

To: jeevacation@gmail.com[jeevacation@gmail.com]; Jeffrey Epstein[jeevacation@gmail.com]
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sat 12/8/2012 5:41:35 AM
Subject: were you aware of this?

<http://www.courthousenews.com/2011/03/10/34803.htm>

LOS ANGELES (CN) - An investment fund claims it was conned by a self-described "master illusionist" who persuaded it to invest in rare books and art - including a portrait of Sir Isaac Newton - and then absconded with more than \$543,000 and a bunch of the loot.

Ensign Consulting Ltd., of the Virgin Islands, claims lead defendant Al Seckel spent years crafting a persona with the appearance of respectability before he approached one of its consultants about an investment in rare antique globes.

Four months later, Seckel claimed to have sold the globes for a 30 percent profit, splitting the proceeds 50-50 with Ensign, according to the complaint.

Soon Seckel approached Ensign again, telling its consultant (nonparty) Adam Gold that he was "at a chateau, where believe it or not, the owner has an enormous collection of antiquarian science books inherited from her dad," according to the Superior Court complaint.

"It is a stunning collection. I am trying to negotiate it out now, but will only do so at a price that makes a lot of sense," the complaint states, citing Seckel.

Less than two weeks later, Ensign says, Seckel tried to persuade it to invest in a portrait of Isaac Newton, allegedly commissioned by the scientist himself.

Ensign says Seckel claimed he already had a buyer for the painting: Nathan P. Myhrvold, the former chief technology officer for Microsoft. (Myhrvold is not a party to the complaint.)

Ensign says it gave Seckel \$168,000 to buy the painting, by Sir Godfrey Kneller, anticipating that Seckel would flip it immediately for \$300,000.

But that sale never happened, Ensign says.

Ensign says Seckel offered the Newton portrait to another defendant, Michael Sharpe Rare & Antiquarian Books, as collateral for a debt that Seckel owed Sharpe for a 15th century manuscript.

"Since Ensign paid for and owned the Newton portrait and Seckel otherwise had no ownership interest in the Newton portrait, Seckel had no right to use the Newton portrait as collateral for his personal debt owed to Michael Sharpe," the complaint states.

Sharpe foreclosed upon the security interest in the Newton portrait, and with the court enforcing the judgment, promptly sold it to a third party, defendant Lou Weinstein, according to the complaint.

Ensign claims that everyone involved knew that it owned the portrait, and conspired to hide that the Newton portrait had been used as collateral, had been the subject of a creditor lawsuit, and was sold.

Sharpe made more than \$284,900 on the transaction, and Seckel netted more than \$15,000, the complaint states.

Meanwhile, Ensign claims, Seckel induced it to invest in eight sets of rare books that he described as either "'pre-sold,' or as good as 'pre-sold.'"

But once again, Ensign says, the sales never took place.

Ensign says it entered into a contract with Seckel that required him to repay the price of the investments should any "material adverse change" occur.

But a contract couldn't protect it from Seckel's double-dealing, Ensign says.

With weeks, Seckel said that three of the books, worth more than \$103,000, had been stolen by a bookseller, though actually he had sold the books, using the bogus theft as a way to cover up his fraud, according to the complaint.

Finally, after Seckel defaulted, Ensign says it tried to take possession of the books and portrait, and hired an auction company to handle the sales.

At first Seckel failed to cooperate, then "he finally admitted that he had pawned some of the books, presumably almost a year after having done so," Ensign says.

Ensign says that in an email, Seckel claimed that he had pawned the books to comply with Ensign's demands for

repayment.

Named as defendants are Al Seckel, Isabel Maxwell, Illusionworks LLC, Lou Weinstein, Heritage Book Shop, Krown & Spellman Booksellers, Michael Sharpe Rare & Antiquarian Books, W.P. Watson Antiquarian Books, and 19th Century Rare Book and Photograph Shop.

Ensign demands \$543,259, and punitive damages for breach of contract, fraud, conversion, tortious interference with a contract, fraudulent transfer, negligent misrepresentation, and fraudulent accounting.

It is represented by Olivier Taillieu with Zuber & Taillieu.