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Painting Valued at \$26 Turns out to Be a Raphael Masterpiece Worth \$26 Million

The Madonna was spotted during the making of a BBC TV series.

[Amah-Rose Abrams](#), October 3, 2016



Innocenzo Francucci da Imola *The Virgin*.

Photo The National Trust for Scotland, Haddo House

A painting discovered in a stately home by the Scottish National Trust and valued at £20 (\$26) is now thought to be a Madonna by Renaissance master Raphael, potentially increasing its worth to a cool £20 million (\$26 million).

The work, attributed to minor Renaissance artist Innocenzo Francucci da Imola, was initially spotted by Dr Bendor Grosvenor during the making of the BBC TV series “Britain’s Lost Masterpieces.”

Grosvenor was visiting Haddo House to view some other works for the series when he spotted the Madonna composition which, although not in the best condition, caught his expert eye.

“I thought, crikey, it looks like a Raphael,” Grosvenor told the *Guardian*. “It was very dirty under old varnish, which goes yellow ... Being an anorak, I go round houses like this with binoculars and torches. If I hadn’t done that, I’d probably have walked past it.”

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It later transpired that the painting was been purchased as a Raphael in the early 1800s and was exhibited, in 1841, alongside other paintings attributed to him. The work was later re-accredited to being by Francucci da Imola “after Raphael.”

In 1899, the painting—which has been dated to between 1505 and 1510—was valued at £20 as a copy, about £2,000 (\$2,600) in present-day prices.



Dr Bendor Grosvenor and Jacky Klein while shooting “Britain’s Lost Masterpieces”. Photo courtesy the BBC.

After some research, Grosvenor saw that the under-drawing matched that of Raphael, as did the profile of the Madonna featured in the paintings. Despite all these indicators, the series’ production timeline made it impossible to verify the work, which would have required speaking to as many Raphael experts as possible. The work is still formally credited to Francucci da Imola on the [Art UK](#) database of public works in Britain.

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"We had to turn this series round in very quick order," Grosvenor told the *Guardian*. "We didn't have time or resources to take it on a European tour of Raphael scholars," he explained, adding that "all the evidence seems to point in the right direction ... It would be Scotland's only publicly owned Raphael."

In the program, Grosvenor speaks to Sir Nicholas Penny, former director of the National Gallery, who, although doesn't confirm the work, drops some heavy hints. According to the *Guardian* he says: "I'm between probably and by. I just want a bit more time and courage."