

AUTHENTICATION
IN ART

AiA news-service

artnet[®]

Ariana Grande's Legal Battle With the Artist Who Claimed Her 'God Is a Woman' Video Ripped Off His Candle Paintings Is Over

The video remains online with its imagery unchanged.

Sarah Cascone, August 21, 2019



Singer Ariana Grande. Photo by Axelle/Bauer-Griffin/FilmMagic/Getty Images.

Pop star Ariana Grande and artist Vladimir Kush have settled their legal dispute. The singer stood accused of ripping off a pair of Kush's paintings in the music video for her hit single "God Is a Woman."

Kush's lawyer, Mark G. Tratos, filed a notice of voluntary dismissal with Nevada district court on Friday, stating that "the parties have reached a resolution." The terms of the settlement, which was first reported by the Blast, have not been disclosed, other than to note that both Grande and Kush will pay their own legal bills.

At three points in the music video, which also contains references to Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel fresco The Creation of Adam, Grande appears in silhouette form, her body taking the place of the wick in a lit candle framed against a cloudy sky. The imagery was remarkably similar to Kush's paintings *The Candle* and *The Candle 2*, painted in 1999 and 2000, respectively.

The Russian-American artist had sought unspecified damages and for the video to be removed from YouTube. Post settlement, it is still live, with the contested imagery unedited.

Kush isn't exactly a household name, but he's attracted a steady stream of clients for his unique brand of kitschy Surrealism, which he has dubbed Metaphorical Realism.

The artist sells his work through his own company, Kush Fine Arts Las Vegas, which has galleries in Maui, Laguna Beach, and inside Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas (a similar

business structure to that employed by artists like photographer Peter Lik and the late Thomas Kinkade). Although Kush told Artsy his paintings can sell for as much as \$100,000, the artnet Price Database has record of only one record of his work reselling at auction, for \$8,000 back in 2013.



Vladimir Kush's painting *The Candle*, left, and a scene from Ariana Grande's music video for "God Is a Woman," right.

Grande's music video was the work of director Dave Meyers and production company Freenjoy, Inc., both of whom previously faced legal action for allegedly copying the distinctive paintings of Lina Iris Viktor in Kendrick Lamar and SZA's "All the Stars" music video. That case settled last year, but Meyers is currently facing yet another suit over similarities between a Billie Eilish video and photographs from Maurizio Cattelan and Pierpaolo Ferrari's satirical art magazine *Toiletpaper*.