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New M&G Exhibit Investigates Art Mysteries

A new Greenville exhibit is about to unveil how there is more to art than meets the eye. *The Art of Sleuthing* will open to the public Friday, Oct. 23, at the Museum and Gallery at Heritage Green, inviting sleuths of all ages to explore the intrigues of forgery, provenance, steganography and Nazi-looted art.

“It’s coming to see art in a new way,” said M&G curator John Nolan. Nolan’s description is accurate as *The Art of Sleuthing* blends both the creative and scientific aspects of art together in an enticing manner.

A primary highlight of the exhibit showcases two stellar examples of forgery, including a loan from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Titled *The Smiling Girl*, this piece was originally attributed to Vermeer until closer investigation proved it a fraud. Continuing the theme, the forged *Still Life with Fruit* on loan from the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University exemplifies modern art fakes.

But forgery is not the only art mystery this exhibit uncovers.

In the spirit of Sherlock Holmes, visitors take a close look at symbolic signatures, hidden brushwork and even the back of a painting. They delve into the mystery of provenance, discovering who owned a particular piece in history. Works from M&G’s permanent collection, including a small painting from the home of Napoleon Bonaparte will bring this aspect of art sleuthing alive.

Donnalynn Hess, director of education at M&G, said “Whatever your preferred method of ‘detection,’ this exhibition is designed to awaken your ‘inner sleuth.’”

Guests will investigate the question of authorship, looking at a painting on loan from the J. Paul Getty Museum. They also hear a few of the tragic stories of art stolen by the Nazis during World War II. An example on loan from the North Carolina Museum of Art was painted by Cranach and stolen from its Jewish owners.

While terms like “forgery” or “provenance” may be over little people’s heads, the interactive children’s room has plenty to keep them occupied. A photo booth with detective costumes, a book nook and learning stations offer both a fun and educational experience for the young detective.

As a whole, the entire exhibit provides guests young and old with an enjoyable experience as well as a learning platform.

“Many people are intimidated by art,” said Erin Jones, director of M&G. “*The Art of Sleuthing* plays on the viewer’s natural curiosity, helping him grasp how art is a tool to better understanding people and culture.”

The Art of Sleuthing opens Friday, Oct. 23 at the Museum & Gallery at Heritage Green and will run for approximately 20 months. Admission is available Tuesday-Saturday from 10 AM-5 PM and on Sundays from 2-5 PM with a small entrance fee.

Photo Caption: Details from the backs of M&G paintings have provided the necessary clues to help solve the mysteries and identify provenance (ownership history).