

Actor Alec Baldwin settles fraud dispute with art dealer

By Steven Crighton

Daily Journal Staff Writer

Actor Alec Baldwin's settlement Monday with an art dealer he accused of fraud will bring him five times the \$190,000 he paid for the painting at the center of the dispute, his attorney said.

Steven Feldman, of Hueston Hennigan LLP and Baldwin's lead counsel, said the amount reflects what Baldwin would have earned from a full trial victory.

Ted Poretz of Zukerman Gore Brandeis & Crossman, represented New York gallery owner Mary Boone. He declined to comment on the allegations or the settlement.

Baldwin sued Boone in 2016 over the painting he purchased in 2010 — a piece by artist Ross Bleckner called "Sea and Mirror." According to court documents, Baldwin was captivated by the painting and wanted to buy it.

When Baldwin received the painting, he said he felt something was amiss. The colors seemed different, Baldwin said.

Boone explained the discrepancy away by telling Baldwin that the painting's previous owner was a smoker, and that she had it cleaned,

according to the complaint.

The claim never sat well with Baldwin, Feldman said. The actor later voiced his skepticism to artist friends, who confirmed he was right to be suspicious. He confronted Boone and she confessed the painting wasn't "Sea and Mirror," according to the complaint.

A source familiar with the case said the painting was a replica created by the original artist. *Baldwin v. Boone*, 65807/2016 (N.Y. Sup. Ct., filed Sept. 12, 2016).

In court documents, Boone argued Baldwin knew — or should have known — that the piece was not an original at the time he'd purchased it, Feldman said.

Over the course of discovery, Feldman said the legal team found evidence that directly contradicted Boone's claim. With the evidence in Baldwin's favor — and Hueston Hennigan's recent string of successes in fraud cases, pointing to a \$12 million award in a 2013 wine fraud case as an example — Feldman said the team was confident about going to trial.

Feldman said he thought that may be what prompted the defendant to agree to a settlement with terms favorable to Baldwin.

"I think it was the result of us going for aggressive pretrial dis-



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covery that revealed Boone's culpability and scheme to defraud Alec, which justified his claims entirely for fraud and punitive damages," Feldman said. "The settlement obviously reflects multiples above what the work that he purchased actually cost."

In addition to the cash, Baldwin will additionally receive two more paintings from the "Sea and Mirror" artist as per the settlement, Feldman said.

"This is the exact right result for the fraud that occurred in this case," Feldman said.

steven_crighton@dailyjournal.com