



Cultural Heritage & Museums United Kingdom

Just Stop Oil Protestors throw soup on Van Gogh painting...again.

Three Just Stop Oil protestors took to the National Gallery in London to throw tins of soup on the painting Sunflowers last Friday (27/09), just hours after two protestors were given prison sentences for the same action in 2022. The sentences follow a UK crackdown on climate activists.

Just Stop Oil [stated](#) its campaigners performed this act as “a sign of defiance after the original soup throwers, Plummer and Holland were imprisoned for up to two years at Southwark Crown Court today (27/09)”. Plummer was given a sentence of two years and Holland of 20 months for committing near damage to the work of art considered one of the Dutch artist’s masterpieces.

A member of Friday’s trio said ‘There are people in prison for demanding an end to new oil and gas’ as was seen in a [video](#) posted by Just Stop Oil. The three were swiftly arrested, charged with causing criminal damage, and will appear at Westminster Magistrates’ Court on the 30th September. There has been a crackdown on environmental activists and campaigners in the UK, according to this [January 2024 statement](#) by a UN representative for environmentalists, with a number in jail for disruptive protests such as holding banners on bridges and blocking roads. The vandalism of art and cultural artifacts is a tactic adopted in a [swathe of protests](#) around Europe. Subsequently, Just Stop Oil has proposed the question: what is more valuable, life or art?

While some museum professionals support starting discussions surrounding artistic responsibility and ecological sustainability,

others have [noted](#) that these acts are completely unjustifiable. Nevertheless, the National Gallery has shared that the painting was unharmed in the act, unlike in 2022 when damage was done to its valuable Italian frame. Sunflowers was rehung on the wall of the gallery where the [Poets and Lovers](#) exhibition took place, and made visible to visitors just hours after being drenched in two cans of tomato soup.

photo credit: Just Stop Oil