

AUTHENTICATION IN ART

AiA Art News-service

The Telegraph

Art forger goes straight selling £5,000 fakes



Convicted forger David

Henty CREDIT: ANDREW HASSON FOR THE TELEGRAPH

- [Robert Mendick](#), CHIEF REPORTER

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These masterpieces should be worth in the region of a half a billion pounds. Except they are fakes produced by David Henty, a convicted forger who produced them in the living room of his house by the seaside Brighton.

Mr Henty was exposed by The Telegraph a little over a year ago for selling his copies on eBay, duping hundreds, if not thousands, of the internet auction site's customers in the process.

But proving there's no such thing as bad publicity, Mr Henty has turned the notoriety to his advantage.

"Since you did those stories, I have had quite a few commissions. I can't thank The Telegraph enough." David Henty, master forger on going straight

The Telegraph investigation, which prompted interest from newspapers and television stations around the world, has led to Mr Henty going straight.

At the end of the month, an art gallery will stage an exhibition of his copies of masterpieces by the likes of van Gogh, Picasso and Modigliani.

With paintings priced at up to £5,000 a time, Mr Henty is expecting to do decent business.



David

Henty CREDIT: ANDREW HASSON FOR THE TELEGRAPH

"Since you did those stories, I have had quite a few commissions," Mr Henty said.

"People read about me in The Telegraph and elsewhere and sent me letters requesting I do copies for them of masterpieces.

"As a result, I decided to go straight and business is brilliant. I can't thank The Telegraph enough."

At the age of 58, and after a career in crime, the admission from Mr Henty is a bold one.

He was jailed for five years in the mid 1990s for forging thousands of fake British passports which he planned to sell to anxious Hong Kong citizens ahead of the handover to China.

The scam would have earned him a £1 million and might have worked, not least if he hadn't mis-spelt the words 'Britanic' and 'Magesty'. He went to jail a second time in Spain for selling stolen cars.



David

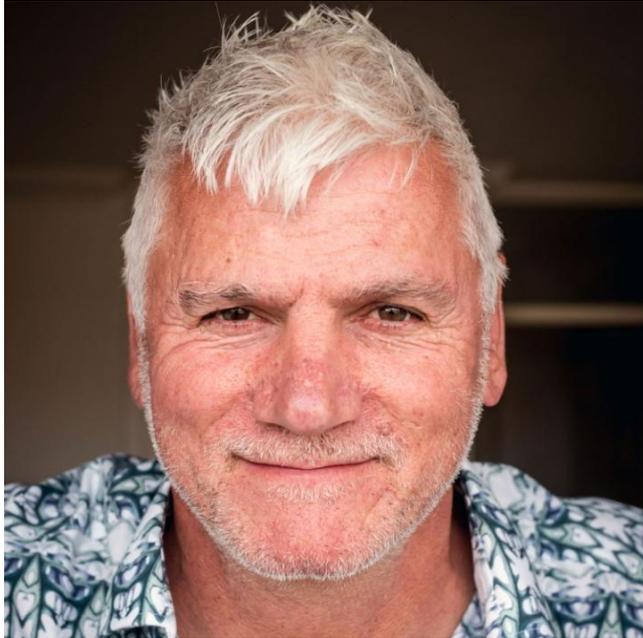
Henty CREDIT: ANDREW HASSON FOR THE TELEGRAPH

His eBay scam involved copying works by slightly less famous - and usually dead - artists, luring buyers in with claims that the paintings had been found in attics and in house clearance sales and that the authenticity could not be guaranteed.

In fact, Mr Henty knew the artwork couldn't be genuine because he was churning the paintings out in his living room, as he later confessed when confronted by The Telegraph.

It was hard for him to conceal he was the artist behind the fakes, not least because he drives around in a car with the personalised number plate "V9OGH" in self-recognition of his skills as a counterfeiter of van Gogh's work.

"I think eBay has had its day for fake art," he said, "For the last few months I have been concentrating on these masterpiece copies. I have done a lot of research. I have been to the galleries and studied them in the flesh. The paintings are all the exact size of the originals.



David

Henty CREDIT: ANDREW HASSON FOR THE TELEGRAPH

“I have got 30 or 40 paintings for the exhibition. I have just done a 6ft Francis Bacon that I am really pleased with. I have tried to get them as accurate as possible.”

The exhibition at the No Walls Gallery in Brighton will be his first as a legitimate copier. The opening night will be attended by Peter James, the best-selling author of crime fiction who has just completed a book about real life criminals in Brighton written in conjunction with Graham Bartlett, the city’s former chief superintendent, who arrested Mr Henty for the passport scam.



David

Henty CREDIT: ANDREW HASSON FOR THE TELEGRAPH

The pair - detective and villain - have struck up an unlikely friendship in recent months. Mr Henty’s passport scam is a chapter in the book, entitled 'Death Comes Knocking' and which is published in the summer.

The endorsement of Mr Henty's art by Mr James, who has sold 17 million books worldwide, will further boost his chances of artistic success.

A satellite television channel is also planning to make a programme around Mr Henty in which one of his fakes will hang with genuine masterpieces in a gallery.

Contestants have to spot the forgery. Whether they succeed or not will be testament to Mr Henty's skills as a master forger.