

Forged painting of Turkish artist Nejad Melih Devrim discovered at Sotheby's

Istanbul, January 30 2014

The owner of an Istanbul gallery narrowly prevented the sale of a supposed painting by contemporary Turkish master Nejad Melih Devrim at Sotheby's auction house after notifying officials that the work was a fake, daily Radikal reported yesterday.

Normally, a fake of a renowned artist's work is produced by forgers, but this time two different paintings from Devrim were combined to create a new painting, Radikal reported. This fake work by Devrim, who lived in Paris between 1946 and 1968 before moving to Poland, where he died in 1995, had been given to Sotheby's for sale, only for Istanbul Galeri Nevi owner Haldun Dostođlu to notice that the work was a forgery. Dostođlu said Sotheby's had recently sent him a photograph of the painting before the sale, allowing him to realize that it was not an original. "This is not happening for the first time; when they are not very sure about the source of paintings, especially by Devrim, Mübin Orhon and Erol Akyavaş, they ask me," he said.

"I have organized many exhibitions of these artists and prepared books about them. This is why I know a bit about their works. Actually, I don't have a scientific explanation but I reply with my feelings, which hardly misguide me. When I look at the photo, it looked like a Devrim painting, but something made me suspicious," he said.

"I examined the 'Nejad' book, a publication of Galeri Nev, and saw two paintings made between 1950 and 1954. I realized that the upper part of the fake painting was the same as an original one but the fake one was turned on its side. The lower part is the same as another original painting. It means they produced a fake painting by attaching two original paintings to each other, turning one on its side. Did an artist do it? This book inspired the forgers, most probably," he said.

Fake paintings common

Fake paintings are all too common in Turkey, Dostođlu said. "But justice does not deal with this issue. Everyone knows that there are many fake ones on the market, but the Turkish courts have never intervened in the issue. Nobody has been tried because of fake paintings. Istanbul is home to lots of galleries; I really wonder how they survive. After 30 years of experience, I have an idea about how surviving is hard, but some galleries never experience difficulties," he said.

Warning about fake paintings, he advised people to only buy works from trustworthy auctions houses or galleries. "Many painters can easily be imitated but nobody is suspicious about Mehmet Gülerüz because he has an impossible drawing technique to imitate," he said.



The photos above show the original painting by Nejad Melih Devrim while the right one is fake, which forgers have produced by attaching them to each other.