

**Title:**

Will you pay \$135 million for a small piece of canvas?

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612

**Summary:**

The most expensive painting in the world. Would you pay for \$135 million for it?

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**Article Body:**

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In many respects one could say that this question is almost like a misnomer on any given day. \$135 million? For 99.9% of the world's population the question may not merit a decent response if any at all. Simply because most of the world's population are either middle-class, working class, living hand-to-mouth or are in abject poverty.

So that leaves the veritable 0.01% or less of the world that have the disposable income or wealth enough to splash out on a small piece of canvas. Now for argument's sake, lets all assume that you and I did form part of that elite group. Will you still pay that amount of money?

I can almost hear the questions coming through very loudly. What kind of canvas is it? Well, short answer is its an oil painting. An oil painting for 135 humungous ones? Yes and you better believe it. Not too long ago, Gustav Klimt's iconic "Mona Lisa of Austria" that was looted by the Nazis went under the hammer for a whopping \$135 million.

The entire art world was rightfully astounded by the auction price. But to you and I probably a bit on the sinful side of things. How can you justify the price of such a piece? Easily, I say. Forget the price for a moment. Lets try and place some value to it.

A little history sleuthing should help us on the way: Who was the artist? When was it painted? How many are there? Why was it painted?

Indeed even to the non-art lover, the mention of heavyweights such as Leonardo

Da Vinci, Van Gogh etc., is enough to spark interest simply because the impact of their work is so ubiquitous in daily life such that no one can ignore the mastery and uniqueness of their pieces. I once saw a saying that goes '...if no-one ever took risks, Michaelangelo would have painted the Sistine floor!' (Neil Simon, playwright) If you havent seen it, seek it on the web or in person at the Vatican, its simply breathtaking!

Clearly the age of a piece of artwork also impacts on our decision to splash out. Recently another bizzare auction took place in London. Dubbed the holy grail of vintage wine, a 1787 Sauternes from Chateau Yquem went under the hammer for a rather 'paltry' \$100,000! Clearly age must have something to do with how we value collectibles.

Then there's the lingering desire for exclusivity. Does anybody else have one? Indeed how many of the same are out there? If the answers are no and one respectively, expect the price to skyrocket. Notice how your average male makes an absolute fuss about having the latest ride in town when he's the only one with it? Well, seemingly the same trait permeates art collecting as well. Amongst the super rich and the "old money", its not the type or number of 'horses in your stable" but rather which art pieces you have in your hallway! This is effectively the bling bling for the super-rich.

Finally, although to a lesser degree we seem to enjoy stories. If the painting doesnt tell a story, its rank will be on the lower end of things. Let it tell an intriguing story or better-still spice it with a myth or legend and bingo! Price shoots up again.

All in all, we can agree that there distinct factors in deciding whether and how much we pay for antiquated art pieces. But \$135 million? Not me, for that kind of money I can find 135 charities at least whose operations will be transformed for a long time and boy that is a better feel-good factor than what's in my hallway.