

### Part 3

You are going to read a newspaper article about art. For questions 13–19, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text. Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

## Fake art meets real money

*Christophe Petyt has turned the production of exact copies of masterpieces by the world's most famous painters into big business.*

Christophe Petyt is sitting in a Paris café, listing the adornments of his private art collection: several Van Goghs, and a comprehensive selection of the better Impressionists. 'I can,' he says quietly, 'really get to know any painting I like, and so can you.' Half an hour later I am sitting in his office with Degas' *The Jockeys* on my lap. If fine art looks good in a gallery, believe me, it feels even better in your hands. Petyt is the world's leading dealer in fake masterpieces, a man whose activities provoke both admiration and exasperation in the higher levels of the art world. Name the painting and for as little as £1,000 he will deliver you a copy so well executed that even the original artist might have been taken in.

Petyt's company employs over eighty painters, each steeped in the style of a particular artist or school. 'We choose them very carefully,' he says. 'They're usually people with very good technique but not much creativity, who are unlikely to make it as artists in their own right. But they love the great works and have real insight into what's gone into them.' Every work is individually commissioned, using new canvases and traditional oil paints, before being artificially aged by a variety of simple but ingenious techniques.

The notional value of the original is not the determining factor, however, when it comes to setting the retail value of Petyt's paintings. This is actually linked to the amount of effort and expertise that has gone into producing the copy. An obscure miniature may therefore cost much more than a bigger, better-known painting by a grand master. The Degas I'm holding looks as though it came off the artist's easel yesterday. Before being sold it has to be aged, and this, so to speak, is the real 'art' of the copy. A few minutes in a hot oven can put years on a canvas, black tea apparently stains it beautifully and new frames can be buried underground, then sprayed with acid.

The view when Petyt started out was that very little of this could be legal. He was pursued through the French courts by museums and by descendants of the artists, with several major French art dealers cheering from the sidelines. This concern was perhaps understandable in a country that has been rocked by numerous art fraud scandals. 'The establishment was suspicious of us,' huffs Petyt, 'but for the wrong

reasons, I think. Some people want to keep all the best art for themselves.' He won the case and as the law now stands, the works and signatures of any artist who has been dead for seventy years can be freely copied. The main proviso is that the copy cannot be passed off to dealers as the real thing. To prevent this, every new painting is indelibly marked on the back of the canvas, and as an additional precaution a tiny hidden piece of gold leaf is worked into the paint.

Until he started the business ten years ago, Petyt, a former business-school student, barely knew one artist from another. Then one particular painting by Van Gogh caught his eye. At \$10 million, it was well beyond his reach so he came up with the idea of getting an art-student friend to paint him a copy. In an old frame it looked absolutely wonderful, and Petyt began to wonder what market there might be for it. He picked up a coffee-table book of well-known paintings, earmarked a random selection of works and got his friend to knock them off. 'Within a few months I had about twenty good copies,' he says, 'so I organised an exhibition. In two weeks we'd sold the lot, and got commissions for sixty more.' It became clear that a huge and lucrative market existed for faux art.

Petyt's paintings are exhibited away from the traditional art centres – in places with lavish houses in need of equally impressive works of art. Although their owners include rock stars, fashion designers and top businesspeople, they either cannot afford or more likely simply cannot obtain great works of art. Petyt is understandably reluctant to name any of his clients, but says that sometimes even the owner of the original will occasionally commission a copy. 'The best paintings are so valuable,' he explains, 'that it's risky to have them at home and the costs of security and insurance are huge. So some collectors keep the original in a bank vault and hang our copy.'

Is it art? Petyt draws a parallel: 'Take music, for example. Does Celine Dion compose her own tunes – write her own lyrics? She's interpreting someone else's work, but she's still an artist. Classical musicians often try to produce a sound as close as possible to what they think the composer intended. Nobody's suggesting they're anything but artists. With us, maybe, it's the same.'

- 13** In the first paragraph, the writer indicates that he shares
- A** Petyt's enjoyment of the work of a range of painters.
  - B** the art world's suspicious attitude towards Petyt's activities.
  - C** the general inability to distinguish copies from real paintings.
  - D** Petyt's desire to appreciate great works of art at close quarters.
- 14** What do we learn about the painters employed by Petyt?
- A** They have been specially trained in the techniques of forgery.
  - B** They were chosen because of the quality of their original work.
  - C** They have to be versatile in terms of the range of styles they reproduce.
  - D** They make copies of those paintings which customers specifically request.
- 15** The price of one of Petyt's paintings tends to depend on
- A** the status of the original artist.
  - B** the time and skill needed to create it.
  - C** the degree to which it has to be artificially aged.
  - D** the extent to which the copy truly replicates the original.
- 16** How does Petyt feel about the attempts to prove that his activities were illegal?
- A** He suspects that they were not driven by public-spirited motives.
  - B** He accepts that they were useful in helping to establish his integrity.
  - C** He regrets that they gained the support of other art dealers in France.
  - D** He respects the right of the real artists' families to protect their interests.
- 17** As a result of the court case he won, Petyt
- A** no longer reproduces fake signatures on paintings he sells.
  - B** has been able to copy the work of more contemporary artists.
  - C** is obliged to make sure his products can be identified as copies.
  - D** has agreed not to market his products through certain channels.
- 18** What do we learn about the way Petyt selected the paintings that would appear in his exhibition?
- A** They needed to be ones that could be reproduced quickly.
  - B** It was not something that he put a great deal of thought into.
  - C** They had to be pictures that would appeal to the buying public.
  - D** He did some research into the work of artists he'd always admired.
- 19** What is implied about the majority of Petyt's customers?
- A** They have little genuine interest in contemporary art.
  - B** They regard works of art as a lifestyle accessory.
  - C** They may buy the paintings purely as a form of financial investment.
  - D** They are wealthy enough to buy the original works of art if they wanted.