

Press Release
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The court of Cologne reaches an early verdict in the Beltracchi forgery case.

For many years, Wolfgang Beltracchi and his accomplices have produced fake avant-garde artworks introducing them as lost masterpieces into the international art market. Last October 26, the Cologne Regional Court before which the forgers were appearing in the biggest case of fraud and false art of the moment announced an early verdict. The penalties range up to six years of imprisonment.

The trial of the most spectacular cases of counterfeit works of art since World War II, revealed by evidence of forgery gathered by AV Modern & Contemporary's director Sofia Komarova, lasted about two months. The Cologne Court delivered its verdict Wednesday, October 26 and sentenced the brain of the case, Wolfgang Beltracchi (60) to six years imprisonment. The latter's wife, Helen (53) and the accomplice of the couple, Otto Schulte-Kellinghaus (68), respectively sentenced to four and five. Beltracchi's older sister, Jeanette Spurzem (54), has also been charged with one year of imprisonment with nine months of probation.

The relatively light sentences and the speed at which the trial took place are mainly due to the agreement between the two opposing parties from the beginning of the procedure. The court had in fact secured the defendants sentences below ten years if they would consent to a full confession. The proposal was promptly accepted and the four defendants then recognized the full harm and delivered detailed testimony. With these confessions, the conclusion of the trial which was originally scheduled for March 2012 was consistently accelerated and the court decided not to hear the 160 witnesses and ten assessors originally scheduled to appear.