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Former Knoedler director settles lawsuit with casino billionaire over fake Rothko

This is the eighth of ten legal cases brought by collectors who bought forged paintings through the now defunct gallery

by [LAURA GILBERT](#) | 19 October 2016



Frank Fertitta, stung by Knoedler's sale of a forged work by Rothko in 2008

Ann Freedman, the former director of New York's Knoedler gallery, and Frank Fertitta, the billionaire casino magnate and owner of the Ultimate Fighting Championship, have reached a settlement in the eighth of ten lawsuits brought by collectors against the now-defunct gallery. The terms of the settlement, which was filed in the Manhattan federal court on 14 October, were not disclosed. From 1994 to 2008, Knoedler sold nearly \$70m in paintings supposedly by Abstract Expressionist and other Modern artists that turned out to be forgeries.

Fertitta, [who discovered his work was a fake after reading The Art Newspaper](#), filed his lawsuit in April 2014 alleging that Freedman and Knoedler knowingly sold him a fake Mark Rothko for \$7.2m in 2008. According to his court papers, Fertitta resold the forgery to an unidentified buyer in 2011 and offered to buy it back.

Knoedler remains a defendant in the lawsuit, as do the Swiss attorney Urs Kraft and the Rothko scholar Oliver Wick, who were intermediaries in the sale. According to court documents, Wick received a \$300,000 consulting fee from Knoedler in addition to a \$150,000 "introductory commission" paid by Fertitta. At the time of the sale, Wick was a curator at the Fondation Beyeler in Zurich, which had previously displayed the work in an exhibition.

Two lawsuits against Freedman and Knoedler are still outstanding. The Martin Hilti Family Trust in Liechtenstein is suing over a "Rothko" it bought for \$5.5m, and the California collector Frances White is suing over a "Jackson Pollock" she and her husband bought for \$3.1m. Knoedler is a defendant in those lawsuits as well.

Freedman's lawyer Luke Nikas said his client is "pleased to have resolved the Fertitta matter" and "feels very good about the... remaining cases"