us, (using the definition that “not-fake” is something associated with a production or drawn by an actual animator in the pursuit of the production of a cartoon) Fan Art is fake. How does it muddy the waters? Seller A provides fan art to customer B. A year later, Customer B needs money and sells his art without mentioning it is fan art. That art is now out in the world as fake art.

“Preliminary Art” ANSWER: **MOSTLY NOT FAKE**

A LOT of preliminary art can be created for a show or feature. It's not uncommon to have a feature in production for half a decade before hitting the screen. We know of at least 3 attempts to make Beauty and the Beast. Frozen has been worked on for almost a century in one form or another. So if you see a version of Simba that looks totally odd AND it's for sale by a reputable dealer – it's likely not-fake. Of course, if a shady seller has that AND a Calvin and Hobbes original for sale, run away.

“Presentation Art” ANSWER: **WE SAY FAKE – OTHERS NOT SO MUCH**

This is a tough one. Presentation art can be created in support of a film. But to us, its just too hard to authenticate unless you're getting it straight from the studio or animator (there's usually little or no production notes to go by). Also, it's too easy to fake or forge. Finally, a lot of shady folks use “Presentation Art” as a way to say they made it themselves. So we generally say “no” to buying anything labeled as “Presentation Art.”

“Concept Art” **ANSWER: MOSTLY NOT FAKE**

See “Preliminary Art” above.

“...art by Disney?” **ANSWER: MOSTLY FAKE**

We see a lot of this – the inclusion of the word “Disney” and/or a question-mark. This is often used by shady sellers to get traffic to their item, since the word “Disney” is a big draw to both people and search engines. Also, folks love to knowingly sell Golden Films Little Mermaid cels (for example) as “Disney?” cels, when the sellers are clearly certain they are not from the Disney production. That being said, even WE have items that we are sometimes unsure of – but we also price them accordingly AND are very clear about what it might or might not be. So be cautious about this phrase.

“Test art” **ANSWER: NOT FAKE, BUT NOT USED**

This one isn’t usually labeled “Test art” but it’s a good one to know about. Animators will sometimes be given “tests” to see if they are appropriate for a production. Also studios do “Test art” for various reasons including voice-over auditions, concepts, etc. To give some examples, we have a folder of Ren and Stimpy art that was not used in production, but was drawn by a well-known animator who was being tested to see if they should work on the show. We have cels of a character from Anastasia that never appeared in the film, but was labeled “test” and was likely used during an earlier version or for voice-over tests.

“Limited Edition, Serigraph, Sericel, Glicee, etc.” **ANSWER: FAKE...with an occasional “but”...**

All fakes. Most galleries sell these...we do not. Because they are fakes – all of them. None have been used in production. And

without the appropriate paperwork or seals, etc. they also can muddy the waters (see Fan Art above). Sellers will often list these on ebay and only a very close look at a photo (to read the seal) will tell you it's a fake. That's if you're lucky. HOWEVER – some productions have no cels, some productions have very few cels and some only have cels that costs thousands. In those instances or in instances where an animator does a live signature edition, we can see them being valuable and desirable. They're still fakes, but as we mentioned, may have some merit. Of course you can make your own choice on this one.

“Art from unused scenes” **ANSWER: MOSTLY NOT FAKES**

Really the same answer as “Preliminary Art” and “Concept Art.” Done by animators in the pursuit of a feature or cartoon. Watch for a few scammers.

“COA/Seal versus no COA/Seal” **ANSWER: ASK YOUR REPUTABLE GALLERY AND DO YOUR HOMEWORK**

This one can always go either way. Frankly, your neighbor could make a seal and COA – it proves nothing. And in fact there are dealers selling on ebay who put fake seals and photocopied COA's with their art (Simpsons art as a matter of fact). But experienced buyers/sellers know when a seal and COA are the real deal and when it matters. When it matters? Yes. Because a cel from a feature can come out of the Disney studio with a seal and COA AND a cel from the same scene can come from an animator's estate without one. Both not-fake. Or a gallery can add their own seal and COA. And read those COA's!! Sometimes they say and/or guarantee nothing – which might be okay with you. Just be aware. As one of our favorite shorts reiterates: “Knowledge is power!”

Additional info:

Our last comment is a general one. We used to believe that folks

would simply not go through the effort of faking something that would sell for only \$10. Really – we thought – why would someone put all the time into it for only that much money? Well – regardless of the lack of logic, people do. There’s a seller who regularly fakes cheap Simpsons drawings. So again – as we noted a few times in this guide, partner up with an experienced buyer or seller. Get to know a gallery or dealer who is clearly about long relationships, not quick sales. Or make friends with an animator out there – many of them have blogs, etc. And most of all LEARN THINGS YOURSELF! As we said earlier, “Knowledge is power.” Knowing what hole-patterns were used at what times on Disney cartoons (for example) is something you can learn yourself and each bit of information like that helps you protect yourself!