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Art Dealer Eric Spoutz Sentenced to Over Three Years in Prison for Selling Forgeries

Spoutz conducted fraudulent transactions under a series of aliases.

Caroline Elbaor, February 20, 2017



Eric Spoutz lecturing at a museum in Los Angeles in 2012. Image Courtesy Instagram.

Disgraced art dealer Eric Spoutz has been sentenced to 41 months in prison for selling dozens of fake artworks purported to be by postwar American masters such as De Kooning, Robert Indiana, and Joan Mitchell, among others.

Spoutz, 32, will also be required to undergo three years supervised release as well as forfeit the \$1.45 million he received in “ill-gotten gains.” Finally, he will have to pay \$154,100 in restitution.



By [Brian Boucher](#), Feb 4, 2016

Despite Spoutz’s attempts at providing provenance for the forgeries, investigators were able to uncover the fraudulent circumstances under which the works were purchased. “Our Office has a long history of investigating—and prosecuting—those who try to contaminate the art world with fraudulent artwork,” said US Attorney General for the Southern District of New York, Preet Bharara, in a statement.

“Thanks to the outstanding investigative work by the FBI, Spoutz’s alleged forgery mill is no longer in business.”

During the court proceedings, Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Adams said, “Spoutz falsified a complex series of seemingly original documentation of each piece’s provenance: bills of sale, letters from art dealers, correspondence from prior owner’s estates, etc.”

Spoutz apparently also operated under the names Robert Chad Smith, John Goodman, and James Sinclair, leading his victims to suspect something was awry. “In your certified affidavit you state that the artworks came from your surrogate uncle Chad Smith,” one victim is quoted in [the complaint](#).

“Finding Chad Smith anywhere is almost impossible and made worse by the fact that the drummer for the Black Eyed Peas is named Chad Smith and he takes up the first 20 pages of Google... if you would be so kind as to either call me, answer

my calls or email to me a way that I can establish who your uncle was I would greatly appreciate it.”



By [Sarah Cascone](#), Feb 8, 2016

Spoutz reportedly donated works to a handful of US museums, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Detroit Institute of Arts.

In a report from the [*Detroit Free Press*](#), the fraudster apologized before the sentencing, and his lawyer blamed a troubled past on Spoutz’s life of crime.