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HEADLINE: Limited Viewing

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HIGHLIGHT:
Passing on a portrait.

BODY:
"Send it back!" That's a complaint you sometimes hear at a restaurant. But in a portrait studio?

Limited Brands Chairman (and billionaire) Leslie Wexner has redefined etiquette. After viewing a 6-by-6-foot oil painting of himself, his wife, Abigail, and their four young children, an apparently horrified Wexner returned it to the artist, Nelson Shanks. Wexner's lawyer alleges that Shanks "created an inherently impersonal, inaccurate and disturbing painting."

Shanks, 65, is no color-by-numbers hack. He has done portraits of Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, Princess Di, Margaret Thatcher and Pope John Paul II. "This has never happened before," he laments. Shanks spent two days at the Wexners' 60,000-square-foot Georgian mansion in New Albany, Ohio, where he took 300 photographs as a basis for the painting. The family, he says, declined offers to view the portrait before it was completed.

In any event, Shanks is suing the Wexners in U.S. District Court in eastern Pennsylvania for breach of contract, seeking \$339,900, including the costs of framing and shipping. Codefendants are New York money manager Jeffrey Epstein, who originally intended the painting as a gift to the Wexners, and New York socialite Ghislaine Maxwell, daughter of late British media magnate Robert Maxwell, who put artist and subjects together. A judge recently threw out a motion to have the case dismissed.

Which means Shanks may get a second shot--as a courtroom sketch artist.

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