



By: *Catriona M. Munro, TA Editor in Chief*

Acid on Artwork



It seems that a charming “dissident Russian artist”, one Andrei Molodkin, is claiming to be sealing works of original works of art in the National Gallery in London - originally by Picasso, Rembrandt, Warhol and more - not, on this occasion as retribution for the use of fossil fuels, but in the event that Wikileaks founder Julian Assange happens to die in prison.

He claims he has collected 16 works of art, which are worth collectively over 45 million. Is this a phoney pseudo-stunt?

I understand that this “war against art” has not strictly yet begun, because all masterpieces so far fallen victim to Just Stop Oil have all so far been saved by protective glass, apart from an attack with hammers on a painting in the National Gallery last year.

What bothers me is not really the stupidity of deciding to try to ruin art - it can, as it's been pointed out, be fixed.

What confuses me is why violence against art has recently become such a recent habit of our time? Do paintings matter less than everything else? Or, as Molodkin has said, “Freedom is more important than art” and we need to emphasise this?

A controversial curveball

Here's a controversial curveball: maybe the art of our time is in fact a bit 3rd rate (that's generous). I have no particular taste for street art like Banksy, or the conceptual horrors of Tate Modern.

There seems to be a lot of hostility to art. And just to hammer home the message, last May a Monet was smeared in mashed potato in a museum in Potsdam, in the Hague, a man glued his head to Vermeer's “Girl with a Pearl Earring”.

As pointed out above, only one masterpiece has been damaged, but maybe it is time the authorities took some action before there are too many damages.

The acts of eco violence took place at the UN Climate Summit last year and notably, the videos of eco-idolatry unexpectedly triggered a lot of public fury.

Is there a link between environmental activism and the preservation of the cultural heritage of humanity?

Curators were equally unamused, pointing out that the eco activists had severely underestimated “the fragility of these irreplaceable objects which must be preserved as our world cultural heritage”.

Is there a link between environmental activism and the preservation of the cultural heritage of humanity? Presumably it depends on where you stand. It's also a question if this carries on, and whether the numbers of people can carry on attending museums and art galleries.

Meantime, Molotkin says he doubts that the masterpieces under threat will in fact be destroyed (after vowing to destroy them). He has called the project “Dead Man's Switch” and it is a collaborative work “like any artwork or portrait”. All the artworks in question are from various donors in the south of France.