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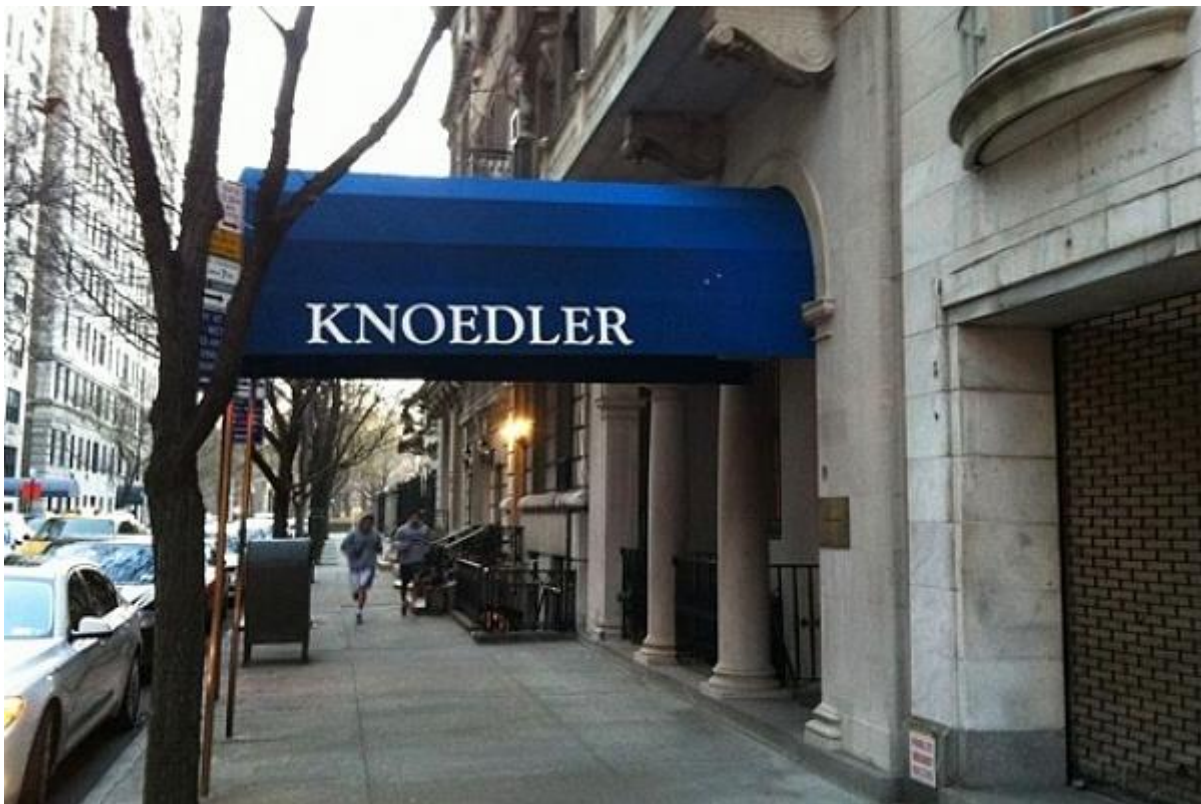


THE ART NEWSPAPER

Knoedler gallery and former director quietly settle three claims over fake paintings

Six cases remain open in Abstract Expressionist fakes scandal that has entangled many in the art industry

by [LAURA GILBERT](#) | 11 August 2015



Knoedler Gallery in New York

After vigorously fighting claims that they knowingly sold a string of fake Abstract Expressionist paintings totalling \$60m, the now-defunct Knoedler Gallery and its former director Ann Freedman have quietly settled three of the ten lawsuits brought against them by angry buyers. The settlement terms were not disclosed.

Two of the cases against them, brought in Manhattan federal court, were closed this summer. The Manny Silverman and Richard Feigen galleries settled their suit last Tuesday, 4 August. They were the intermediaries in a sale in 2000 to the New York collector Stephen Robert of a painting purportedly by Clyfford Still for more than \$1m. And on 15 July, the California collectors Martin and Sharleen Cohen, settled their claim over a painting meant to be by Mark Rothko, which they bought in 1998 for \$385,000 through the Michelle Rosenfeld Gallery. Both these settlements also include Knoedler's owner, Michael Hammer, and his company 8-31 Holdings.

A third lawsuit, brought in New York state court by the collector William Lane over a counterfeit Rothko he bought in 1998 through the Gerald Solomon gallery for \$320,000, closed in April. The first lawsuit brought against Knoedler over the suspected fakes by the collector Pierre Lagrange was quickly settled in 2012.

Six federal court cases against the once-venerable gallery are still open and the forgeries have entangled many in the art industry: the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri and Basel's Beyeler Foundation have both displayed fakes that passed through Knoedler; Christie's sold Lane's fake Rothko for \$2.2m and later refunded the money; and the art historian Oliver Wick is a defendant in one of the active suits.

The settlements also do not include some of the key figures in the forgery scandal, who remain defendants: the Long Island art dealer Glafira Rosales, who started bringing the fake works to Knoedler in the 1990s and her companion Jose Carlos Bergantinos Diaz. Rosales pleaded guilty to federal income-tax evasion and money laundering in 2013 and is awaiting sentencing, while Bergantinos Diaz and his brother were arrested in Spain last year and face extradition to the US on federal criminal charges. Also under federal indictment is Pei Shen Qian, the Chinese-born artist who painted the fakes while living in Queens.

Could the recent settlements be a prelude to putting the six other suits to rest as well? "We continue to vigorously defend the remaining litigation," says Charles Schmerler of Norton Rose Fulbright, who represents Knoedler, Hammer, and 8-31 Holdings. Ann Freedman's lawyer did not respond to inquiries.