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Russian Art Vandal Arrested, Denies Drinking Vodka

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Igor Podporin (Anton Kardashov / Moskva News Agency)

A Moscow court has ordered the arrest of a man who attacked a famous painting depicting Ivan the Terrible and his dying son at a museum in the Russian capital last week.

Ilya Podporin, 37, allegedly snuck past Tretyakov Gallery security guards minutes before closing time on Friday and struck the canvas with a metal pole, causing extensive damage in three places. He confessed to attacking the painting "because it distorts historical facts" and faces a prison sentence of up to six years.

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"The court rules to grant the investigation's motion to place Podporin in pre-trial detention until July 26," the state-run TASS news agency quoted the judge as saying.

Podporin confessed to damaging the painting and took back his initial testimony where he said he attacked the masterpiece under the influence of alcohol, Interfax reported.

“I didn’t drink and I don’t drink vodka at all. The video that was disseminated was made after I was pressured,” he was quoted as saying at the hearing.

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The painting, by the classic Russian painter Ilya Repin, depicts Ivan the Terrible cradling his son, who he had just mortally wounded. It has repeatedly raised the ire of Russian conservatives, who accuse it of distorting history.

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