

Casino mogul sues over damaged Picasso

New York (AP) – Casino mogul Steve Wynn sued Lloyd's of London Thursday, saying the insurance company failed to act properly on his demands to pay USD 54 million in lost value for a Picasso that was damaged when Wynn accidentally poked a hole in the canvas with his elbow.

The lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Manhattan sought an order to force Lloyd's to expedite Wynn's claims for reimbursement and restoration costs for Picasso's 1932 work, „Le Reve,“ by providing him with an appraisal report or initial damages assessment.

Wynn's representatives told Lloyd's in November that the painting was worth USD 139 million the day before Wynn damaged it in his Las Vegas office on September 30, but was believed to be worth no more than USD 85 million afterward.

In 1997, Wynn paid USD 48.4 million for the painting depicting Picasso's mistress, Marie-Therese Walter.

Wynn has described the damage to the canvas as a thumb-sized flap and said it was „the world's clumsiest and goofiest thing to do.“

He damaged the canvas as he showed it to guests, including screenwriter Nora Ephron and husband Nick Pileggi, broadcaster Barbara Walters, New York socialite Louise Grunwald, lawyer David Boies and his wife, Mary, and art dealer Serge Sorokko and his wife, Tatiana.

„The blood drained out of their faces,“ Wynn said. „I just turned around and said, ‚Oh, my God. How could I have done this?“,

A message left with a spokesman for Lloyd's was not immediately returned.

In a letter included as an exhibit with the lawsuit, a Lloyd's representative wrote that he understood that Wynn's representatives wanted the insurers to estimate the level of depreciation at the outset, but that it was customary practice for the insured to make a claim first and for insurers to agree or disagree.

Lloyd's has already agreed to pay USD 90,000 to restore the painting, a consultant fee of USD 21,000 related to the restoration and increased security that was required during the process.