

One was bombed, two were stolen and three destroyed by fire, but a new Sky TV show reveals how vanished masterpieces by Monet, Van Gogh and Klimt were magically brought back to life by the ...saviours of the lost art!

By Michael Hodges
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Gustav Klimt's *Medicine* is one of the wonders of early 20th-century art. At 13ft tall, it looms over a room at Factum Arte in Madrid. 'This painting is magical,' says Factum founder Adam Lowe. Elsewhere in the room are works by Van Gogh, Vermeer and Monet. But none is genuine. *Medicine* was looted by the Nazis in WWII, and the Monet, Vermeer and Van Gogh were burnt, stolen or destroyed. Everything here has been recreated using digital-mapping technology.

At the heart of what Lowe does are the 3D printers that allow him to create artworks as if they were painted, building up the surface of the picture in layers.

Now Factum Arte has undertaken its most ambitious commission: bringing back to life a series of seminal paintings for Sky Arts. Says Lowe: 'This is not making fakes, they take us as close to the artist as we as can get.'

'The Mystery Of The Lost Paintings' begins on May 2, Sky Arts, at 8pm

Flowers that wilted in the heat

Six Sunflowers, *Vincent Van Gogh, 1888*

Six Sunflowers was one of a series of four painted in a week at Arles in the south of France in 1888. Bought by Japanese collector Koyata Yamamoto in 1920, it was mounted in a new heavy frame at his home at Ashiya. In August 1945, the US Air Force dropped 1,500 bombs on the city, creating a firestorm. The picture proved too heavy for Yamamoto to move and Six Sunflowers was lost to the flames. To help Factum Arte recreate the painting, the National Gallery in London scanned its Sunflowers and sent the data to Madrid, to be combined in the new work. 'Every brush mark was made by Van Gogh in some form,' says Factum's Adam Lowe.

'I would love this to be seen beside the version in London and then sent to the remaining members of the family in Japan as a gift,' says Factum Arte's Adam Lowe.



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Commissioned to mark the Prime Minister's 80th birthday in 1954, Graham Sutherland's portrait was supposed to hang in Parliament. But Churchill hated the work

Never Surrender...

Portrait of Winston Churchill, *Graham Sutherland, 1954*

Commissioned by the Houses of Commons and Lords to mark the Prime Minister's 80th birthday in 1954, Sutherland's portrait was supposed to hang in Parliament. But Churchill hated the work, damning it as 'an interesting example of modern art'. Lady Churchill had the portrait put in a cellar at their home at Chartwell before her private secretary Grace Hamblin's brother smuggled the picture out and burned it in his back garden. It was a disaster for British art. 'Sutherland was internationally famous,' says Lowe. 'An artist at the top of his game'. This portrait carried the mark of other modernist painters like Francis Bacon. So it was like a dream to be asked to recreate this lost picture. It should be hung as intended – in the Houses of Parliament.'



Medicine by Gustav Klimt, 1901. The painting was rejected as 'pornographic' when it was unveiled

Nude victims of the Nazis

Medicine, *Gustav Klimt*, 1901

The Austrian symbolist's masterpiece scandalised Viennese society. Commissioned to hang in the University of Vienna to celebrate the work of the medical faculty, the painting was rejected as 'pornographic' when it was unveiled in 1901. 'It is probably the most radical painting of the 20th century,' says Lowe. Taken from a Jewish collector by the Nazis in 1938, it was locked away in Schloss Immendorf, a castle in lower Austria used as a store for looted art. 'It was almost certainly destroyed in a fire on the last day of the war by retreating SS officers in the castle,' says Lowe.



Myrto, painted in 1929, a muscularly erotic image of two naked, reclining women, was stolen by a Nazi officer from the collection of Pierre Bouchard during the occupation of France.

Lust Masterpiece

Myrto, *Tamara de Lempicka, 1928*

The Polish artist Tamara de Lempicka produced utterly distinctive female nudes. Myrto, painted in 1929, a muscularly erotic image of two naked, reclining women, was stolen by a smitten Nazi officer from the private collection of Pierre Bouchard during the occupation of France. It was never seen again. Factum Arte recreated the painting from an 80-year-old photograph. ‘We only had a black-and-white picture but we knew the models’ hair colour from other paintings,’ says Lowe. ‘Lempicka’s work has great seductive qualities.’

Target of the great frame robbery

The Concert, *Johannes Vermeer, 1664*

The Dutch artist’s mysterious picture – a man has his back to us and a painting on the wall appears to show a brothel scene – was stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in the US by thieves disguised as guards in 1990. It’s been missing ever since. To recreate the texture, Factum Arte scanned Vermeer’s *The Music Lesson* in the Royal Collection at Buckingham Palace. ‘So this surface is from a similar painting,’ says Lowe. ‘But the brush strokes, the way the paint cracks... this is not just a reproduction, it is a believable Vermeer.’



The Concert by Johannes Vermeer, 1664. The Dutch artist's mysterious picture was stolen from the Isabella Gardner Museum in the US by thieves disguised as guards in 1990.

Set aflame by a fag end

Water Lilies, *Claude Monet*, 1916

In 1958, electricians working at New York's Museum Of Modern Art stopped for a cigarette. It proved disastrous – dropped ash ignited dust and then a paint pot caught fire. In the ensuing fire, Monet's 18ft Water Lilies was badly burned. 'It was a destroyed painting,' says Lowe. A digital scan of the charred work revealed that some apparent bubbles were not fire damage but accretions of paint where Monet had repeatedly returned to the work. 'Our job was to remove every mark that wasn't by Monet,' says Lowe.



Water Lilies by Claude Monet, 1916. In 1958, electricians working at New York's Museum Of Modern Art stopped for a cigarette. It proved disastrous