

The art of faking it: gallery puts forgeries on show

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The National Gallery in London will exhibit a collection of fake and wrongly-attributed paintings next year, in a show exploring how modern science has lifted the lid on centuries of forgery.

A number of works that were either deliberately produced as fakes or were simply mistaken for paintings by great masters have been unmasked by researchers testing the materials and techniques.

"I wish we had more fakes," said gallery director Nicolas Penny. "You only get good at spotting them if you know what you are looking for."

Among those to be exhibited are a painting acquired in 1923 that was thought to be from the 15th century. Recent examination reveals the materials used were not available back then and it was in fact made in the 20th century.

Likewise, in 1845 "A Man with a Skull" was bought as a Hans Holbein the Younger piece, although its authorship was disputed. Modern analysis of the wood panel support has since proved that it postdates Holbein's death.

The exhibition will also highlight how original works that were altered to adapt to changing tastes were uncovered through cleaning -- and how the analysis has thrown up new masterpieces.

Raphael's "Madonna of the Pinks" held by the Duke of Northumberland

was thought to be a copy until it was identified as genuine in 1992.

It was bought by the National Gallery in 2004 for 22 million pounds (36 million dollars, 25 million euros).

"The National Gallery is a place where we display great masterpieces and it's a place where we study [art](#) in all its complexity," Penny said.

"It's really naive for people to think that having forgeries is something you should just be ashamed of."

The exhibition, entitled Close Examination: Fakes, Mistakes And Discoveries, will run from June 30 to September 12, 2010.

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