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New York Auction Houses Could Soon Be Forced To Reveal Sellers' Identities



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In a decision that could fundamentally shake New York's auction market, the NY State Supreme Court is reconsidering the current law that protects anonymous sellers, [according to Tom Mashburg of The New York Times](#).

Currently, most sellers in New York auctions are allowed to remain anonymous. The auction houses merely state that the work is from a "private collection" and leave it at that.

But in October, an appellate court unanimously ruled that buyers must be given the names of sellers in post-auction paperwork for the deal to be binding. The court cited current (virtually ignored) state law that already requires the buyer to know the name of the seller, and now the decision is being reviewed by New York's highest court.

The reason that disclosing the names of auction sellers could be such a game changer is because currently, a buyer is allowed to back out of any transaction where the seller's name is not provided. If the name was provided, it would be harder for buyers to sue an auction house for their money back if they changed their mind about the price or sale of any purchased item.

You'd think that would be in the auction house's favor, but most are uncomfortable with the decision because it could force sellers to seek auction houses in other states or countries that would protect anonymity. The law, if upheld, would be a step towards making sellers' names more public — something that could be damaging if there were



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family conflicts over inherited assets, an embarrassment of debt, or if institutions did not want to disclose that they were selling items from their collections.

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