



ART NEWS NOW: Fake Rothko Trial Begins, Christie's Sales Drop, Boston Increases Art Funding and more.

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by Pat Rogers

Have a minute? Get caught up on the art news people are talking about. Read on for today's art news to know.

The first trial in the sale of over 30 fake paintings purportedly made by Abstract Expressionism masters opened in Manhattan on January 25, 2016 in United States District Court. The trial arises from a lawsuit involving the 2004 sale of a fraudulent 1956 untitled Rothko painting by the Knoedler & Company, reported [The New York Times](#). The trial is expected to determine whether the gallery and its director, Ann Freedman, were aware that the paintings were fake and were in on the ruse to bilk collectors, reported [NYT](#).

All tolled, over 30 fake paintings were sold to collectors who paid \$63 million for the fakes, according to the [NYT](#). This week's trial is the first lawsuit stemming from the sales of the fraudulent paintings. Others included works allegedly made by [Jackson Pollock](#), Willem de Kooning and others. All of the works had actually been painted by a Chinese immigrant in Queens, according to the [NYT](#). Some suits have already settled with other trials pending.

Christie's announced today total sales of \$7.4 billion for 2015, representing a 5 percent decrease over the same period in 2014. That said, Christine's also announced the sales were the second-highest in the company history and that there is a strong demand for art at all price points, according to their announcement. Notable successes included the record-making sale in New York of Amedeo Modigliani's *Nu couché* for \$170.4 million and a record day-sale totals during their corresponding 20th Century Sale week.

Frank Stella's former home and studio in New York City was purchased for \$22 million by real estate company Milan Associates, reported the [Real Deal](#). The Beaux-Arts carriage house, at 138 East 13th Street, was built in 1903 by architecture firm Jardine, Kent, and Jardine and formerly housed the Van Tassel & Kearney Auction Mart, a top seller of horses and horse-drawn carriages, according to the Real Deal. [Frank Stella](#) purchased the building in 1978 and lived and worked there through 2005. High ceilings are throughout the home and reach 30 feet on the second floor, according to the Real Deal.

James Turrell will donate a custom-made "Skyspace" to The Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh, reported [Art News](#). The artwork has an estimated value of \$1 million, making it the largest gift in the contemporary art museum's history. [Turrell](#) has created around 86 Skyspaces for

private and public venues in 29 countries on three continents. [The Mattress Factory](#) was one of the first art museums to exhibit his Skyspace pieces and they currently have three on permanent view, according to *Art News*.

Marianne Boesky will close her uptown experimental project space at East 64th Street as the building is expected to be sold, according to the *New York Times'* ArtsBeat. The final show in the space will feature art by Donald Moffett and Pino Pascali. Boesky has occupied the space for the last six years. [Marianne Boesky galleries](#) in Chelsea and the East Village are not impacted by the change.

The Venice Biennale announced Christine Macel has been chosen as Artistic Director for the 2017 Venice Biennale, set to run May 13 to November 26, 2017. Macel is the chief curator of [Centre Pompidou](#) in Paris. Christine Macel is the fourth woman to direct the Biennale, according to the art organization. The 2015 Director for the Venice Biennale was Okwui Enwezor.

Macel has contributed to the Biennale before. She organized the French Pavilion in 2013 and the Belgium Pavilion in 2007. At Centre Pompidou, Macel has organized numerous solo shows include those featuring Philippe Parreno, Sophie Calle, Nan Goldin and Sala as well as the upcoming one-person show for Melik Ohanian titled "Dear Friends, donations of the last 5 years."

Boston is allotted \$1 million to fund three programs benefiting artists living in Boston as a way of reaffirming the city's commitment to supporting its artist community, announced Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh during his State of the City Address on January 20, 2016, according to [The Boston Globe](#). Funds will expand and support Boston's recently-formed artist-in-residence-program, called Boston AIR, and fund individual grants for artists and a new artist resource desk at City Hall, reported [The Boston Globe](#).

In other Boston news, the **Museum of Fine Arts has acquired a rare early painting by Mexican artist Frida Kahlo**, representing a first for the MFA and becoming the only known work by the artist to enter the permanent collection of a New England museum, according to [The Boston Globe](#). *Dos Mujeres (Salvadora y Herminia)*, 1928, is a double portrait depicting two Mexican women before a verdant backdrop of leaves, fruit, and insects. The little-known painting by [Frida Kahlo](#) was held in a private American collection for around 90 years before being acquired by MFA in December, reported the Boston Globe. The work pre-dates many of the self-portraits that made Frida Kahlo famous.

David H. Koch stepped down from the board of the Natural History Museum in New York City as of December 2015. Koch has donated around \$23 million to the museum and the dinosaur wing is named after him, according to [The New York Times's](#) ArtsBeat. Koch has served on the board for 23 years and decided to not renew his seat on the board, reported the [NYT](#), citing lack of time for board business. Koch serves on about 20 boards and plans to devote more time to cancer research, according to the article.