

Return to Sender

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The Paris art historian, Andréi Nakov, took part in an interview, together with the German art historian, Hans Peter Riese, the German scientist, Erhard Jägers, and others broadcast on the German radio station, HRinfo, on 25 June 2013. Responding to a question about fakes, Mr Nakov said that he had “become so tired of photographs of fakes being sent to his email address that he no longer even bothered to look at them and simply pressed, ‘Return to Sender.’” Is this really a professional approach to the work of art – to pass judgement on works from computer photographs in the best case or not to look at the image at all in the worst case? Is Mr Nakov attempting to establish credibility by an appeal to his authority, expecting the world to just believe him, no proofs needed? Every museum in the world requires art historical documentation, with scientific analyses becoming increasingly demanded, before they consider buying a work of art. So is “no proofs needed” an attempt to give credence to a counter culture proclaimed by an individual in order to discredit the historical and scientific documentation in which lie the real proofs, not to mention the authority of the work itself? Would any truly professional person in the world deny these fundamental requirements as the basis for assessing the work of art? Would any truly professional person in the world pass over these requirements and pronounce on a work of art? To slander a work of art is no different than slandering a person and in particular those who have investigated it and whose expertise is professional and informed.

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