

Fingerprint find leads to new Leonardo

Press Release 13th October 2009
Art Access & Research (UK) Ltd.

Art Access & Research's Director of Forensic Studies, **Peter Paul Biro** has been instrumental in the first attribution of a drawing to Leonardo da Vinci in over a century. This discovery has garnered the attention of the world's press with coverage on the BBC, articles in the London Times, The Guardian, The Telegraph and The Australian amongst others. The attribution of *La Bella Principessa* by a leading Leonardo expert is supported by fingerprint identified by Peter Paul Biro, a world leading expert on forensic fingerprint examinations of art. The drawing, which was believed to be an early 19th century work from Germany had changed hands for as little as £12,000 in recent years may now be worth around £100 million.



The fingerprint, believed to be of Leonardo's middle or index finger was found in the upper right hand corner of the drawing and matched to a Leonardo print from his painting of St Jerome in the Vatican. The print on the painting of St Jerome is especially significant because the painting comes from a period when Leonardo was understood not to employ any assistants meaning that the print is almost certainly Leonardo's. Biro has described the find as "a great success for Art Access & Research and further evidence of the growing importance of scientific techniques in the art world". The techniques used in this instance may lead to further discoveries from artists whose fingerprints Art Access & Research has on file, such as Jackson Pollock, Picasso, JMW Turner, Raphael and others.

Biro co-founded Art Access & Research where he currently serves as Director of Forensic Studies. His primary roles are conducting fingerprint examinations for attribution and authenticity studies and leading long term research efforts into forensic contact evidence.

Biro began his career as a conservator before conducting a pioneering study in 1984 to authenticate a painting by J.M.W. Turner using human contact evidence. His matching of the artist's fingerprint on the canvas to other fingerprints on known Turner paintings was the first successful case of this kind and established him as the primary authority in this area. Since then he has specialized in dealing with challenging authentication studies and developing definitive databases of artists' fingerprints. He has completed authentication studies for collections and private clients around the world.

Art Access & Research was formed early in 2009 from the long-standing consultancies of Dr. Nicholas Eastaugh and Peter Paul Biro. Dr. Eastaugh is a world renowned expert in the physical analysis of paintings; Biro is widely and highly regarded for his development of the use of fingerprint evidence in fine art studies. By combining their practices and collaborating with colleagues specialising in complementary fields from the arts and sciences Art Access & Research is now able to undertake a wide range of advanced scientific art history studies.

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