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## Antiques Dealers



### KENNETH W. RENDELL GALLERY

Bringing history to life, one page at a time.

Leaning over a table covered with sheets of paper, Kenneth Rendell explains how he determined that a supposedly rare and valuable Elvis document was as legitimate as an Elvis sighting. Four years ago, Rendell, the 61-year-old owner of the Kenneth W. Rendell Gallery in Manhattan, was offered pages of lyrics that Presley had allegedly written in longhand. Rendell deals in rare and historic letters, manuscripts, documents, and papers, and has authored a book, *Forging History*, in which he relates his role in detecting the falsity of the Hitler diaries, among other cases. He was interested in the Elvis stash, which had surfaced in Germany, but was skeptical. "Graceland says there are only six letters in his own hand. I know that's true, because I found all six of them," he says without smiling. "They were all written to friends, and I think all of them start with 'You know how I hate to write.'"

The sheets of paper on the table are photocopies of Presley's handwriting and of the discovered lyrics. "Elvis was all over the place in his letter forms," Rendell says, pointing to a column of wiggly lowercase script. Then he points to the lyrics. "These are way too consistent." This and other clues convinced him that the German papers were bogus, and so he declined to purchase them. "I'm a big Elvis fan. I was very disappointed they were not genuine. If they were legitimate, they would have sold really well," he says, noting that a real handwritten copy of

"Love Me Tender" might have fetched as much as \$150,000.

If the lyrics were authentic, they would be just the sort of item you would find at Rendell's gallery, which is a delightful study in juxtaposition. Towering figures from the worlds of politics, literature, science,

William Clark. Also on display are a 100-yuan note signed in both Chinese and English by Mao Tse-Tung, a signature by director Alfred Hitchcock in which he includes a sketch of his trademark profile, a page from Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* manuscript, and a page of a musical manuscript by Mozart.

Some items are amusing, such as a short note that Ronald Reagan wrote in July 1967 denying any interest in the presidency: "I'm naturally very honored when someone can even think of me in connection with that high office, but I'm not a candidate." (Apparently, Reagan soon changed his mind, as he sought the Republican presidential nomination in 1968.) Others carry sage advice, such as a June 1957 letter from Ernest Hemingway to an aspiring writer: "Peter, the stolen horns bit is what makes literature; i.e. inventing truly from honestly acquired knowledge so that what you make up is truer than what you remember."

Rendell himself has gleaned invaluable wisdom from reading the personal papers of the great minds in human history. "The most important thing you learn is that everyone's teenagers are a pain in the ass," he says, half in jest, adding, "Generally speaking, you see the human side."

—SHEILA GIBSON STOODLEY

Kenneth W. Rendell Gallery, 212.717.1776,  
[www.kwrendell.com](http://www.kwrendell.com)



the military, and the performing arts gather under one roof as they never could during their lifetimes. Letters from Sylvia Plath, J.D. Salinger, Claude Monet, George Washington, Winston Churchill, and Helen Keller hang on the wall near documents signed by Queen Isabella I of Spain, Napoléon, Paul Revere, and explorers Meriwether Lewis and