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Is this a Van Gogh self-portrait? New book claims it is a forgery

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A Swiss magazine has published a report claiming one of Van Gogh's most celebrated masterpieces – a self-portrait showing the artist with bandaged ear and smoking a pipe - is not by the Dutch artist himself.

In the article in Die Weltwoche, journalist Hanspeter Born claims the painting is a forgery by little-known impressionist painter Emile Schuffenecker (1851–1934). Born describes how drawing teacher and part-time artist Schuffenecker used a black-and-white photo of Van Gogh's original, now in London's Courtauld collection, as a model for his own painting of the doomed painter who cut off his ear.



Was this painted by a contemporary of Van Gogh?

Provenence

The painting which Born claims was made by Schuffenecker is entitled *The Man with the Pipe* and was shown in a Paris exhibition as a Vincent van Gogh self-portrait. Van Gogh is said to have painted over 30 self-portraits between 1886 and his death in 1889.

In 1902 Schuffenecker sold his work to the wine merchant and art lover Gustave Fayet for 3,000 francs, which Born says was the highest price ever paid for a Van Gogh at that time. In a letter to Fayet, Schuffenecker consoled himself for the loss of 'something of myself'.

'My poor man with a pipe will now find itself in good company and in the hands of a man who will love it, which comforts me a little. I dearly recommend it to you,' Born quotes him as saying.

After Fayet's death, the well-known Paris dealer Paul Rosenberg sold *The Man with a Pipe* to the American advertising tycoon Albert Lasker, who lent it to the Chicago Museum of Art. After the death of Lasker's daughter, the painting was bought by the Greek shipping magnate Stavros Niarchos and passed to his son Philip. It is now on view at the Zurich Kunsthaus.

Book

The claims are made in a new book by Born following years of research together with French academic Benoit Landais. In the book, *Schuffenecker's Sunflowers*, Born and Landais claim that some 30 paintings attributed to Van Gogh are forgeries or pastiches painted by Schuffenecker.

Schuffenecker was also alleged to be the painter of one of Van Gogh's sunflower paintings but that claim was rebuffed by experts at the Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam in 2002. There are three works in the sunflower series.

1920s

Suggestions that Schuffenecker faked works by Van Gogh and others, including Gauguin, date back to the 1920s. Earlier this month, the Cleveland Museum of Art in the US dismissed claims by Born and Landais that eight paintings in a show on Vincent van Gogh scheduled to open in March are fakes.

The show focuses on Van Gogh's regular habit of painting double or multiple versions of favourite images.