



A new hidden layer found on an old painting

SAO PAULO — A Brazilian art restorer has discovered a new layer hidden in a centuries-old painting of the **Greek God of fertility Priapus**, by French artist Nicolas Poussin -- the deity's erect penis.

"They hid the phallus of Priapus. It's what we call adjustment for modesty, and it's not uncommon," said Regina Pinto Moreira, quoted in Tuesday's edition of the Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper. She suspects the cover-up was made in conservative Catholic Spain in the 18th century.

Moreira, who worked as a master art restorer at the Louvre in Paris for some 30 years, spent eight months alongside two French experts restoring Poussin's large 1634-1638 painting "Hymenaios Disguised as a Woman During an Offering to Priapus."

The 3.71-meter (12.2-foot) by 1.66-meter (5.44-foot) painting depicts Hymenaios, the Greek god of marriage ceremonies, dressed as a woman and dancing with Priapus, who was traditionally depicted with an erect penis.

The painting however once belonged to the Spanish royal family, and Moreira said she thinks this was when the post-production modesty came in.

Removing layers of dirt, dust and paint specks that accumulated over more than three centuries cost 150,000 euros (213,000 dollars). The artwork will be put on display at Sao Paulo's grand Museo de Art (MASP) on September 8.

Following the Napoleonic wars, the painting moved from Spain to the hands of English aristocrats, then was sold to French art dealer Georges Wildenstein. He sold it in 1953 to influential Brazilian journalist and MASP founder Francisco Assis Chateaubriand.

Howard's lips sealed on Silvio

With his former chief of staff, Arthur Sinodinos, asking the questions, it was never going to be one of John Howard's toughest interviews. But it is a fair bet the former member for Bennelong was as unprepared as the rest of the audience for the unbridled enthusiasm his presence generated at a lunch hosted by the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry yesterday.



Sinodinos began a question-and-answer session with his former boss about the economy, the stimulus, China and the European Union. After a while he woke the audience with an unexpected question. "Finally, do you think [Italian Prime Minister] Silvio Berlusconi is a sex addict?" Sinodinos asked Howard, prompting uproarious laughter. "Well?

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The chamber's CEO, Nicholas Care, opened by describing Howard as "the best statesman and politician that this country has

ever come up with". But Care wasn't done, proceeding to ponder how wonderful it was to have Sinodinos and Howard in the same room together. "I can only say one thing, ladies and gentlemen. I

think it's Christmas. I think it's an event that we will treasure and remember for ever and ever."

The assembled 250 guests were treated to 10 minutes of Howard's musings on the global financial crisis before

You've met him!" With his eyebrows seemingly signalling for help, Howard stammered: "I, I, I, I, ... I know Silvio. We enjoyed a good relationship. I have absolutely no comment about his private life."

Facebook reunites long lost cousins

COUSINS on opposite sides of the world, who until a few days ago did know each other existed, have been united through Facebook.

Jannali pensioner Penelope Panagopoulos, 72, got the surprise of her life when she was put in touch with her first cousin, Harry Persanis, 75, of New York, on the social networking site. The pair, who live 16,000 kilometres apart, spoke for the first time after one of Mrs Panagopoulos's daughters searched for Facebook users with her mother's maiden name, Persanis. The two cousins, of Greek descent, have not yet met but now talk on the phone and regularly exchange messages.

Mrs Panagopoulos's daughter, Esta, from Surry Hills, plans to fly to New York in September to meet Mr Persanis, her cousin once removed.

"I was very upset, stressed and felt sick; I even started to cry," Mrs Panagopoulos said after speaking to Mr Persanis for the first time.

"But, of course, I was a little bit excited because this reunion is very important for my family.

"After my father and Harry's father died there was no way of contacting one another, so this whole experience is a complete revelation."

Mr Persanis only decided to join Facebook a few weeks ago and said that living in New York had made it difficult to keep in touch with relatives around the globe.

"I cannot imagine that for most of

my life I had no contact with relatives," he said.

"Several weeks ago I joined Facebook on a whim, and now it's overwhelming.

"The upsetting part about it all is that I wish I'd tried to make contact a lot earlier. "But now that I have been reunited with the rest of my family I have come full circle.

"Life could not be better."

Facebook staff were delighted to hear the story.

"It's great to see people using Facebook to connect with friends and relatives with whom they may have lost contact," a spokeswoman

for the website company said.

Rival social-networking site, MySpace, with more than 130 million monthly active users worldwide, said Australians were increasingly searching for long-lost friends and relatives through websites.

MySpace International managing director Rebekah Horne said: "If you're unsuccessful with your initial search for family or friends on MySpace it's important to remember that on average 300,000 new people from around the world are signing up every day."

Article BY BRITTANY STACK AND MILES GODFREY



Family affair: Penelope Panagopoulos (centre) celebrates finding her long-lost cousin with family members (from left) Esta Galigalis, Nick Panagopoulos, Bill Panagopoulos and Patrica Panosin in Jannali. Picture: Chris Lane