AUTHENTICATION IN ART

AiA Art News-service

artnet®

Fraud Trial Reveals Knoedler Owner Michael Hammer Spent $1 Million on Two Cars

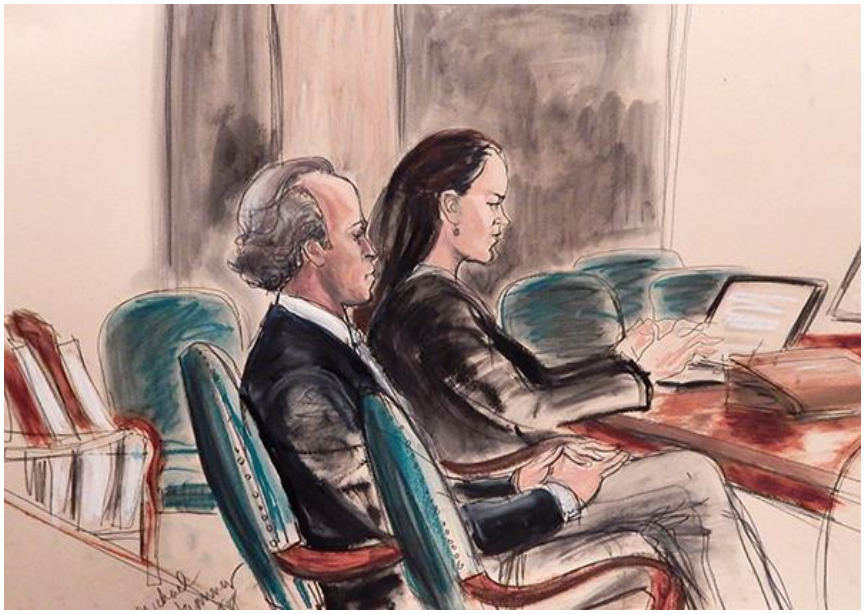
Brian Boucher, Wednesday, February 10, 2016

The Mercedes Benz Maybach Pullman.
Image: via Mercedes.com.

Eyebrows rose in the courtroom on Tuesday as Knoedler & Co. accountant Ruth Blankschen testified about two luxury cars that gallery owner Michael Hammer bought with gallery proceeds.

The gallery and its former director, Ann Freedman, and 8-31 Holdings, the company that also owns Hammer Galleries, are on trial for selling fake paintings supposedly by Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and other Abstract Expressionist artists. (Read more about the trial here.)
Specifically, those cars were a $482,000 Rolls Royce and a $520,000 Mercedes.

Details regarding the Mercedes have not emerged; however, the car in question could be the Mercedes-Maybach Pullman, which is over twenty-one feet long, and includes facing seats in the passenger compartment, which is partitioned from the driver by a glass wall that turns from transparent to opaque at the touch of a button.



Michael Hammer in court during the Knoedler forgery trial.
Photo: Elizabeth Williams, courtesy Illustrated Courtroom.

“Many governments, heads of state and royal families around the world have for decades chosen Mercedes-Benz saloons with the designation ‘Pullman' to drive them with the stateliness and style befitting their status," says the carmaker.

That popularity has earned the Pullman the sobriquet “the Dictator Ship."

Options include armor plating, which would double the starting price, according to the Motley Fool, which points out that the car represents the company's attempt to edge into the super-luxury market long dominated by Rolls-Royce and Bentley.
It seems less likely that Hammer bought himself the half-million-dollar Mercedes that Kanye West picked up—the SLR McLaren, known for its “Gullwing" style doors, which open upward.
Regardless, what is known is that Hammer spent $1 million on two automobiles.