



THE FIFA FILES

► In spring 2014, a senior figure inside Fifa, world football's governing body, leaked a cache of hundreds of millions of documents to The Sunday Times

THE SUNDAY TIMES

British owner of 'fake' Chagall told it will be destroyed

Richard Brooks Published: 2 February 2014



The picture the owner believes was painted by Chagall (BBC)

TWO granddaughters of the Russian-French artist Marc Chagall are threatening to destroy a watercolour attributed to him after deciding it is a fake.

Martin Lang, a Leeds businessman, bought the painting for £100,000 of a nude "in good faith" from an interior designer who was refurbishing his home in 1992.

He was told it was by Chagall, an artist best known for the dreamlike images in his paintings, and a photograph and accompanying article about the work had appeared in a 1989 book on Chagall by Aleksandr Kamensky, a respected art critic. A crease in the watercolour could even be seen in the photograph.

Last year the painting was submitted to 'Fake or Fortune?', the BBC1 programme presented by Fiona Bruce and the art dealer Philip Mould, to verify it was by Chagall. [By continuing to use this site, you are agreeing to our use of cookies. For more information about the how to control them, please see our Cookie Policy.](#)

The work was examined by James Butterwick, a London-based Russian art expert, and Tony Tetro, a former Chagall forger, who both expressed doubts over its authenticity.

“There is a lack of Chagallness in this painting,” said Tetro, whose fakes of works by Rembrandt, Joan Miro and Salvador Dali were so accurate that some described him as a genius. “I also think the signature is not quite right.”

The most damning evidence that it is a fake was provided by tests on the colours, which showed the blue used was not available until the 1930s, more than two decades after the work was said to have been completed while Chagall was living in Vitebsk in what is now Belarus.

In November the painting was sent to Paris to be examined by the Chagall committee on which the artist’s granddaughters Meret Meyer and Bella Meyer both sit. Lang was stunned to receive a letter confirming the work was a fake and that the committee had decided to retain and destroy the work.

Pierre Valentin, a French lawyer will be seen on Fake or Fortune? tonight explaining that such committees have a legal right to protect the reputation of an artist and can on rare occasions demand the destruction of an artwork. “I suspect that means burning,” he warns.

Lang said: “I can take it being called a fake, though I’m still unconvinced, but if they deem it a forgery I’m happy in a way for that to be officially written on the reverse of my painting. But I want it back here, and don’t understand why I can’t.”

In the knowledge that the Chagall committee will meet again on Tuesday, Lang last week wrote a final letter setting out his case. Ed Vaizey, the arts minister, is also to be contacted to see if he is willing to intercede with the French government.

Chagall was born in 1887 and became an influential early modernist artist. As well as his paintings, he created stained glass windows for several cathedrals and for the United Nations.

In the 1950s Pablo Picasso remarked: “When Matisse dies, Chagall will be the only painter left who understands what colour really is.”

The Chagall committee has ruled before that paintings said to be by the artist are fakes. It is not thought it has previously asked for a work to be seized and destroyed.

4 comments

 Sarah Gallagher

1 person listening

		+ Follow	Share
			Post comment

Newest | Oldest | Most Recommended

 **lindy cozens**
they should enjoy it for what it is regardless of the value!

February 02, 2014 10:39

1  Recommend Reply

Laurence Robinson

February 02, 2014 10:30



Thanks for spoiling tonight's episode, you thought that was a good idea last week too.

1 [Recommend](#) [Reply](#)



Mr. Gareth Wong

February 02, 2014 10:17

Well, in the original art show in China, they would give the art owner the choice during the studio filming to elect the art work to be destroyed there & then if proven fake.. if it's real, they keep it and get a certificate of authenticity.. forgot if there is a prize.. that's much more entertaining despite how posh & good looking Fiona is. ;)

[Recommend](#) [Reply](#)



Anthony Charles

February 02, 2014 06:25

The windows in the Knesset are by Chagall.

[Recommend](#) [Reply](#)

[Livefyre](#)