

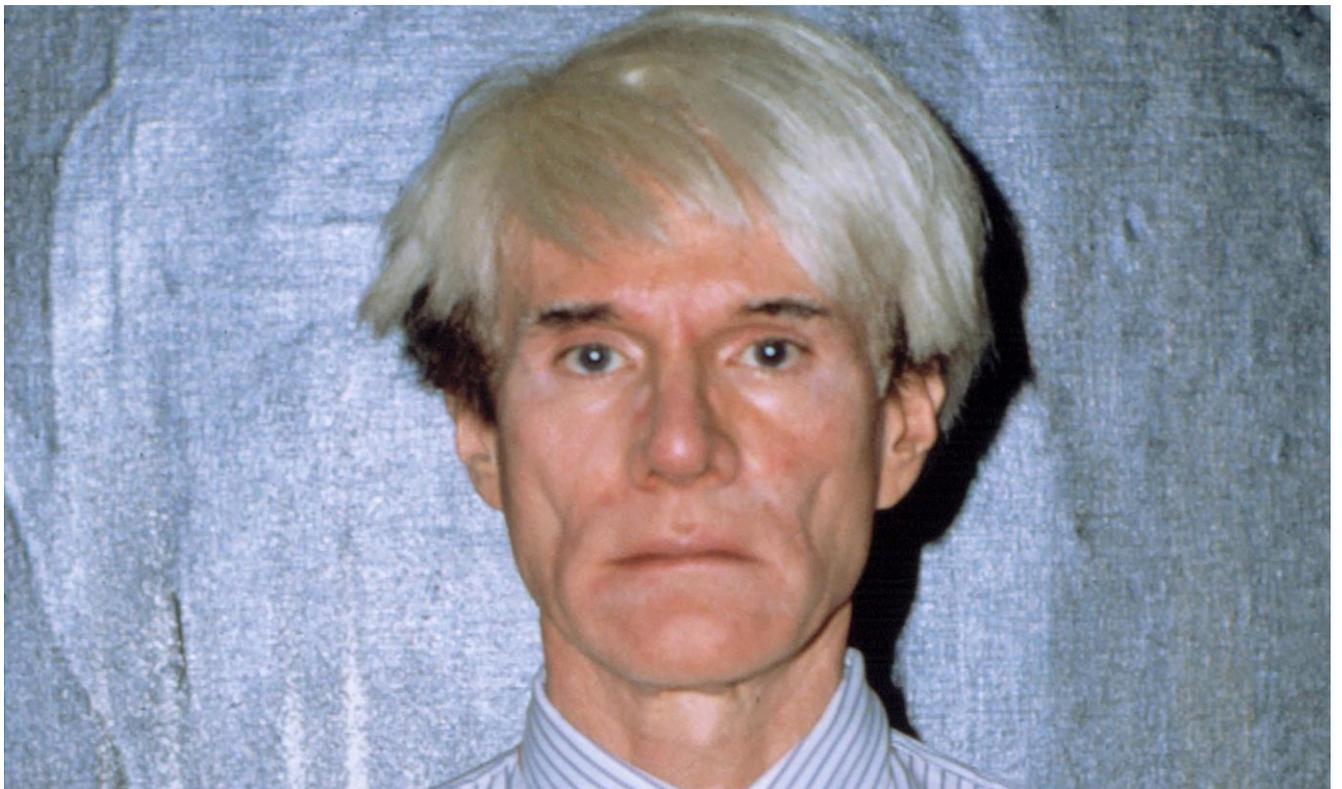
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Theft of nine Warhol prints in Los Angeles went undetected for years

An estimated \$350,000 worth of silk screen prints hanging in movie business were discovered to be replaced with fakes after one was taken to be reframed



Bald Eagle, one of the stolen Andy Warhol prints, was sold by auction house Bonhams in 2011, according to the affidavit. Photograph: Everett Collection/Rex

Reuters

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Nine original [Andy Warhol](#) prints were quietly stolen from a Los Angeles movie business and replaced with fakes in an art heist that went undetected for years, police and court documents showed on Thursday.

The silk screen prints worth an estimated \$350,000 are from the artist's 1983 series *Endangered Species* and his 1980 *Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century*, according to a police report submitted to [Los Angeles](#) superior court as part of a search warrant affidavit.

The theft was first reported earlier this week by celebrity website TMZ.

Los Angeles police detective Don Hrycyk of the city's art theft detail declined to comment, saying the case was under investigation.

In the affidavit, police said the theft of the prints from the premises of movie company Moviola was so seamless, it was only discovered after one of the pieces was taken to be reframed. Staff at the framing firm noticed that the print was fuzzy and lacked a print number and signature.

A special tool was used to remove the frames in which the prints were hung at Moviola, because otherwise the walls would have been left damaged, according to the affidavit.

It appears whoever stole the prints replaced them with large color copies, Los Angeles police detective Brent Johnson wrote in the affidavit.

Bald Eagle, one of the pilfered works, was sold by auction house Bonhams on 25 October 2011, according to the affidavit.

A judge last month issued a search warrant for the Los Angeles office of Bonhams, as detectives investigated who bought the print and who consigned it, court papers showed.

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Bonhams spokeswoman Kristin Guter said police did not search the office but that last month the company responded to a request from investigators for information and documentation about the Bald Eagle print sold in 2011.

She said police have not contacted Bonhams about any prints from 10 Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century.

An official at Moviola did not return a telephone call seeking comment.

A Los Angeles police report said the conditions of the fakes indicated the theft occurred in the past three years, although the 2011 auction of the Bald Eagle suggested a date earlier than that.

The Ten Portraits of Jews series includes Sarah Bernhardt and Martin Buber, while Endangered Species includes the bighorn ram and the Siberian tiger. It was unclear exactly which images from the two series were stolen.