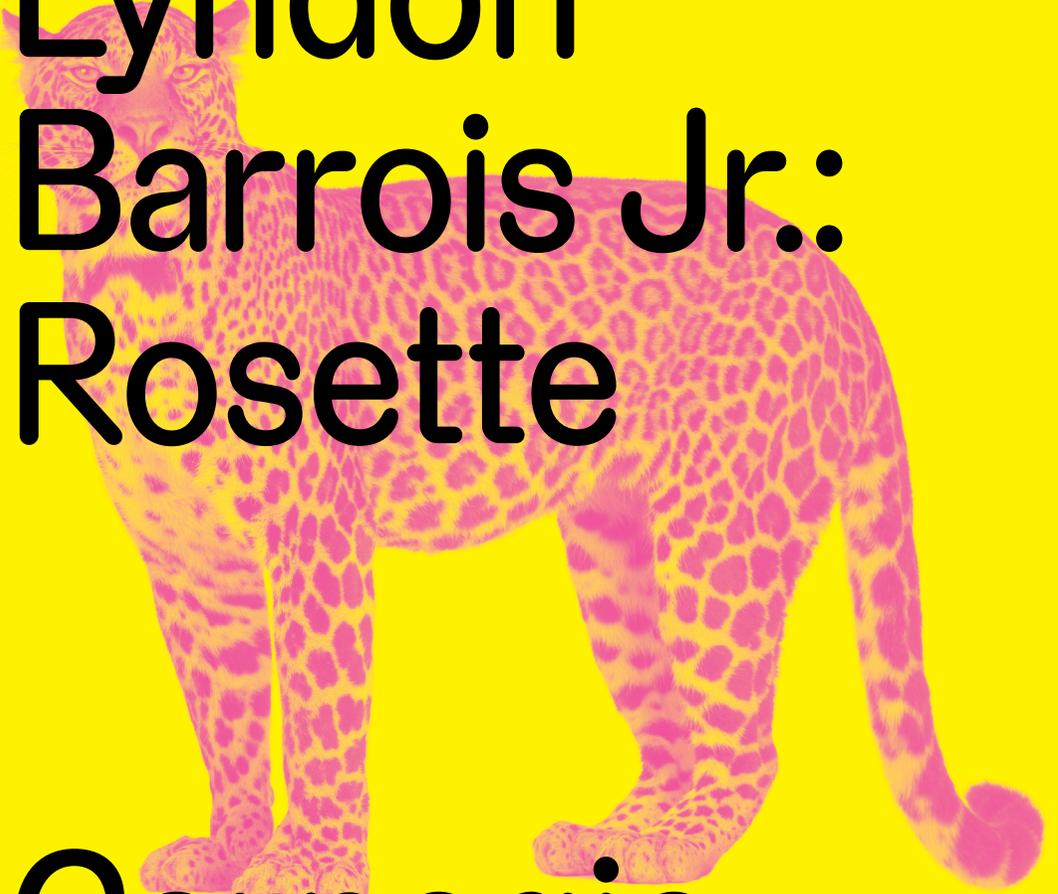


● Forum 86

Lyndon  
Barrois Jr.:  
Rosette

Carnegie  
Museum  
of Art



A motion picture is magical. A director invites you to suspend your disbelief so that a set designer can transport you to distant places and an actor can lead multiple lives on screen. During his childhood, Lyndon Barrois Jr. inherited a love of movies from his father who went on to work in special effects for the film industry. One of Barrois's favorite genres has become the heist film, which features mesmerizing sleights of hand and lets you in on elaborate schemes of deception. The artist brings this cinematic intrigue and fascination with trickery and mistaken perception into his studio where he explores how to represent the stuff of reality—and the abstract notions they convey—in the form of painting and sculpture.

A year ago, Barrois began a long-term project of writing a film script. Tapping into a niche genre of the art heist and forgery with notable examples such as *Topkapi* (1964) and *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968/1999), Barrois began imagining a story set in present-day Belgium about an art conservator named Lumière—who may secretly be a forger—and Seon-min, a fellow conservator. Lumière immediately sets up a scene of potential crime, but the motive is slower to emerge. Barrois looked to history for character development: Belgium's wealth—prominently displayed in its royal and civic buildings, including museums—is evidence of its colonial exploits in Africa. Elephant tusks traded at the value of precious metal, rubber plants sapped to make tires for the booming automobile industry, and uncompensated labor violently extracted from people in present-day

Democratic Republic of Congo all enriched Belgian emperor Leopold II's private coffers as well as the country at large. Today, museums in Belgium, and elsewhere, hold fine ivory carvings and design objects of the Belgian Art Nouveau, which, in their curvaceous rubber vine-like and elephantine shapes, recall the colonial roots of these forms. Behind the displays, museum conservators are tasked with the care of objects deemed invaluable to cultural heritage. Is it possible, then, that Barrois's protagonist—entrusted with preserving the integrity of such objects—is committing forgery to sabotage a system of values based on the authenticity of art as a moral protest? Barrois's script doesn't give away any answers and will have you guessing to the end.

Barrois says that he'll never realize the script as a film. Neither a screenwriter nor an artist who makes films, Barrois uses the space of an exhibition instead to present his narrative in the form of painting, sculpture, and, in this exhibition, choice objects borrowed from both Carnegie Museums of Art and Natural History. The script provides a framework for his art practice, which encompasses extensive research, material experiments, and grappling with art and history through images and objects. Consider *Rosette* as a lens through which you are invited to see colliding stories of a museum as a site of many forms of care work, fraught histories, and unexpected alliances. Enjoy the show.

—Liz Park, Richard Armstrong Curator of Contemporary Art

***Double Appear* written by Lyndon Barrois Jr.**

\*This script contains references to violence and coarse language.

INT. MUSEUM - CONSERVATION STUDIO - DAY  
In the foreground, we see a pair of out-of-focus, gloved hands cleaning a surface with a long cotton swab. A fuzzy figure in the distance is standing in the doorway.

LUMIÈRE (O.S.)

I hadn't realized we'd found someone for this job.

Seon-min—wearing a lab coat and magnifiers—is startled and turns away from her work to greet the voice.

Lumière is casually leaning in the door frame, smiling with warmth, layered and color-coordinated.

LUMIÈRE

I'm in *Africana* down in the basement. When did you start?

SEON-MIN

About a month or so ago, but I'm just getting to put my hands on something now, finally.

LUMIÈRE

How are you finding it?

SEON-MIN

It's amazing, surreal actually. So many genius works in the collection here. It's a bit of a dream.

LUMIÈRE

I don't mean to dim your excitement, but I get a bit sus on talks of genius, given the unaccounted ones down in my area—"the unidentified artisans."

SEON-MIN

(embarrassed)

Yeah for sure, just, a figure of speech...

LUMIÈRE

Of course...

(smirking, looking at the painting)

This reminds me, you familiar with the legend of the last dummy? It's from the 1930s I believe.

Seon-min furrows her brow and shakes her head while slowly continuing to work.

LUMIÈRE (CONT'D)

Essentially, a ventriloquist— KILLED by his own puppet. There was an entire act that culminated in the ventriloquist getting a shave from the puppet with

a straight razor. They kept arguing because the puppet wouldn't listen to what he wanted. Then, the whole thing ends with the puppet slitting his throat.

Seon-min abruptly stops and looks to Lumière with wide-eyed shock.

SEON-MIN

Right, so he killed himself...

LUMIÈRE

Insanity. They did find an added mechanism in the puppetry, likely to boost the strength and dexterity of its control, but it's still unclear whether it was a safeguard, or a guarantee of the fatal cut. "A Stroke of Genius..." they called it. "One Night Only."

Seon-min still stunned, stares into space picturing the incident.

LUMIÈRE

What gets me is the commitment to the conviction of it. He even maintained the resolve to have the puppet bow to the audience as he bled out. The audience didn't know whether to clap or run for help.

(beat)

Sorry, that was absolutely too morbid for a first chat.

SEON-MIN

No, that's...fascinating and strange—

LUMIÈRE

My point is, he wasn't a genius, he just practiced like everyone else who's good at anything.

SEON-MIN

(rolls eyes with amusement)

Okay, I see what you are doing...But nobody paints like this anymore.

LUMIÈRE

Oh I'm sure some do. But if everyone still did, no one would care.

(beat)

Not that I care much even now to be honest. It seems like an awful amount of trouble. And for us, all these tools and labor, to keep the dead from dying.

SEON-MIN

(laughing)

Don't you work with ancient artifacts, like, older than these even?

LUMIÈRE

Yeeaaaahh but, that's different. Maybe.

SEON-MIN

How so?

LUMIÈRE

Maybe it helps a minor history become a major one.

SEON-MIN

Hm. There's a bit of that here too, in these pictures. Like this one for instance, there's a slightly different portrait beneath the surface. Of the same person.

LUMIÈRE

Like, they had it altered?

SEON-MIN

I suppose. Perhaps she found a more flattering draughtsman. But we are trying to decide whether to revert it back to the original. It tells a much deeper story.

LUMIÈRE

But isn't the image we see now as it was intended?

SEON-MIN

Yes but, it's not real, it's superficial. Just a skin. Here, look at these...

Seon-min turns on a light table revealing radiographic images of the painting.

LUMIÈRE

Wow, definitely different.  
(beat)

So now that we see things like this, how often do you come across anything fraudulent?

Seon turns to Lumière, struck by the question...

CUT TO:

INT. "A SILENT OLD TROLL" CAFE - EVENING  
Lumière and Seon-min sit at a table in a dimly lit bar with a wooded interior.

LUMIÈRE

I do love the food of this place.

SEON-MIN

The beer in Belgium is amazing.

LUMIÈRE

There's a decadence to it, incredibly rich.

SEON-MIN

It can feel decadent overall sometimes.

LUMIÈRE

You know, there are some who think what we do is absolutely criminal. The things we keep and preserve? Why are these things valuable? And of what sort? Monetary? Cultural property? Some would argue that their value extends beyond these conditions.

SEON-MIN

How so?

LUMIÈRE

What about the value of the contexts for which they were intended? For many, objects are alive. They are to be used, activated. How do we appreciate them? We put them in cases. We suspend their mortality, we argue that it keeps them alive, but they are only memories of lives lived. They are zombified and rendered inert. They can't pass on, they can't perform with any agency, they are just... slaves to their owners.

SEON-MIN

It IS fucked up when you put it that way. I mean if none of these things were in our museums, you'd have to... (realizing) go to where they were from to see them...

LUMIÈRE

Wouldn't that be something?

SEON-MIN

(staring into space)

Huh...that would change so much.

Two tulip-shaped glasses full of beer arrive at the table.

LUMIÈRE

Back to the question of fraudulence.

Would it really matter if the copy were a good one? Aside from artistic intent and decisive moments and such. What if—by all accounts of the expertise—they were the same? Hypothetically, of course.

SEON-MIN

Well, one wouldn't have the passage of time, or the patina of having existed, the fact that historic hands have crafted them—

LUMIÈRE

Imagine all of that were simulated, I'm talking dead ringer. If no one could tell the difference, would it matter?

Seon-min ponders silently.

LUMIÈRE (CONT'D)

Okay, a zombie is a kind of double, right? The matter is there but not the memory? It's more like a cast I suppose, an image without the history. But at face value—barring deep inspection, or indiscretion—its story is held intact.

SEON-MIN

(revelatory, under breath)  
It's like a changeling...

LUMIÈRE

(curiously)

A changeling...?

SEON-MIN

Okay, I got one...

LUMIÈRE

Are we trading legends now?

SEON-MIN

I have a mild obsession with the supernatural that sends me down many a rabbit hole. Obviously, there are cross-cultural parallels all the time. For instance, in Nordic folklore, a changeling is used when trolls swap human babies for their elderly. It's a way for them to live out their old age getting pampered. Meanwhile the babies get turned and raised as new trolls. A heist of life almost.

Lumière is amused.

SEON-MIN (CONT'D)

They get caught when they do something out of character—something adult, like...singing a ballad, smoking a pipe, or thinking aloud in profound ways. They obnoxiously out themselves.

(Excerpted from *Double Appear*)

## Exhibition Checklist

1. *Lobby Card I* (Lumière), 2023, solvent transfer, collage, and oil on Belgian linen, portrays Lumière, the protagonist of Barrois's screenplay.
2. *Lobby Card II* (Seon-min), 2023, solvent transfer, collage, and oil on Belgian linen, portrays Seon-min, Lumière's conservator colleague.
3. *Hand Over Fist*, 2023, solvent transfers and liquid rubber on primed canvas mounted to panel, and linoleum frame, depicts *Landolphia owariensis* or Congo rubber plant, which was a major source of natural rubber.
4. Conservator's table holds a microscope connected to a monitor—a setup suggested by Carnegie Museum of Art senior manager of conservation Mary Wilcop.
5. and 6. *Two Daggers*, 2023, oil on Belgian linen, and *Everfair*, 2023, CNC-milled foam, MDF, paper pulp, sawdust, wood, and liquid rubber, await a conservator's scrutiny on the table.
7. Taxidermy leopard *Panthera pardus* from Carnegie Museum of Natural History sits on top of...
8. empty crates from Carnegie Museum of Art storage.
9. *Kaleidoscope (Cavity)*, 2023, oil on Belgian linen, vinyl, recreates the design work of Henry van de Velde (1863–1957), an artist, architect, designer, and one of the founders of Art Nouveau in Belgium.
10. *Precious Gums*, 2023, wood, plexiglas, and paper, holds the following objects—fake and authentic—from Carnegie Museums of Art and Natural History:
11. *Figure of a woman*, ca. 1450–1550, wood and paint, by unnamed Flemish artist, Carnegie Museum of Art, Gift of Richard Beatty Mellon, 30.13.315
12. Elephant's molar, ca. 1920s, Carnegie Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. Helen Overs, Dr. Robert Overs and Gareth Griffiths, from the Bishop Walter H. Overs Collection, 93.169.53. Elephants usually have a pair of incisors known as tusks, as well as 12 premolars and 12 molars.
13. Mineral specimens from Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Minerals are solid chemical elements or compounds formed by natural geological processes. Some minerals considered valuable for industrial and aesthetic purposes are mined, sold, and even faked.
- 13A. This calcite is a pseudomorph, meaning a mineral that has taken the form of another—in this case, that of glauconite. The color of this species is faked by probably soaking it in copper solutions.
- 13B. The center crystal of this bournonite is a fake. It has been reconstructed using plaster, covered in foil, and painted.

13C. This piece of wood has been slowly replaced over time by opal (a pseudomorph), retaining the original texture and look of the wood.

13D. This tusk-like calcite is a stalactite from a copper mine.

13E. The color on this quartz was created using vapor deposition, which means the surface of the crystal is coated with gold fumes resulting in what is called “aqua aura.”

13F. This large crystal of carrollite from the Democratic Republic of Congo was glued into the calcite and chalcopyrite matrix to look as if it formed there.

14. *Figure (Female Head and Torso)*, 19th century, wood, by unnamed Central African artist, Carnegie Museum of Art, Gift of Jay C. Leff, 78.58.1

15. *Tratteggio*, 2023, oil on Belgian linen, takes its title from a technique of retouching art that reveals the hand of the restorer.

16. *Escroc Légitime*, 2023, CNC-milled foam, MDF, paper pulp, sawdust, liquid rubber, depicts Belgium’s second king, Leopold II (1835–1901), who founded and owned the private colonial enterprise the Congo Free State from 1885 to 1908.

17. *Repose*, 2023, embroidered felt, a pair of banners flank the entrance of the Forum Gallery.

This gallery brochure is published on the occasion of *Lyndon Barrois Jr.: Rosette*, organized by Liz Park, Richard Armstrong Curator of Contemporary Art, and Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, May 5 through August 27, 2023.

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Premier Partners

## Programming

This exhibition ignites public conversations centered on the questions: How do art objects tell stories? What is art for? How can it question value and reorient power? What is ownership and what does it mean for a museum to own art?

**May 4, 6 p.m.**

● Forum Gallery

Celebrate the opening of the exhibition with an in-gallery conversation with Lyndon Barrois Jr. and Liz Park, Richard Armstrong Curator of Contemporary Art.

**May 25, 6 p.m.**

● Carnegie Museum of Art Theater

Please join us for a conversation between Lyndon Barrois Jr. and Mary Wilcop, senior manager of conservation at Carnegie Museum of Art. Their dialogue will invite us to consider the relationship, overlaps, and differences between an artist making art and a conservator preserving art.

Forum Gallery presents the work of living artists in an ongoing series that invites them to expand their practice through a commission or new presentation of existing works. Initiated in 1990, and with 86 projects to date, the Forum series is an opportunity for artists to deepen their relationship to and understanding of the museum.



p. 1: Portrait of leopard © Eric Isselée/Adobe Stock; p. 3: Wooden box, crate or parcel, 3D rendering © natatravel/ Adobe Stock; p. 4: Digital rendering of Lyndon Barrois Jr., *Escroc Légitime*, 2023; p. 7: Detail of Lyndon Barrois Jr., *Hand Over Fist*, 2023, photo: Sean Eaton; p. 8: Digital rendering of Lyndon Barrois Jr., *Everfair*, 2023; p. 11: Quartz variety aqua aura, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, photo: Debra Wilson; p. 12: Unnamed Central African artist, *Figure (Female Head and Torso)*, 19th century, Carnegie Museum of Art; p. 16: Calcite variety stalactite, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, photo: Debra Wilson.