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271 Picasso, Warhol, and Miró Fakes Seized in Yet Another Spanish Forgery Ring Bust

Lorena Muñoz-Alonso, Tuesday, March 3, 2015



Some of the counterfeit works seized by the Spanish police
Photo via: Spanish Police

Spanish police have uncovered a forgery ring that sold fake artworks purported to be [Pablo Picasso](#), [Andy Warhol](#), [Joan Miró](#), Joaquín Sorolla, [Antoni Tàpies](#), and [Eduardo Chillida](#) among others, [Europa Pressreports](#).

The operation culminated last weekend, when nine people, all of them Spanish, were arrested and 271 artworks—found in several flats in Valencia—seized. The arrested suspects include the team that painted the forgeries as well as the middlemen responsible for introducing them to the art market.

According to police sources, the alleged fraudsters were working across several distribution channels: they peddled the fakes through art galleries, but also through direct sales and online auctions.

The investigation began in Denia, in the Spanish province of Alicante, when a home burglary was reported to the police. The burglar was identified, and linked to the forgery ring.

Chief of the Spanish Police's Artistic Heritage Brigade Antonio Tenorio [told El Mundo](#) that the alleged con men had been working for at least seven years. He explained that the forgers sold the works to the middlemen for as little as €50 to €100 apiece. The middlemen then introduced them to the market at vastly inflated prices. A document compiled by the alleged criminals and found by police during the raids listed a drawing as costing €1,000 and a fake Tàpies painting retailing for €180,000.

Tenorio said the forgeries were of great quality, and that the relatively recent historical period they cover made them easier to sell than cumbersome old masters fakes. Tenorio added that the rise of online auctions had facilitated the sale of fake art.

This is the latest case in a series of high-profile forgery rings uncovered in Spain in the last few months. Last January, police arrested forgers specialized in the creation of counterfeit old masters, including Francisco de Goya and José Benlliure. The 27 pieces recovered in their raids in Castellón had a combined price of €1.2 million (see [Massive Old Masters Forgery Ring Busted in Spain](#)).

Also in January, three people, including an art dealer, were arrested in Zaragoza for trying to sell fake Miró, Picasso, and [Henri Matisse](#) drawings, with nine fake works seized during

the operation (see [Picasso, Miró, and Matisse Forgery Ring Busted](#)).

In April 2014, Spanish art dealer Jose Carlos Bergantiños Diaz and his partner were arrested in connection with the infamous Knoedler & Co. art forgery scandal. They stand accused of selling more than \$33 million worth of forgeries attributed to Mark Rothko, [Jackson Pollock](#), and [Robert Motherwell](#), among others (see [Spanish Dealer Arrested for Role in Knoedler Forgery Scam](#)).

Last but not least, two brothers from Girona were arrested two weeks ago for attempting to sell a fake Goya to a purported sheikh who, in turn, paid them a deposit with fake money (see [Police Arrest Brothers Who Sold a Fake Goya ... and Were Paid with Fake Cash](#)).

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