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Saint Jerome once owned by controversial collector
Giulano Ruffini sent for technical tests

Sotheby's confirms painting shown at the Met attributed to Parmigianino now
under suspicion

by [VINCENT NOCE](#) | 17 October 2016



Saint Jerome attributed to Parmigianino is being tested

A painting of Saint Jerome attributed to the 16th-century artist Parmigianino is now being investigated, Sotheby's New York has confirmed. A similar set of technical tests led the auction house to conclude that a Portrait of a Man attributed to Frans Hals, which it also sold in good faith, was a forgery, as our sister paper the Journal des Arts first reported in late September.

The auction house sold the painting of Saint Jerome in January 2008 for more than \$800,000 as a work from "the circle of Parmigianino". In 2014, a private collector lent it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where it was shown from April 2014 to February 2015 and attributed to Parmigianino himself. The Met described the painting as a "powerful depiction of the penitent saint", possibly painted by the artist in Bologna or Parma around 1528-30.

A spokeswoman for the Met says: "The work was here for study and during that time curators of the European painting department had occasion to discuss it with leading experts on the artist." She adds that at the time, "the only point of dispute was whether it was painted by Parmigianino or by an artist close to him".

The painting of Saint Jerome once belonged to Giuliano Ruffini, an Italian-based French collector, who has sold paintings subsequently attributed to Cranach, Hals and Orazio Gentileschi among others. Ruffini insists that dealers, experts and curators are the people responsible for the attributions.

With leading museums, including the National Gallery in London and the Louvre in Paris, involved, the case is turning into a battle between experts that could have serious legal and financial repercussions.

In Basel, Dieter Koepplin, who authenticated the Venus with a Veil as a Cranach in 2013 before its purchase by the prince of Liechtenstein, now says he is "certain it is a forgery". However, the director of the prince's collection, Johann Kraeftner, said he has "no reason to doubt the authenticity of the painting". Kraeftner says: "Any divergent opinions resulting from recent analysis instructed by the French authorities can and will be refuted." Legal experts in France have declared the work a fake after it was seized from an exhibition in March.

Sotheby's has not published the technical study of Portrait of a Man conducted by the US-based company Orion Analytical, although the results of that study led the auction house to conclude the painting was a forgery, and it reimbursed the US-based buyer.

The British dealer Mark Weiss, who sold the portrait in good faith as a Hals to the US collector Richard Hedreen through Sotheby's for \$10m, says: "I still have to be convinced," adding: "The scientific community

believes that further examinations should be undertaken.” He has not reimbursed Sotheby’s.