

## CHECK IT OUT: ART & PHOTO CHECKLIST

You don't have to be an expert to undertake a basic investigation. Using this checklist, you can determine whether a photo or artwork is likely to have authentication issues. If you're dealing with a relatively expensive item, you will also want the help of at least one expert, and appropriate laboratory analysis. Use our list as a guide, and adapt it to your needs.

### Support

- Is there any provenance? If so, do you have any reason to feel suspicious about it? Trust your instincts!
- Are there primary source citations from the period, linking the artwork to the time and/or subject?
- If it's a print or other reproduction, when did the original appear? Where is it? What can you learn about it?
- If it's a numbered print, is it within the documented

### Materials

- Was the alleged artist known to use these materials?
- Have the materials been used in the way that you would expect?
- Are the techniques and materials consistent with other known works by the artist at that period?
- Does the format fit the technologies of the time? (This is especially important for photographs, which had distinct starting points for methods and processes.)
- Use basic scientific analysis (e.g., UV light, magnification) to look for alterations
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### Signature

- Examine the signature, copyright, or other in-image identifiers. Are they appropriate? Do they vary in any respect from the main image?
- Does the signature or copyright information appear where expected?

### Condition

- Consider the overall condition of the work. Does condition correlate to the purported age and history?
- Examine the front and back of the piece, including framing or casing, for any signs of recent work or irregularities.
- Are there any identifying tags or labels? If so, take notes for further investigation.
- Examine the edges. Are there any recent cuts to suggest resizing?

### Content

- Is the piece stylistically consistent with the work of the artist at the period?
- Are the clothes and hairstyles correct for the time presented?
- Is there anything historically inaccurate in the image itself? (E.g., an artifact or technology that hadn't been invented at the alleged time of creation.)

### The Big Question

- Can you find one anomaly that indicates beyond reasonable doubt that the work could not be by the alleged artist?

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**RESULTS:** At this point you may find yourself with several theories deserving further consideration. For instance, you may believe it is a genuine, but anomalous, work (perhaps created when the artist was ill or under pressure to produce results quickly). Further research may then be necessary to find evidence that will strengthen one of these theories.