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Sompo Holdings Wins on Appeal in Van Gogh “Sunflowers” Dispute

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Dec. 1, 2025 – Hughes Hubbard advised Sompo Holdings, owner of one of Vincent van Gogh’s iconic “Sunflowers” paintings (valued at \$250 million), in securing a major appellate win.

The Seventh Circuit affirmed the dismissal of a lawsuit seeking to recover the painting and \$1.5 billion in claimed damages. Descendants of German Jewish art collector Paul von Mendelssohn-Bartholdy – who sold the painting through a Paris dealer in 1934 after the Nazi regime targeted him for persecution – brought the appeal.

The firm previously [won dismissal of the lawsuit](#) in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy’s descendants appealed that decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

Mendelssohn-Bartholdy acquired “Sunflowers” after van Gogh’s death. In 1934, after the Nazi Party targeted him for persecution because he was Jewish, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy consigned the painting to Paul Rosenberg, a Parisian art dealer, who sold it to Edith Beatty, a British-American heiress.

In 1987, Yasuda Fire and Marine Insurance Company – Sompo’s predecessor – purchased the painting at a London auction for \$40 million, a record price at the time. Today, Sompo owns and displays “Sunflowers” at the Sompo Museum of Art in Japan.

In December 2022, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy’s descendants, seeking to use the reopened statute of limitations established by the U.S. Holocaust Expropriated Art Recovery Act of 2016, filed suit to recover “Sunflowers” (valued at \$250 million) and \$1.5 billion in claimed damages.

On June 3, 2024, U.S. federal judge Jeremy C. Daniel dismissed the case, ruling that the court has no jurisdiction over Sompo Holdings and its affiliates, despite the painting’s temporary exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago from September 2001 to January 2002.

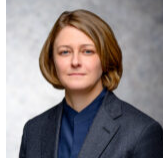
On Nov. 21, 2025, Judges Kenneth F. Ripple, John Z. Lee and Doris L. Pryor of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit affirmed the judgment of the district court.

Dan Weiner and Meaghan Gragg led the Hughes Hubbard team, which included Shigeki Obi. The Clark Hill firm acted as co-counsel.

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Daniel H. Weiner



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