

£50k reward for 'great' artist Orlit's missing works

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Henry Orlit

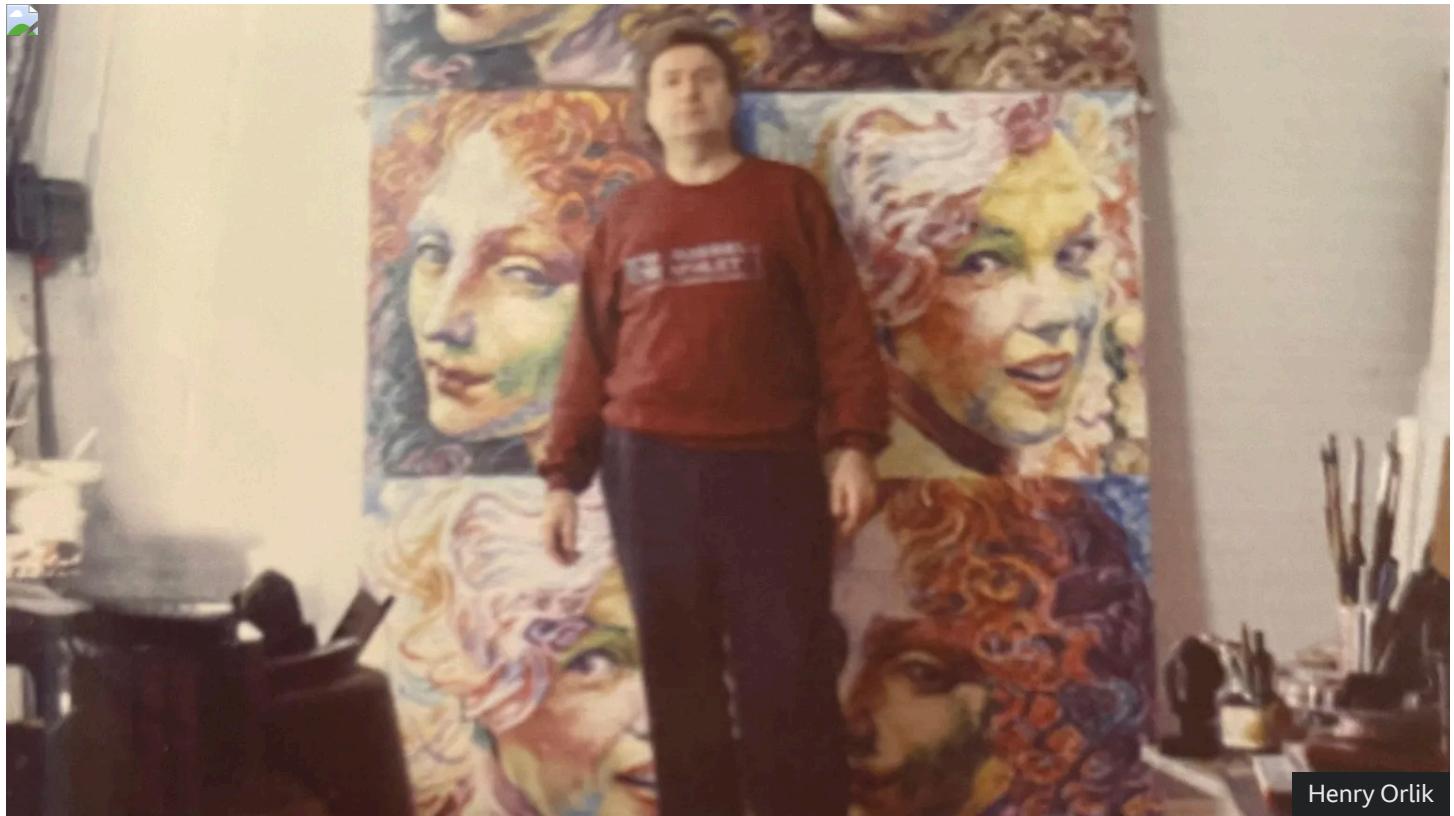
Henry Orlik's huge canvases - including ones depicting royalty - are among those to have disappeared.

A re-discovered artist described as a "great" is offering a £50,000 reward in the search for dozens of his missing works.

Henry Orlik, 78, from Swindon, has made £1.6m from his surrealist art work in the past year, with all the sales coming from two exhibitions.

While he had work displayed beside the likes of Salvador Dali in the 1970s, Orlik became an artistic recluse some decades ago and is now in poor health.

After being evicted from his social housing in London while recovering from a stroke in 2022, his possessions - including a large amount of his work - disappeared, and the search is on to find them.



Henry Orlik

Depictions of Marilyn Monroe are within the missing paintings

Orlick currently lives in his childhood home in Swindon, where other works had been safely stored.

Family friend Jan Pietruszka said he had been sorting through them, with some items going to the recent exhibitions for sale.

He said Orlik remained desperate to find the missing works lost during his eviction and "my brief is find them at all cost".

"He's getting weaker all the time. His health situation is deteriorating. He's quite depressed that we're not making great progress in finding these paintings," he explained.

Mr Pietruszka said his friend struggled to speak much now.

"He's very deprecating about his work," he added.

"When it comes to the money side, he's ambivalent, he's not really interested. The subject always reverts back to, 'Can you get the paintings back?'"



Jan Pietruszka has been going through the numerous artworks at Orlik's family home

It was initially thought that 78 works had been lost when Orlick was evicted from his London flat and could not get back inside.

Now, it is believed at least 90 pieces - potentially hundreds - are missing.

The £50,000 reward is for the recovery of all the pieces, as there has still been no confirmation of their whereabouts.

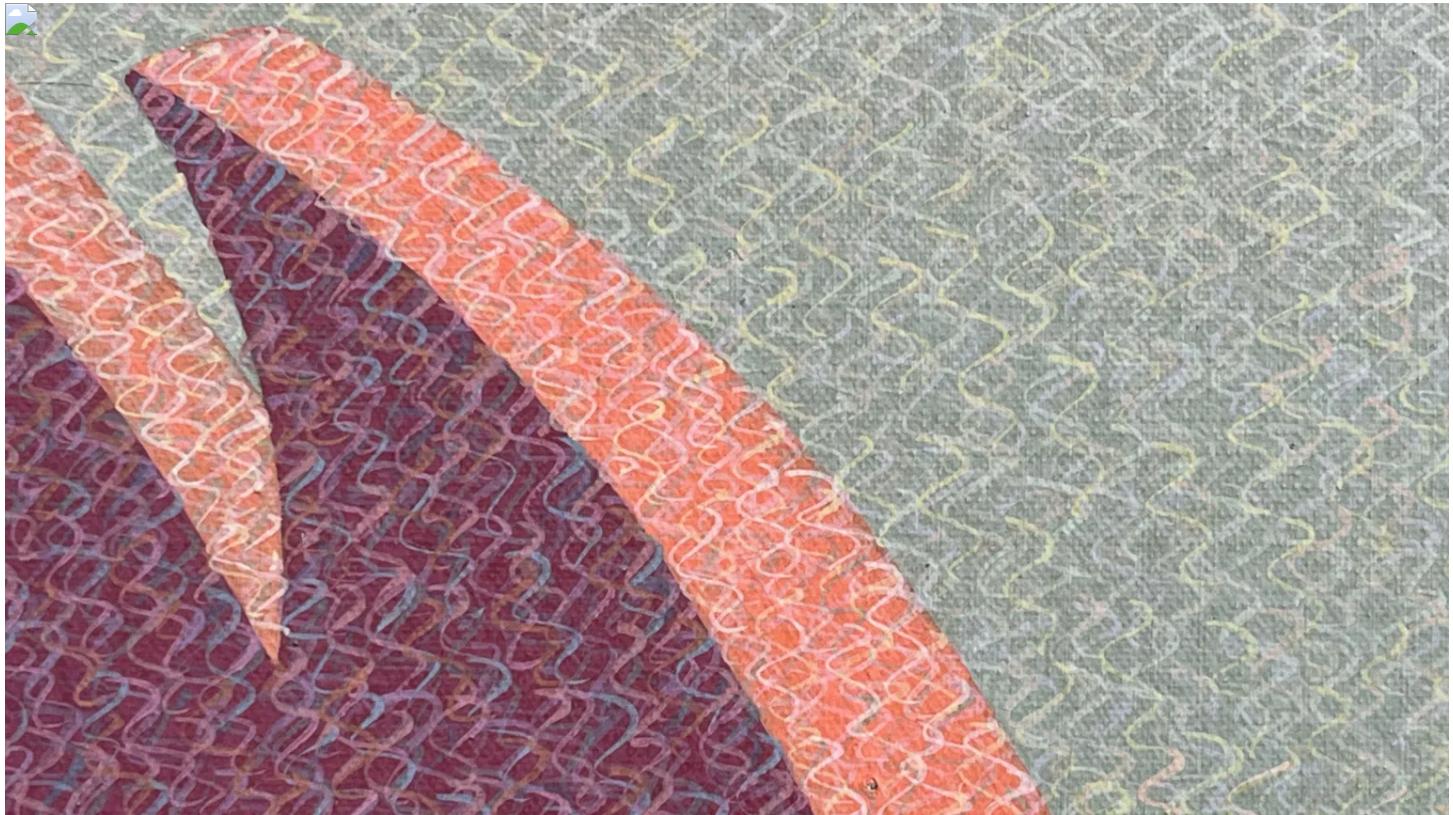
Some of the artwork is enormous - life size or larger and already on a frame - and would be easily noticed as a result.

Interpretations of Marilyn Monroe were among them.

"Nobody in their right mind would throw that in the skip," said Mr Pietruszka.

Hundreds of sketches and work laid out flat were in an architect's chest that was in the London home too, including several of his own copies of the Mona Lisa.

A lot of Orlik's work is not signed, but one of his specialisms is something called "excitations", his method of composing a picture using small squiggles.



Henry Orlik has not signed much of his work, but some of it is recognisable from his very accurate, small squiggles called "excitations".

Orlik paints with incredible accuracy and tiny brush strokes, but has mastered different styles.

Marlborough art dealer and gallery owner Grant Ford has been working with Mr Pietruszka and organising the exhibitions.

He said he could hardly believe what he was seeing when one of Orlik's works was first put in front of him.

"I've never come across an artist quite like this," he said. "As a specialist, I think his imagination is extraordinary."

Mr Ford has three decades of experience at Sotheby's and can be seen as an expert on the BBC's Antiques Roadshow.

He said that Orlik "should be considered one of our greats".

"I think had he not turned his back on the commercial art world in the 70s, he would have been one of the really big names.

"Now is a critical time because his health is deteriorating," said Mr Ford.



Art dealer and gallery owner Grant Ford organised the exhibition in London last year as well as one at his own gallery in Marlborough, Wiltshire

Mr Ford said they had had interest from all over the world, including the US and China.

As a young man, Orlik spent some time in New York in the 1970s and an exhibition is being organised there for this year.

Due to Orlik's art not being sold for decades, the gallery owner had to start from scratch in working out how to price them.

Some have gone for more than £40,000.

Mr Ford and Mr Pietruszka said they were determined to find the bulk of the missing work with this reward - not just one or two pieces.

Anyone with information about the works' whereabouts has been urged to contact the Winsor Birch gallery.

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