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Charges made against two men in Russian avant-garde forgery case

The suspects allegedly offers fakes for sale as genuine works by Malevich, Rodchenko and Goncharova

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In June last year, German police officers searched apartments, offices and storage facilities across 14 German cities, seizing around 1,000 works. Photo: © BKA

Two men have been charged after a 15-month investigation into the suspected forgery of Russian avant-garde paintings. The Wiesbaden public prosecutors office says that between 2006 and 2013, a 68-year-old and a 42-year-old allegedly offered 18 fakes for sale as genuine works by artists such as Kazimir Malevich, Alexei Jawlensky, Alexander Rodchenko and Natalia Goncharova. A 41-year-old man, the brother of one of the accused, has also been charged for helping them.

According to a spokesman for the prosecutors office, the 18 works include *Porträt eines Mädchens in Rot* (portrait of a girl in red), 1913, meant to be by Jawlensky, which was offered by the suspects for €400,000 and *La cueillette des pommes* (the apple picker), around 1910, supposedly by Goncharova, which was offered for €160,000.

In June last year, 100 German police officers searched apartments, offices and storage facilities across 14 German cities. The two men were subsequently arrested and have now been charged. Around 1,000 works were seized at the time, but the charges are now limited to 18 paintings. The case is expected to go to trial at the end of the year.