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# US court orders collector to repay Sotheby's \$1.2m for Parmigianino fake

The judgement comes after two experts found the painting was made with modern synthetic pigments

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Two separate investigations found that Saint Jerome, attributed to Parmigianino, is a modern fake. Courtesy of Sotheby's. The seller of a painting of Saint Jerome that had been attributed to Parmigianino, or his followers depending on the expert, has been ordered by a federal court in New York to refund Sotheby's after an expert report "conclusively" found that the painting was a "modern forgery", according to the judgement.

In his 6 November decision, Judge George Daniels found Lionel Saint Donnat de Pourrières liable for breach of contract and ordered him to reimburse

Sotheby's \$842,500—the amount it refunded the buyer in the 2012 sale—plus \$158,090 in interest, as well as the cost of the forensic inspection led by Orion Analytical and the auction's house's legal fees. The total comes to more than \$1.2m, around twice the sum De Pourrières made from the auction.

De Pourrieres, who did not appear in court, declined to comment on the judgement, and the lawyers who initially represented him withdrew from the case after Orion's report came out. The Luxembourg-based broker had tried to challenge Orion's findings through a second opinion, but De Pourrieres's own expert, Maurizio Seracini, reached the same conclusion, saying the work was “without doubt a 20th-century fabrication”. Both examinations found modern synthetic pigments in the paint.

Saint Jerome is one of several paintings at the centre of a major Old Masters fakes scandal. The painting was previously owned by Giuliano Ruffini, whose collection included a number of other panels that are now part of a wide criminal investigation in France. Saint Jerome was first authenticated by the late Parisian expert Mario di Giampaolo and Sylvie Béguin, an honorary curator of the Louvre. In 2003, it was included as an original work by the Mannerist master Parmigianino in exhibitions in Parma and the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, despite

doubts then expressed by the British specialist David Ekserdjian. It was described by Sotheby's for the 2012 sale as by the Circle of Parmigianino. When it was lent to the Metropolitan Museum in New York for display from April 2014 to February 2015, it was again attributed to Parmigianino. Sotheby's proposed submitting Saint Jerome to a forensics lab for testing in 2016, after a Venus attributed to Cranach in the Prince of Lichtenstein's collection, which also came from Ruffini, was seized in France. When Orion's report concluded Saint Jerome was a fake, Sotheby's rescinded the sale and refunded the buyer.