



AiA Art News-service

The Telegraph

Art researcher who planned to sell
'Picasso' learns it is a fake by infamous
art forger



David Henty,

infamous art forger, claims he created a 'Picasso' found at a car boot
sale CREDIT: ANDREW HASSON

- [Laura FitzPatrick](#)
- [Robert Mendick](#), CHIEF REPORTER

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The painting signed by Picasso and picked up at a car boot sale for just £230 had got Brighton's leading auction house hugely excited.

If genuine, the oil on board study Seated Bather would be worth £1 million - and possibly much more.

The painting bears Picasso's signature on the front and a second with a note on the back.

The auction team at Brighton and Hove Auction Room said they were 'stunned' and declared it a possible 'preliminary study' when antiques collector Philip Stapleton brought the artwork in for examination.

But their hopes of finding a genuine Picasso may well be dashed.

The likely hand behind the painting is David Henty, a prolific art forger, previously jailed for forging passports in the 1990s.

When asked by the *Telegraph* if the painting was one of his, Mr Henty, 60, who lives in Brighton, said: "It looks very familiar.

"I gave some paintings a while ago to a friend of mine. There are a few stray ones [out there]."



Philip Stapleton, from Crawley, bought the painting at the car boot sale in West Sussex

In a subsequent text message, he said: "It's all a bit of fun but sometimes they do end up in funny places!" accompanied by a photograph of the original painting contained in a Picasso art book in Mr Henty's possession.

Mr Henty was first exposed as an art forger by The Telegraph in 2014 after the newspaper found him selling dozens of copies of works by Picasso, LS Lowry and others on eBay.

The publicity led to him being feted on television programmes and his copies - marked clearly as 'Henty's' - now sell for £5,000 and upwards.

Rosie May, Brighton and Hove Auction Rooms' art researcher, said she didn't believe Mr Henty had painted Seated Bather.

"He is a liar, he isn't an honest person," said Ms May, adding: "It would be a shame for Mr Stapleton if this devalues the artwork."



The 'Picasso' found at a car boot sale CREDIT: DAVID MCHUGH

Mr Stapleton, of Crawley, West Sussex, said: "It sat on my desk for about six months after I bought it. I thought that I'd paid quite a lot of money for a fake picture.

But I went to the auction house and I thought I'd get my money back on it."

Philip Mould, the art dealer and presenter of the BBC series Fake or Fortune?, said: "No one in the serious art market is likely to take it seriously unless it was authenticated by the Picasso family and estate. It's a titanic task to get the evidence to satisfy them.

"The road to authenticity with Picasso is paved with rejection. It's not impossible but to find a piece with all the evidence of a Picasso is a prize of the 20th Century."