

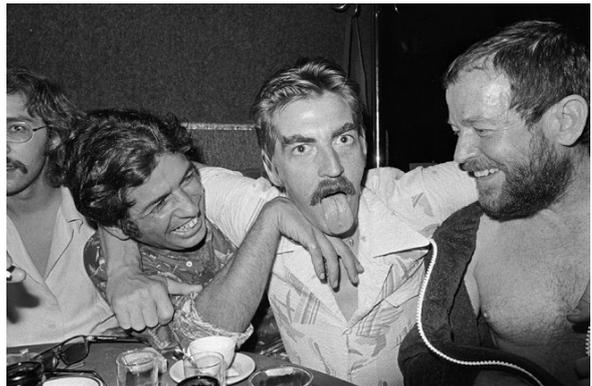
The New York Times

New Details Emerge About Tainted Gallery

By PATRICIA COHEN
November 3, 2013

The art forger Ken Perenyi remembers Anthony Masaccio as a practiced partner in the sale of fake paintings, a man with movie-star looks and the nickname Tony Cha Cha who mingled with models and artists in the back room of Andy Warhol's hangout Max's Kansas City during the 1970s. In a memoir published last year, Mr. Perenyi describes how he painstakingly created fakes that Mr. Masaccio hawked to gallery owners out of a Saks shopping bag.

Now Mr. Masaccio has surfaced as "a known purveyor in forged art" in another document — a newly amended complaint against Knoedler & Company, a gallery that is at the center of an \$80 million forgery case.



Anthony Masaccio, second from left, at Max's Kansas City. He is part of an amended complaint against Knoedler & Company.

The new papers challenge declarations by Knoedler, now shuttered, that it did everything possible to authenticate works that turned out to be fakes by pointing to how it once did business with Mr. Masaccio, despite warnings from gallery staff and a modern art expert.

The complaint makes references to Mr. Perenyi's memoir and says that in 1994 the gallery bought at least one painting attributed to Willem de Kooning from Mr. Masaccio, even though Knoedler's associate director at the time, Frank Del Deo, said that Mr. Masaccio "didn't appear to be all that trustworthy," and that the painting had no exhibition history or publication record.

"A more verifiable provenance" would be preferred, Mr. Del Deo warned, "before we engaged in selling" any paintings he provided.

Stephen Polcari, an art expert hired by Knoedler, told the gallery's president, Ann Freedman, that he had "doubts" whether Masaccio's painting was genuine, according to the amended complaint. Knoedler bought the work anyway, paying cash.

Mr. Masaccio's whereabouts could not be determined now.

In interviews, lawyers for Knoedler and Ms. Freedman dismissed the amended claim. Nicholas A. Gravante Jr., who represents Ms. Freedman, said that Mr. Masaccio "was one of de Kooning's studio assistants," and that "several prominent dealers have likewise acquired works from Masaccio." Knoedler's lawyer, Charles D. Schmerler, in an email, called the new allegations "fictional."

The adequacy of Knoedler's efforts to verify the authenticity of works is at the heart of several lawsuits brought against the gallery by clients who bought works provided to Knoedler by Glafira Rosales, a Long Island dealer who was the source of at least 40 counterfeits that the gallery started selling in 1994.



The new information on Knoedler's practices comes in an amended complaint from John Howard, a Wall Street executive who bought a fake de Kooning from the gallery for \$4 million.

Ms. Freedman has maintained that she had no clue that any of the works from Ms. Rosales were counterfeits. Although no documentation accompanied the works, Ms. Freedman has said she did everything possible to verify the art's authenticity.

But Mr. Howard and others contend that Ms. Freedman and the gallery tried to suppress negative information and deceive potential customers. In court papers, Mr. Howard argues that Ms. Freedman misrepresented the opinions of experts and even helped provide — wittingly or not — a convincing but fabricated story about the works' history.

For example, Ms. Rosales had initially said the paintings had been inherited by the son of an anonymous collector, who she and others referred to as Mr. X. But it was Ms. Freedman who suggested the works' provenance to Ms. Rosales, court papers say, first naming the artist Alfonso Ossorio as the possible liaison between Mr. X and the other artists. Court papers filed by Ms. Freedman say that she "surmised" that Ossorio might have played a role.

When a panel of experts later concluded it was "inconceivable" that Ossorio played such a role, the complaint says Ms. Freedman suggested to Ms. Rosales that the possible source was, instead, David Herbert, a New York dealer who died in 1995. Mr. Gravante insisted that Ms. Rosales was the one to name Mr. Herbert.

Ms. Freedman earned a total of \$10.4 million from the sale of works from Ms. Rosales, court papers say; the gallery made a net profit of \$29 million.

Mr. Schmerler, Knoedler's lawyer, said: "There is a very wide gap between what plaintiffs now have alleged in a last-ditch effort to save their failing claims and what the evidence clearly shows to be the truth."