

# Flogging a Dead Horse

by David Fleming OBE

*President of the International Committee on Museum Management*

David Fleming is President of INTERCOM and Director of National Museums Liverpool (NML), England. NML is made up of nine museums and galleries and holds collections of global importance. He has been a museum director for 17 years, and has been responsible for a number of major museum development schemes, including Liverpool's International Slavery Museum.

He has published extensively and lectures on museum management around the world.

He is currently a member of ICOM's Finance and Resources Committee, and was part of the team which developed ICOM's Global Vision and Strategic Plan in 2007.

The following articles have recently appeared in the pages of the Newchester Evening Chronicle:

August 14

## PENSIONER FINDS LEONARDO MASTERPIECE IN GALLERY VAULTS

**Experts stunned at sensational discovery**

One of the art world's greatest discoveries has been made by an elderly volunteer at Newchester Art Gallery. It was revealed yesterday by gallery bosses that last month pensioner Edna Lumpworthy, 85, found a painting thought to be by Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci in the cellar while looking for something to hang on the wall of the volunteers' room at the gallery.

Edna, 83, a retired hospital cleaner who lives on the Bewick estate, said *"I found the painting in a pile of old things right at the back of the picture store. It didn't have a frame on it and it was quite dark, but when I looked more closely I could see that it was a picture of a horse being cut up by what I thought must be a vet."*

*"I thought it was horrible at first but it was about the right size for the wall in our volunteers' room at the gallery so I took it upstairs and propped it up on our table. One or two people had a look at it and then one of the curators came and took it away. I was quite upset because I had grown fond of it. I like horses."*

Experts have studied the painting and have confirmed that they believe it could be a masterpiece by Leonardo which was thought to have been destroyed in a fire at Seaham Castle in the last century.

Councillor Barney Baxter, Chairman of Newchester City Council's Leisure Committee said: *"It's unbelievable. Sensational. It's been right under our noses for years. We think it must have come into the Gallery when the Duke of Lambton's collection was bequeathed to the city in the last century."*

Gallery bosses say the painting is under restoration and they cannot yet reveal when the painting will go on show to the public.

September 22

## ROW BREAKS OUT OVER LEONARDO MASTERPIECE

**It's ours say Duke's family**

A row has broken out over the masterpiece by renowned Renaissance painter Leonardo da Vinci. The family of the ninth Duke of Lambton have claimed that the painting actually belongs to them.

The Duke's great grandson, Edmund Spindly-Finnigan said last night: *"We believed this painting had been destroyed by fire in the nineteenth century. Clearly it wasn't, and yet somehow it ended up in the cellar at the local art gallery. I believe it must have been lent to the gallery for safekeeping after the fire and now we want it back. The gallery says it has no documentation to prove it's theirs. We will fight the council over this."*

A spokesperson for the Council confirmed that there had been discussions with the Spindly-Finnigans but said that she couldn't comment further at this time.

Local art dealer Arthur Bullock said: *"If this painting is really by Leonardo then it's worth millions."*

October 18

## COUNCIL TO SELL LEONARDO HORSE MASTERPIECE?

### Family vows to fight on

In the latest twist to the saga of the lost masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci, Newchester Council officials have had the painting valued and sources say that the painting will be put up for sale in what is likely to trigger “a frenzy” among collectors according to local expert Alfred Bullock.

“This could break the world record” said Mr Bullock, 68. Earlier this year a painting by Vincent van Gogh fetched \$180million in a New York sale, and the Chronicle has been told that the Leonardo painting could exceed that price.

Edward Spindly-Finnigan, a member of the Duke of Lambton's family who are claiming that the painting belongs to them said: “My family isn't interested in the value of the painting. We just want justice and we are not going to take this lying down.”

Sources claim that the Council wants to sell the painting so that it can plug a £30million deficit in its budget.

Edna Bullock, a pensioner from Bewick, found the painting hidden in the cellar at the gallery last July. She has since died.

No-one was available for comment from the City Council.

January 12

## 'DEAD HORSE' SALE TO BUILD NEW GALLERY

### New masterpieces lined up says council

Newchester City Council will sell the painting by Leonardo da Vinci which was found in the city's art gallery cellar last year by retired hospital cleaner Edna Lumpworthy.

The painting is believed to be worth in excess of £80 million and goes up for auction in London later this year.

Council Leader Ruby Batty said: “This is a windfall which will benefit all local people. It will help us improve council services across the board and with a lower council tax than last year. And we intend to build a brand new art gallery to house the city's art collections, and to make available to the acting Director of the art gallery a significant sum so that she is able to enhance our collections. Everyone wins.”

A claim by the family of the Duke of Seaham, who originally owned the painting, was dismissed by lawyers last month, clearing the way for the sale.

Art Gallery Director Maurice Ailment resigned over the affair last November, claiming that he had been pressured by the council to support the sale, and it is believed he is making a claim for constructive dismissal. He was unavailable for comment last night.

## Exercise

You are the acting Director of Newchester Art Gallery.

The national Museums Association has objected to the sale by the Council.

Make the case for the sale of the Leonardo painting.