



Modern history of the Mona Lisa

Stolen in 1911. Louvre employee Vincenzo Peruggia had stolen it by entering the building during regular hours, hiding in a broom closet and walking out with it hidden under his coat after the museum had closed. Peruggia was an Italian patriot who believed Leonardo's painting should be returned to Italy for display in an Italian museum. Peruggia may have also been motivated by a friend whose copies of the original would significantly rise in value after the painting's theft. A later account suggested Eduardo de Valfierno had been the mastermind of the theft and had commissioned forger Yves Chaudron to create six copies of the painting to be sold in the United States while the location of the original was unclear. But the original remained in Europe and after having kept the *Mona Lisa* in his apartment for two years, Peruggia grew impatient and was finally caught when he attempted to sell it to the directors of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence; it was exhibited all over Italy and returned to the Louvre in 1913. Peruggia was hailed for his patriotism in Italy and served six months in jail for the crime. Before its theft, the *Mona Lisa* was not widely known outside the art world. It wasn't until the 1860s that critics began to hail it as a masterwork of Renaissance painting and only within a thin slice of French intelligentsia.

In 1956, part of the painting was damaged when a vandal threw acid at it. On 30 December of that same year, the painting was damaged again when a rock was thrown at it, resulting in the loss of a speck of pigment near the left elbow, which was later restored

The use of bulletproof glass has shielded the *Mona Lisa* from more recent attacks. In April 1974 a "lame woman", upset by the museum's policy for disabled people, sprayed red paint at the painting while it was on display at the Tokyo National Museum. On 2 August 2009, a Russian woman, distraught over being denied French citizenship, threw a terra cotta mug or teacup, purchased at the museum, at the painting in the Louvre; the vessel shattered against the glass enclosure. In both cases, the painting was undamaged..

With thanks to Wikipedia.