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Art exhibition organizer fined for deceiving public

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A company that organized an art exhibition in Taipei last year was on Wednesday fined NT\$500,000 (US\$15,456) by the Fair Trade Commission for misleading consumers by exaggerating the value of the works of art.

The exhibition made headlines in August last year after a boy put a hole in a painting after apparently tripping and trying to catch his balance on the artwork.

Questions were raised about the value of some of the works in the exhibition “The Face of Leonardo, Images of a Genius,” organized by TST Art of Discovery Co.

In explaining the fine, the commission said that the ads used by the company gave the impression that the works were very valuable.

The ads included phrases such as “the NT\$7 billion self-portrait of Da Vinci,” “55 works, billions of dollars of masterpieces,” “visitors can appreciate genuine works worth about NT\$10 billion,” and “works with a value of more than 200 million euros,” the commission said.

However, the company was unable to substantiate the values of the artworks either through transaction prices nor via assessments by third parties, it said.

The commission did not establish the authenticity or value of the works on its own, it said, adding that the inability of the organizer to back up the stated values with objective facts offered enough justification to impose the fine.

The company showed an intent to mislead consumers and influence them to visit the exhibition, the commission said.