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'We want Salvator Mundi' for Leonardo blockbuster, Louvre says

Claims that it had "cancelled plans" to show the work are "fake information", the museum says

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Courtesy of Christie's Images LTD 2017 Courtesy of Christie's Images LTD 2017

The Louvre museum in Paris has confirmed that it hopes to display the Salvator Mundi, a painting of Christ, which was sold for \$450m at Christie's in New York in 2017 as a work by Leonardo da Vinci.

The museum wants to include the canvas in its upcoming Leonardo show, which opens in October to mark the 500th anniversary of the artist's death.

"I confirm the Musée du Louvre has asked for the loan of the Salvator Mundi for its October exhibition and truly wishes to exhibit the artwork," a spokeswoman for the institution tells The Art Newspaper. The museum has requested the work's loan from its owner but "the owner has not given his answer yet," the Louvre spokeswoman says.

The phrasing of the Louvre's statement suggests that the painting is still owned by a single individual, who is widely believed to be Mohammed bin Salman, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia.

After the painting was auctioned in November 2017, Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism released a statement saying it had acquired the work for the Louvre Abu Dhabi. The Emirati museum was scheduled to show the work last September but this display was cancelled with no explanation. Louvre Abu Dhabi then declined to answer any questions about the decision.

Since then, speculation about the painting's authenticity has proliferated. Yesterday, the British newspaper [The Sunday Telegraph](#) reported that the Louvre in Paris has "cancelled plans" to show the work. The newspaper cited a former conservation consultant to the museum who said that the institution and French politicians at the highest levels "know that the Salvator Mundi isn't a Leonardo." But the Louvre spokeswoman dismissed this report as "fake information."