



AiA Art News-service



Fake Hirst works circulating the art market

United Kingdom February 4 2016

Auction houses and galleries are being urged to remain vigilant after it emerged that a number of counterfeit Damien Hirst works are circulating the art market.

The Antiques Trade Gazette reported on Monday (1 February) that the Hirst fakes are being sold for up to £1500-4000 both privately and by at least a half dozen auction houses. The circulation of the works came to the attention of the Hirst Authentication Committee (HIAC) during one of its most recent authentication sessions. The committee, which is authorised by the artist to authenticate his works, is remaining tight-lipped about how to identify the forgeries for fear of inspiring copycat attempts. It is urging anyone with suspicions to contact it for advice and assistance.

Despite the HIAC's reticence, one art dealer based in London who purchased three counterfeit acrylic works from Mallams Oxford has revealed how it might be possible to spot a fake. The forgeries are said to lack viable provenance details such as the White Cube gallery where Hirst first sold his works, and to be cheaply framed. The dealer purchased the fake works at auction in July 2015 for a total of £11,776. They were catalogued by Mallams as by 'Damien Hirst (b. 1965)' with estimates of £2000-3000. The works were signed on the verso and featured a stamp stating they were made in Hirst's Gloucester studio.

Following the auction, the dealer submitted his purchases to the HIAC for authentication. As authentication sessions are only held around six times a year it was not until October that he learned they were fakes. Now he is struggling to obtain a refund from Mallams who referred him to their

terms and conditions which limits the return period for deliberate forgeries to within 21 days of purchase. The dealer believes this is too short a time frame in which to be able to authenticate works through the HIAC and that Mallams failed to adequately complete due diligence on the works prior to auction. The dispute is ongoing.

Director of the HIAC, James Kelly, says the committee is contacting auction houses and galleries dealing in Hirst's pieces to caution them and to offer assistance in verifying provenance.