

WOLFGANG BELTRACCHI: THE FORGER WHO BECAME AN ARTIST

We have often talked about fakes in the art world and the incredible stories they have given rise to. This time we tell a story in which the protagonists are not just two simple forgers, but a couple, husband and wife, rightly defined as the Bonnie and Clyde of the market. We introduce you to Wolfgang and Helene Beltracchi.



Wolfgang and Helene Beltracchi - Photo Courtesy: CNN STYLE

A German couple, with an Italian surname, conquered the art market with their forgeries. Wolfgang was the artist in the house and possessed an incredible talent for reproducing the style and techniques of the most famous artists of all time, while Helene was the perfect accomplice in her husband's illicit affairs, always by his side. If this isn't love, we challenge you.

But why so much success?

The fake canvases were not reproductions of famous paintings, but unknown works, ideally forgotten for decades and miraculously brought to light. To deceive the necessary authentication requirements, these "masterpieces," in addition to being made with meticulous care, were accompanied by data studied down to the smallest detail, provable through phantom photos in catalogs or because they were considered part of a stolen collection from a collector so influential that he could not be contradicted. Mr. Beltracchi, therefore, knew what he was doing: "I can replicate anyone." And he did just that: Leonardo, Picasso, Cezanne, Rembrandt, Ernst.

In the now distant 2006, even Christie's was fooled. The auction house included a painting attributed to Ernst titled "La Horde" in the Evening Sale of Impressionist and Modern Art, estimated to be worth between £2,500,000 and £3,500,000. That same painting even ended up on the auction catalog's cover. However, it had absolutely nothing to do with Ernst; it was a Beltracchi forgery.



La Horde, fake artwork – Photo Courtesy: We Wealth

And so the couple, who had become millionaires, invested in villas and yachts over the years until 2010, when specialists examining a canvas attributed to Campendonk noticed that the white paint used was not yet available on the market in 1917, the supposed year of its creation.

Game over. After confessing to creating the fakes (only a portion, presumably many are still hanging on the walls of private collectors, galleries, and museums), the husband and wife ended up in jail for six and four years, respectively, later obtaining the opportunity to leave during the day and return only at night.



Wolfgang Beltracchi, Campendonk – Photo Courtesy: Pinterest

They served their sentences, and, as the moral of the story, Wolfgang the forger became a recognized artist: he paints and sells his works under the name Beltracchi. His largest canvases have been valued at over one million euros.



Wolfgang Beltracchi – Photo Courtesy: Welt

In an interview with a British TV channel years ago, Beltracchi didn't even show remorse but rather was aware - as he put it - of being the best of all and regretted only using the wrong white paint.

Source: Speakart.it