The following review will appear in the May 2009 issue of CHOICE. The review is for your internal use only until our publication date of 01 May 2009.

Wood, Christopher S.  Forgery, replica, fiction: temporalities of German Renaissance art.  Chicago, 2008.  386p index  afp ISBN 9780226905976, $55.00

This sophisticated, fascinating book deals with the emergence of art as a new fictional construct in 16th-century Germany. Wood (Yale) argues that historical retrospective in premodern Germany never quite disentangled itself from patterns of deliberate misdating and misidentification. Audiences tended not to distinguish between older buildings and more recent replacements, or between ancient icons and more recent replicas. Contemporary reception of historical artifacts was shaped by a powerful presumption in favor of their mutual substitutability, which was gradually replaced by fictionality—including the fabrication of artifacts and facts. Emerging replication technologies (woodcut, copper engraving, movable type) advertised the idea of authorship and generated archaeological scholarship, while paintings tried to reattach modern life to the past. Wood rightly calls attention to the problematic relationship between humanists and imagery. He argues convincingly that the process of antiquarianism began to unravel as soon as it commenced, for substitution worked better when it was imprecise. Paradoxically, the concept of the original came into focus through its opposite—the perfect replica. Art. Wood concludes, emerged as an institution responsible for absorbing and monitoring anachronistic thinking. This is an important contribution to early modern scholarship and a powerful conceptual revision of current theories dealing with art's emergence.  

Summing Up: Highly recommended.  Upper-level undergraduates through faculty/researchers.  -- H. J. Van Miegroet, Duke University