

Art News Now: da Vinci Breaks Sales Ceiling, Alec Baldwin Settles Art Suit & More News to Know

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by Pat Rogers

Is anyone talking about anything other than last night's shattering auction sale of Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi* for \$450.3 million? Moving beyond everyone's expectations for the sales figures, it seems difficult to think of anything else. A story on the historic sale follows shortly. In other art news, graffiti artists get a win, Alec Baldwin settles his suit with Mary Boone and other news worth knowing. Continue reading to discover the art news people are talking about this week.

A Brooklyn jury decided, on November 7, 2017, that [5Pointz](#) owner Jerry Wolkoff broke the law when he whitewashed graffiti from the exterior of his Long Island City complex without giving notice to the street artists who had permission to make art there, [reported ArtForum](#). If presiding judge Frederick Block agrees, the ruling would set a precedent for legal protection for public street artists, according to the report. Wolkoff had allowed his building to be painted for over 20 years and the art-soaked exterior was a tourist destination. Wolkoff claims he was clear about his plans to tear the building down. The suit was brought by 21 artists, according to ArtForum.



View of 5 Pointz, January 20, 2013. Photo: Ezmosis, via Wikipedia.

Leonardo da Vinci's painting *Salvator Mundi* sold last night at Christie's for a record-smashing price of \$450.3 million with fees, creating a new record for any artwork sold at auction. By comparison, the selling price more than doubled the amount paid for Picasso's *Woman of Algiers* for \$179.4 million at Christies in May 2015, [according to the New York Times](#). The price is remarkable for several reasons, including the trend for collector preference for contemporary art and the contraction of the old masters market, according to the *New York Times*. A separate story has been published at [Hamptons Art Hub](#).

Mary Boone settled a civil lawsuit with Alec Baldwin by issuing a seven-figure check to the actor for a painting he purchased from her gallery, *Sea and Mirror*, 1996, that was a copy of the painting purchased for \$190,000, [according to The New Yorker](#). Both the original and the copy were painted by [Ross Bleckner](#), a fact that came to light after the sale was executed and Baldwin became suspicious, years later, that the painting he was supplied was not the painting agreed upon. When confronted by Baldwin, Bleckner admitted he had made a copy of the painting he wanted to purchase with Boone eventually admitting the switch, the *New Yorker* relayed. The trial had been scheduled for early 2018.

Two Swiss journalists were held for over 50 hours by authorities in Dhabhi while on an approved assignment to cover the opening of Louvre Abu Dhabi, [reported The Art Newspaper](#). They were detained last week after taking pictures at an open air market to capture migrant workers to help illustrate a wider context to their story of the new art museum, according to *The Art Newspaper*. The painting were released on November 11, 2017 and allowed to return to Zurich but most of their equipment was retained by authorities. While not harmed, the journalists were blindfolded, isolated and interrogated for up to 10 hours, they stated.

Earlier this week, Christie's realized it's second highest total for an Impressionist and Modern evening sale, totaling \$479.3 million in sales (with fees) on November 13, 2017 in New York, [reported the Art Newspaper](#). Selling 60 of the 68 lots offered, the top sale went to [Vincent Van Gogh's *Labourer dans un champ*](#) (1889) from the Nancy Lee and Perry Bass collection, which sold for \$81.3 million with fees. An artist record was set for [Fernand Leger's *Cintrastate de formes*](#) (1913), selling for \$70.06 million with fees (\$62 million hammer price).

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