

# FAKE PRINTS



FAKE ORIGINALS AND PRINTS ARE A HUGE INDUSTRY, AND A SCOURGE ON THE ART MARKET TODAY. THIS IS A STUDY OF FORGERY AND FRAUD CONCERNING TWO SALVADOR DALÍ LIMITED EDITION PRINTS.

*by David Phillips*

## **Introduction**

The world of prints by the Spanish master Salvador Dalí is a highly lucrative one. Unfortunately, a great deal of the lucre involved is derived from selling fakes. These fakes take various forms, and all include forged Dalí signatures and meaningless edition references:

- Prints made from originals which themselves are fakes and not by Salvador Dalí at all.
- Prints made by photomechanical reproduction of genuine limited edition etchings or engravings, and sold as genuine.
- Unauthorized print editions and extensions of authorized print editions beyond the authorized limit. This includes genuine Dalí authorized prints with fake Dalí signatures and edition numbers added by forgers.

So widespread is the forgery and misrepresentation and so complex is the subject that the major auction houses are very wary of selling individual Dalí prints. For example, a Sotheby's spokesperson, asked about selling Dalí prints, said, "Sotheby's does sell complete portfolios by Salvador Dalí and some of the early black and white etchings. They must conform to the catalogue raisonné..."

In addition to its main line of business (securely tagging and registering of fine art and collectibles) Fine Art Registry(TM) has concerned itself with fraud and crime in the art market. Over the past months, over 40 people have approached Fine Art Registry for help in clarifying purchases of Dalí prints made from art dealers Park West at Sea at their cruise ship art sales (in addition to over 50 more who had similar issues with work by other artists). In order to help FAR®members who had apparently become victims of fraudulent misrepresentations, deceptive trade practices and the sale of fake art, Fine Art Registry is pursuing this matter in an attempt to get to the bottom of the situation and educate the buying public. In this pursuit, a great deal of relevant material has come to light. It is published here so that the market can be aware of what is going on and buyers can indeed beware of what they purchase under the guise of expensive, investment quality prints.

The material at hand is far too extensive and complex to publish in a single article. A series of articles covering different aspects of the problem will be prepared and published. This material is all thoroughly documented and the documents are held by Fine Art Registry.

## A TALE OF TWO PRINTS

A recent example concerns a couple in Florida who bought a Dali print for close to \$20,000. The print is from the *Biblia Sacra* series of illustrations of the Bible by Salvador Dali. They bought this at what is referred to as an art "auction" aboard one of the Carnival Cruise Lines ships.

The couple received the framed print some weeks later. It was accompanied by what is called an "Appraisal", signed by Albert Scaglione, owner of Park West Gallery. It appraises the work at \$23,200. It provides information about the print as follows:

*Dali, Salvador*

*Registration No: XXXXXX.xxxx*

*(name of print)*

*Appraised Value: \$23,200 US*

*One of one hundred and five illustrations of the "Sacra Biblia" by Salvador Dali, published by Rizzoli Editions, Milan, Italy, 1969, and edited by Giuseppe Albaretto. From the collection of Roberto Mastella. One complete hand-signed Bible also exists, in a private collection [not quite sure what the relevance of this is].*

*Dali's friend and patron, Giuseppe Albaretto, commissioned the artist to create one hundred and five lithographs to illustrate the Bible. Six years were spent, from 1963 to 1969, in creating the lithographs which were published and printed by Rizzoli Editions. Between 1976 and 1979 Mr. Roberto Mastella, a prominent Dali collector arranged through Mr. Albaretto to have Dali hand-sign examples of the lithographs. There are the only known examples of the Sacra Biblia hand-signed by Salvador Dali in existence.*

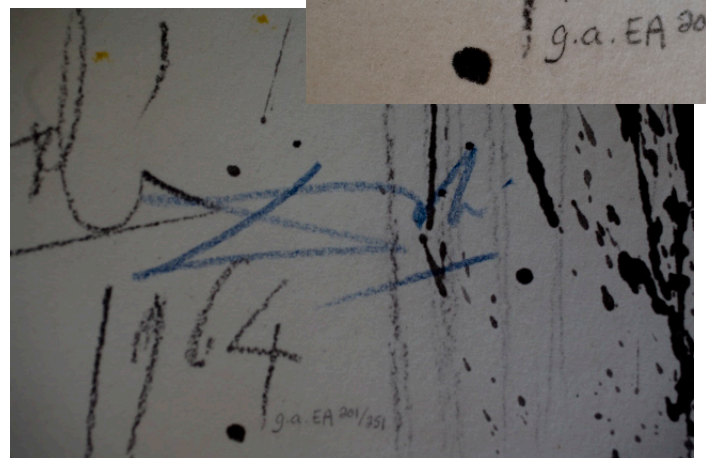
*More than one year was spent researching and authenticating these lithographs. Mr. Bernard Ewell, ASA, a recognized expert in the field of Dali's works and appraiser of the Salvador Dali Museum, St. Petersburg, FL, authenticated the lithographs and the hand-signatures by Dali. Dr. Mara Albaretto Berio, widow of Giuseppe Albaretto, has also authenticated these lithographs.*

*Albaretto's intention in convincing Dali to accept the Biblical commission was to lead the artist*

*to God. He believed that studying the Bible, Dali would once again be drawn to the Catholic religion, fearing that through the influence of Dali's wife, Gala, the artist was risking his spiritual redemption. We can never know the spiritual outcome of the experience of creating the Sacra Bibila, but, the artistic outcome is certainly remarkable. Bernard Ewell, in commenting on the series stated, "Having examined the original paintings, as well as...the printed illustrations, I am tremendously impressed by the fidelity of the prints. It is frequently difficult to tell they are not the original paintings. They are of quality that would fool most viewers. Truly, the coming together of the Albaretto's, the Bible, and Dali resulted in a creation of a set of images that represent far more than the sum of the parts. Even so, it is worth stating again that each image quite clearly can stand alone as an individual work of art by Salvador Dali.*

All very interesting perhaps but, even if true, not very relevant to the authenticity or value of the prints. A certificate of authenticity and appraisal of a very expensive piece of art both written in house and signed by the owner of the pieces who is in no way qualified to either authenticate or appraise art, should be a clue.

The fact is that the print which was sold to this particular couple is not a lithograph in the true sense of the word at all. These are photomechanical reproductions of original paintings by Dali and quite easily recognized as such. This one is also represented as being one of 251 artist's proofs. There is no record of these 251



artist's proofs, let alone with Dali signatures on them. In fact, if these numbers are projected, there are 105 prints to the series; multiply that by 251 and you have the picture of Dali sitting down and signing 26,355 prints for his good friend Giuseppe Albaretto as a favor for Roberto Mastella.

The publisher, Rizzoli, stated that "all the separations, screen processes stencils, sources for the reproduction proofs and final plates were destroyed after the printing". There cannot be any "proofs" in existence, the colophon (publisher's historical statement about the print edition, giving information about the edition's authorship and printing) which states the tirage (total number printed in a limited edition) of the editions makes no mention of "proofs", and to produce them would therefore be in violation of contract.

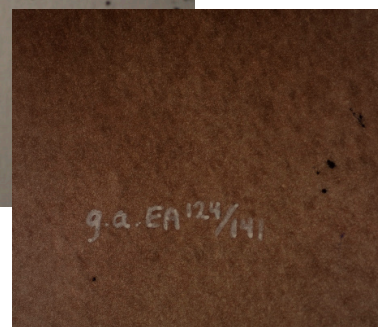
The Certificate of Authenticity which accompanied this print was also signed by Albert Scaglione. He is not any kind of acknowledged Salvador Dali expert and has no credentials or recognition which would qualify him to do so. His training is as an engineer.

A print costing nearly \$20,000 should be accompanied by some very convincing paperwork.

When they realized that they may have been cheated, this couple approached Fine Art Registry for help, hearing that FAR was acting in the role of an advocacy group for victims of art fraud and deceptive trade practices.

Before we get into that, we need to introduce another print. This one was sold to Deborah Austin of Lomita, California. She was working as a nurse aboard the *Disney Wonder* of the Disney cruise line and was approached by John Cochran, Art Director (aka auctioneer) of the Park West art gallery on board who sold her a Salvador Dali print from the same Biblia Sacra series, this one entitled *Et Baptizatus Est a Iohanne In Iordane*. Convinced by the Park West salesman of the bargain she was getting and the great investment value of the art, she paid \$7,200 for it. As with the other print, this was reportedly hand-signed in pencil by Salvador Dali. This one, from the same series mind you, was numbered "g.a. EA 124/141" painted on in white

paint. The "g.a." stands for Giuseppe Albaretto. The "EA" is short for *Epreuve d'Artist* which means Artist's Proof. The 124/141 means that this is proof number 124 out of 141. This immediately raises the question: Why would there be 141 artist's proofs of this print which is in the same series as the other one which claims to have 251 artist's proofs?



**Deborah Austin's print and a close up of the signature and number**

According to a highly regarded expert on Dali prints, Frank Hunter of the Salvador Dali Archives, Ltd. in New York, there is no record of any set of 251 or 141 artist's proofs for these prints, let alone all signed by Salvador Dali. Park West has from time to time sent letters to the Dali Archives informing them of prints that they are selling. These had never been mentioned. According to Mr. Hunter, what is fake about these prints is the numbering and signature, which would obviously give it some real value if genuine, but not the value that Park West is claiming.

This print was also featured on the WKMG report about Park West at Sea and their art "auctions." Like the other couple, when Deborah found out from her research that her print was worth far less than she had been told it was and was certainly not anything to invest in she also contacted Fine Art Registry for help.

This print was accompanied by a certificate of authenticity very similar to the one for the other print, also signed by Albert Scaglione, and was appraised at \$11,600, also by Scaglione, its owner.

In this case, Deborah asked Park West to refund her money on the basis of fraudulent misrepresentation by the Park West Art Director. Her request was answered with a letter from William L. Smith, Senior Auctioneer for Park West, accompanied by a barrage of documents purported to establish the provenance of her print and prove that it was genuine and worth what she paid for it. Unfortunately, many of the supposed authentication documents and especially the individuals who were supposed to have authored them, are themselves dubious, as we will discuss at length in future articles.

A series of phone calls followed and Park West were not willing to refund the money and take back the print.

## FRAUD INVESTIGATION, NEW YORK, STUTTGART, PARIS

Deborah sent her print to the Salvador Dali Archives Ltd. in New York. It was then taken by Fine Art Registry, along with the print from the same series sold to the Florida couple, to Germany to be examined by a senior detective in the art and antiques division of the Baden-Württemberg state criminal investigation department,

Ernst Schöller. Then it was taken to Paris to be examined by Robert and Nicholas Descharnes, world renowned experts in Dali's work.

In May 2008, Herr Schöller examined both prints under microscope and compared them to the information in both the German and the US catalogues raisonnée of Dali prints. He checked the paper, looked for watermarks and examined the printing technique used in reproducing these prints. He found that both prints were mass-produced photomechanical reproductions on unwatermarked paper, much too thick for lithographs. He classified them as posters. He determined that the signatures were fake. He showed us a room in the police department where there were thousands of confiscated fake Dali prints, all with similar forged Dali signatures, all confiscated and taken out of circulation, some already destroyed and the rest awaiting orders from the judge for their destruction.



*Herr Schöller examining the print at the police department in Stuttgart*

He said that the prints he examined were of far worse quality than these. He told Fine Art Registry that they were worth perhaps 50 Euros each (\$75), and were simply posters. He also found that the prints had been damaged and that the one that was still framed was stuck to the mat with masking tape which was not acid free. In 20 years he had never seen an original print treated that way. This is all on video in the hands of Fine Art Registry.



***Robert and Nicolas Descharnes in Paris examining Deborah's print with Frank Hunter***

These same prints were examined by Robert and Nicolas Descharnes in Paris in May 2008. They were quick to point out that they specialize in original Dali works, not graphics, and stated that Frank Hunter was one of the world's leading authorities on Dali graphic works. At the same time, experts as they are on Dali signatures, Nicolas stated that the pencil signatures on the prints he was shown were doubtful.

Mr. Hunter of the Salvador Dali Archives Ltd. in New York also examined the prints. He had helped



***Dali expert Frank Hunter, second from right, with Salvador Dali (left) and Albert Field (right)***

Albert Field compile the *Official Catalogue of the Graphic Works of Salvador Dali* and is arguably the most knowledgeable person in the world on the subject today. He explained that in the past Park West Gallery had provided information to the Dali Archives for authentication purposes and had also written letters informing the Archives of what prints existed in the "Albaretto Collection" and the "Mastella Collection". Amongst these documents there had never been any mention of a series of 251 or 141 artist's proofs numbered "g.a. EA 101/141" etc. The fact that two prints from the same series had totally different numbers of artist's proofs was already highly suspect. This number of artist's proofs is way above what might be expected and what is normal. The fact that the edition numbering was painted in white on Deborah Austin's print and written in pen or pencil on the other was also highly suspect. According to Mr. Hunter, the numbering of these so-called proofs makes no sense, for in all of Dali's editions, the number of proofs pulled for one print is identical for all prints in a series. This only adds to the suspicion of fraud. To add to this there is the anomaly of one signature in lead pencil and the other in colored (red) pencil. The signatures themselves look fake. In terms of price, he pointed out that there are large numbers of these prints on the market: without a Dali signature they can be purchased for a few hundred dollars each – genuine prints. A genuine Dali signature might increase their value by perhaps \$1,000 or so. But to pay \$18,000 or even \$7,200 was absolutely absurd, even for the genuine article.

The "evidence" supplied by Park West that the prints are genuine and really were hand-signed by Dali



***Frank Hunter with Fine Art Registry CEO Theresa Franks reviewing the Official Catalogue of the Graphic Works of Salvador Dalí.***

is voluminous, confusing and highly specious. These include documents by the Torino based Albaretto family when there is first hand, forensic evidence that they forged documents and represented them as genuine contracts with Salvador Dali and also forged photographs depicting Dali allegedly signing prints. They were described by one of the world's foremost authorities on the work of Salvador Dali as "Masters of photomontage." Additionally, the Albaretto family has a long history of being involved with fake Dali works and has been the subject of much press on the subject [see [www.salvadoralifakes.com](http://www.salvadoralifakes.com)]. While this will all be covered in detail in later articles, the documents and evidence are in the hands of Fine Art Registry.

Park West Gallery cites Bernard Ewell as a world-acknowledged expert on Salvador Dali when he is no such thing (again, this will also be covered in detail in future articles). He just happens to have been in their pay.

When it comes to prices, that is another story in itself. The following prices were provided to Fine Art Registry by reliable sources within Park West Gallery who themselves considered the information should be made known to the public. These are actual prices and costs of a series of three Dali prints in the middle price range, taken from records.

175296- Paradise. Cost: \$600, Frame Cost: \$25, Appraised: \$10,800, Retail: \$6,145, Sold 3 @ \$16,565 total.

175263 - Purgatory. Cost: \$600, Frame Cost: \$25, Appraised: \$13,800, Retail: \$7,275, Sold 3 @ \$19,815 total.

175229 – Inferno. Cost: \$600, Frame Cost: \$40, Appraised: \$12,700, Retail: \$4,600, Sold 3 @ \$18,015 total.

A print that is really worth \$12,700 cannot be bought for \$600. Something is very wrong with this picture. And when this is repeated time and time again with many, many different prints, all reportedly from the same source, questions must be asked. These questions have been asked and a good number of them have been answered and the rest will be in due course. "Proving" the authenticity of the prints sold by Park West Gallery involves drowning their customer (or TV station, or lawyers) with bales of documents which are themselves questionable and which, when really examined, prove nothing of the sort.

In the next article in this series, we will have a look at where these prints that Park West Gallery is selling have come from, and present evidence of fakes and forgery.

✍

FAR® and the Fine Art Registry Logo are registered trademarks of Global Fine Art Registry, LLC. Fine Art Registry™ and Helping Bring Order to the World of Art™ are trademarks of Global Fine Art Registry, LLC.  
© 2008 Global Fine Art Registry, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

For more on this investigation, visit  
[www.fineartregistry.com](http://www.fineartregistry.com) and [salvadoralifakes.com](http://salvadoralifakes.com)

And learn the many benefits of membership and join  
[Fine Art Registry](http://www.fineartregistry.com)™ today!

