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Former Knoedler director settles defamation lawsuit

The gallerist Marco Grassi has retracted his comments criticising Ann Freedman's due diligence in researching fakes

By Laura Gilbert
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The former director of the shuttered Knoedler gallery, Ann Freedman, settled a defamation lawsuit against the gallerist Marco Grassi yesterday, 12 December. The suit was based on a New York magazine article published in August in which Grassi criticised Freedman's due diligence in researching a group of Abstract Expressionist paintings that turned out to be fakes. As part of the settlement, Grassi retracted his statements. Freedman and Knoedler are currently defendants in seven lawsuits alleging they knowingly sold forged paintings. The art dealer who brought the works to Knoedler has admitted they are fakes.

As quoted in Freedman's defamation complaint, Grassi said: "It seems to me Ms. Freedman was totally irresponsible and it went on for years... A gallery person has an absolute responsibility to do due diligence, and I don't think she did it. The story of the paintings is so totally kooky. I mean, really. It was a great story and she just said, this is great."

In his retraction, Grassi said: "Regretfully, I made these comments without having full knowledge of the facts about Ms Freedman's diligence, including the many years of research conducted about the provenance of the works or the many scholars, museums, conservators, and dealers to whom she had shown the works. I therefore retract my comments and apologise for any harm they may have caused."



Ann Freedman. Photo: Fred R. Conrad
The New York Times/Redux/eyevine