

South China Morning Post 南華早報

HONGKONG

Democrats say sorry for paying HK\$300,000 for fake Huang Yongyu painting

Tony Cheung, Shirley Zhao, Jeffie Lam and Gary Cheung
15 October 2013

A renowned painter and a former minister have accepted the Democratic Party's apology for unintentionally selling a counterfeit painting during their anniversary dinner earlier this month. Former commerce minister Frederick Ma Si-hang, who will be refunded the HK\$300,000 he paid for the fake, said he would continue to support the Democrats' chairwoman Emily Lau Wai-hing despite the incident. The painting, which features flowers and birds, was donated by lawmaker and former party chairman Albert Ho Chun-yan. He said he obtained the painting from a collector-friend who told him it was by renowned artist Huang Yongyu.



(From left) Ho, Lau and Ma with the painting. Photo: SCMP

Ma bought the painting, but on Sunday, Huang's son Huang Heiman wrote on Weibo that the work was a counterfeit. "Although money was raised, I am deeply regretful that a painting lover has bought a fake work of art," he wrote. The party's chief executive, Lam Cheuk-ting, apologised to Huang Yongyu and Ma, and said Ma would be refunded the money he paid for the painting. Huang Heiman wrote on Weibo yesterday that the family acknowledged the Democrats had responded "appropriately and reasonably".

Ma told the South China Morning Post that Lau called him yesterday morning and apologised over the incident. "She said they will send me a cheque as soon as possible. I will continue to support her," he said. "I've heard about Huang Yongyu, and felt excited to be able to own his work. So I'm feeling a bit disappointed now." Asked about Ho's collector-friend from whom the painting came, Ho said: "The collector ... owns paintings by famous painters, including Huang. He can differentiate genuine works from counterfeits ... But in this case, he accepts what Huang's son said."

Asked if Ho could have asked experts to confirm the painting's authenticity before the auction, party colleague Cheung Man-kwong said they considered asking auction house Sotheby's for help, but dropped the idea after discovering this meant the painting, if genuine, would then have to be auctioned by Sotheby's.