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**Art Dealer Is Arrested on Charges of Selling Fake De
Kooning Artworks**

Brian Boucher, Thursday, February 4, 2016



Eric Ian Hornak Spoutz lecturing at the Washington County museum of Fine Arts in 2013.
Photo: Natasha M. Spoutz, via Wikimedia.

A Michigan man with several aliases has been arrested on charges of selling forged works by Abstract Expressionist masters. Eric Ian Hornak Spoutz, 32, who also reportedly used the names Robert Chad Smith, John Goodman, and James Sinclair, allegedly forged paper trails to substantiate provenance for dozens of artworks by [Willem de Kooning](#), [Joan Mitchell](#), and others.

The arrest happens to come amid [an epic fraud trial](#) involving numerous forged paintings, also by Abstract Expressionists, that New York gallery Knoedler & Co. sold for many millions of dollars.

Preet Bharara, US Attorney General for the Southern District of New York, and the FBI's Diego Rodriguez announced Spoutz's arrest on Wednesday. Bharara has charged Spoutz with wire fraud, which could send him to prison for twenty years. The arrest concludes an investigation that's been ongoing since 2014.

Spoutz allegedly sold some works via a Connecticut auction house on eBay. According to the complaint, the house allegedly sold two pastels, purportedly by Mitchell, on April 29, 2010, for \$28,800 and \$38,400, respectively.

Those two prices match works sold at Shannon's Fine Art Auctioneers, according to artnet's [price database](#).

Spoutz allegedly began to use the aliases after a fraud accusation in 2005, creating fake receipts, bills of sale and correspondence in order to provide a paper trail for the phony works, which he supposedly inherited or bought himself. Some of the allegedly forged correspondence included non-existent addresses. Some of the documents claim the works were sold via the prominent New York dealer Betty Parsons.

The FBI discovered that some of the supposed transactions took place before Spoutz's birth. The complaint states that the documents, supposedly from various sources and years, often used the same typeface.

The Spoutz case is just one of many undertaken by Bharara in recent months. He recently worked to repatriate a stolen dinosaur skull [purchased by actor Nicolas Cage](#) and a [Jean-Michel Basquiat painting](#) smuggled into the US. He also prosecuted an intrepid [Jasper Johns forger](#).

Not all of Spoutz's buyers are known to the authorities, however. Those who believe they bought fraudulent works can call the New York Art Crime Team at 212-384-1000 and speak to Special Agents Chris McKeogh or Meridith Savona.