

LEONARDO'S *SALVATOR MUNDI*: ART OR BUSINESS?

Salvator Mundi, the long-lost Leonardo da Vinci painting of Jesus Christ ordered by King Louis XII of France more than 500 years ago, has been sold in New York at Christie's, the well-known auction house, for more than \$450 million, breaking the world record of any work of art sold at auction. It far surpassed Picasso's *Women of Algiers*, which was sold for \$179.4 million at Christie's in May 2015.

Christie's marketing campaign was unprecedented in the art world. It was the first time the auction house had paid an agency for an advertising campaign. Christie's produced a video that compared the painting to "the discovery of a new planet" and showed celebrities like Leonardo di Caprio and Patti Smith viewing it. Christie's called the work "the last da Vinci," the only known painting by the Renaissance master still in a private collection (some fifteen others are in museums), and "the biggest discovery of the 21st century." In short, Christie's ran a brilliant marketing campaign for a painting with a very complicated history.

The oil on wood panel painting **depicts** a half-length figure of Christ as Savior of the World, facing frontally and dressed in flowing blue and **crimson** robes. He holds a crystal orb in his left hand as he raises his right hand in benediction.

Leonardo, who died in 1519, is thought to have painted *Salvator Mundi* sometime after 1500, during the same period that he produced the *Mona Lisa*. It became part of the British Royal collection in the early 17th century. It then disappeared in 1763 until 1900, when it was acquired by Sir Charles Robinson, an art collector, for the Cook Collection in Richmond, England. At the time, the painting was thought to have been by Leonardo's follower, Bernardino Luini. In 1958 the painting was sold by Sotheby's (Christie's rival auction house) for just £45 and the painting disappeared once again until it showed up in Louisiana in 2005.

It was acquired, badly damaged and partly painted-over, by a consortium of American art dealers who paid less than \$10,000 for it. They restored it extensively and documented its authenticity as a work by Leonardo.

The masterpiece was long believed to have existed but was generally presumed to have been destroyed. In 2011, following six years of investigations, the work was confirmed as a genuine work of art by Leonardo and **unveiled** publicly at London's National Gallery, making it the first discovery of a painting by Leonardo since 1909. The painting was then sold to a Swiss art dealer, who then sold it to a Russian billionaire in 2013 for \$127.5 million in a private sale that became the subject of a continuing **lawsuit**. The Russian family has sold the painting, which was bought by a prince from Saudi Arabia and will eventually be displayed in the new museum, Louvre Abu Dhabi.

Christie's says most scholars agree that the painting is by Leonardo, though some critics have questioned the attribution and some say the extensive restoration makes it impossible to determine the work's authorship. Before the auction, over 27,000 people had lined up at viewings in Hong Kong, London, San Francisco and New York to see the painting. Most of the people in line did not seem to care if Leonardo had actually made the work himself, or how much of the canvas had been repainted and restored. They just wanted to see a masterwork that dates from about 1500 and was rediscovered in 2005.

Text adapted from *The New York Times* (November 15, 2017), *The Telegraph* (November 16, 2017) and *The Guardian* (November 20, 2017)

to depict: representar

crimson: carmesí

unveiled: descobert / descubierto

lawsuit: demanda judicial

Part 2: Writing

Choose ONE topic. Your answer should be 125-150 words in length. There is no specific penalty for exceeding 150 words in length. Extra points are not given for exceeding 150 words.
[4 points]

1. Art plays an essential role in all cultures, and for thousands of years people have been creating, criticizing, and enjoying art. Imagine that you are visiting an art museum or exhibit, and you would like to share your feelings and sensations with your best friend. **Write an email** to him/her explaining your experience. Make sure you do NOT use your own name in your email.
2. Governments often make many addictive substances illegal because they may harm the health of those who take them. But alcohol and tobacco may also be dangerous to a person's health, and they are legal. Should the government make these substances illegal? **Write an opinion essay.**

Grammar	
Vocabulary	
Text	
Maturity	
Total	
Nota de la redacció	