



£20 million art masterpiece owned by Scots museum is a fake, says expert

ART expert Antonio Garcia has produced a 60-page report which states the 16th century painting Lady in a Fur Wrap, which is on display in Glasgow's Pollok House, was not created by the artist El Greco.

By Bill Bond – 26 January 2014

AN ART expert has branded a masterpiece owned by a Scots museum as a fake.

Lady in a Fur Wrap – a 16th century work attributed to the artist El Greco and thought to be worth up to £20million – is part of the Glasgow Museums collection and is usually displayed at the city's Pollok House.

But Antonio Garcia has produced a 60-page report which he says proves the painting is not an El Greco. And he has accused Glasgow council chiefs of blocking scientific tests, which were requested a decade ago, to find out the truth.



Garcia claims Lady in a Fur Wrap is not by El Greco

Garcia said: "Anyone – no matter how few of El Greco's works they may have seen and without being in any way an art expert – can see that the colours used and the perfect facial features in the portrait of this enigmatic lady have nothing to do with the style of El Greco."

The painting was bought by Sir William Stirling Maxwell for £1857 in 1853 and gifted to the city in 1966. Garcia, who was culture editor for Spain's El Mundo newspaper for 20 years, spent two years investigating the disputed oil on canvas. The painting was discovered in Paris 300 years after the death of El Greco – the Spanish-based Greek artist Domenikos Theotokopoulos.

Garcia said: "It was the first time this work had ever been seen. It had never been exhibited anywhere and had never been listed as part of any collection. It was a mysterious appearance that captured the people of Paris. At that time, there were probably five or six artists in Spain who could have painted it but none of them were famous. I am not in a position to say that whoever painted this work was involved in any deceit. He may well have acted in good faith."

The painting is on loan to the Museo de Santa Cruz in the Spanish city of Toledo for an exhibition marking the 400th anniversary of the artist's death. Professor Fernando Marias, curator of the display in the city where El Greco lived, has read Garcia's dossier. It prompted him to email former Glasgow museums boss Dr Ellen McAdam, who now works in Birmingham. He wanted to know whether scientific tests requested a decade ago ever took place and if they did, what they found.

Marias said: "It was an interesting theory but the problem is Garcia can't prove it. I'm an academic and we need proof of what he is arguing.



“He was on about various scientific tests, infrared and X-rays and so on. I am not personally aware of any results of such tests being published.

“I sent an email to Ellen McAdam whom I had met at an El Greco exhibition in Japan asking if any such tests had been carried out. For whatever reason, I never received an answer.”

The call for tests first came when the portrait was displayed at the National Gallery in London.

Garcia said: “It was said that it was going to be done but if it was, the findings have never been made public. It seems the museum in Glasgow does not want any of these.”

Marias estimated the painting could fetch £20million if genuine but even if it’s not El Greco’s work, it could still be valuable.

He said: “If it were to be sold it would fetch a very high price – much higher than any other. It is an icon. I would think it could easily raise double the £9.6million paid for the painting of St Dominic in Prayer at Sotheby’s last summer. One would assume it would be much less than if it were an El Greco but the art market is a very strange and unpredictable one. It is in its own right a remarkable painting, whoever the artist was.”

Another theory is that it could be an El Greco but worked on many years later.

Marias added: “This could be a restoration and to a certain extent was possibly changed. More a restorer than a faker, but that’s speculation.

“What I can say is that we are having this painting at the Toledo exhibition and we are accepting it as an El Greco.”

Although Garcia maintains it is not one of the artist’s works, he said the quality of the piece is all that matters. He added: “Whoever painted it, the Lady in a Fur Wrap is a great work of art and that’s the first thing that should matter, not who signed the picture or its economic value.”

A spokesman for Glasgow City Council culture body Glasgow Life said: “Within the art world, there are many debates between scholars and academics over the provenance of works and we welcome this contribution as part of that debate.”