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Expertise reveals fake Goncharova and Malevich paintings

The painters of Russian Avant-grade of the XX century, Natalya Goncharova and Kazimir Malevich are the most popular artists for fake paintings makers. An expertise has revealed that works by little-known Dutch and German painters are being presented as the paintings of famous Russian artists.

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How to Steal a Million a film comedy that was released in 1966, unfolded a story about a maker of fake painting in Paris who was risked to be exposed with the assistance of advanced methods of analyzing art works. Since then almost 50 years have passed, but the number of fakes in the world of art has not diminished. Several years ago, the ARTnews, a New York-based magazine, released shocking figures: there are more fake works than original paintings in the "Russian art" category.



Photo: Nadejda Brykina

A high demand for works by Russian Avant-grade painters, according to art collectors, is determined first and foremost by the popularity in making investments in art and the "status" of these works. At present, no one is amazed by expensive villas on Coted' Azur or yacht, but at the same time, a painting by Shagal in the castle is also possible.

For a long time, most of the scandals and legal proceedings were linked to fake works that were represented as original paintings by Kazimir Malevich, the author of the famous "Black Square." At present, the turn of other Russian painters, Natalya Goncharova, her husband Mikhail Larionov and Alexandra Ekster has come. The prices of their works have been steadily rising, while Goncharova has been the "most expensive" among female-painters. Scandals over paintings allegedly done by them have stirred one scandal after another: police in the Czech Republic are interested in the authenticity of the works at an exhibition: one of the paintings attributed to Larionov was removed from an auction. In France, police closed an exhibition of works by Alexandra Ekster.

As all know, demand breeds supply. Professional duplicate makers have long developed reliable schemes for the production of fake paintings. Works by little-known, or even unknown Dutch, German and other European painters are being offered on the world market. They do not enjoy high demand and are estimated at very low prices. In fact, these works have become raw materials for making fake paintings. Police know that there were incidents when such paintings were bought in bulk orienting on the age of the paintings and practically showing no interest in their authors.

Technically, it's easier to falsify Malevich than Rembrandt, says general director of the Association of Fine Art Experts, an All-Russian public organization Boris Shumyatsky.



“There is a well-organized fake painting making industry because this is a profitable business. When the price of Malevich stands between \$1.0 million and \$20 million, it will be worthwhile to work hard to make a fake painting. The technology of making fake paintings is being fantastically perfected. The methods of making for one, oil paintings are being studied not only by art conservators but also those who are engaged in making fake works. In Russian art, as a rule, the first Russian Avant-grade art, as well as those linked to it, is falsified. It’s unclear of its provenance because we are continuing to live in trouble times. It’s unclear where these paintings appeared from,” Shumyatsky said.

In fact, mainly books that allegedly give details about unknown paintings by great artists trigger a boom. For one, in 2010, two books devoted to the creative work by Natalya Goncharova were released in the West. They show reproductions of about 160 unknown paintings related to a period of up to 1915 when the painter left Russia. A large-scale emission of fake paintings attributed to Goncharova crosses all sensible borders, said British gallery dealer and collector James Butterwick in an interview with the Voice of Russia.

All this shows that the significance of Russian art is growing worldwide. The prices of the masterpieces of our painters are steadily rising. Some art analysts say that fashion in Russian art is returning abroad. The contemporary works are far from millions, of course, but their prices have grown by 30 times compared to the results of the first auctions in the 2000s. This is a measure of recognition, let it be commercial. Art devotees do not need proof.