

September 1, 1981

In June of 1981, professional problems facing Art Express and unprofessional conduct by publisher Bruce Helander so upset the senior editorial staff that they urged me to seek legal counsel in an effort to save the magazine. It became evident that more than ordinary problems were at issue. Promises made to me and to the staff over the last year and a half were being broken. The normally difficult business of launching a magazine was far riskier than had been known due to practices, statements and self-dealing by publisher Helander.

In an effort to salvage the situation, I asked Mr. Helander to once again confirm his promises. He refused to do so. After a week and a half of trying negotiations during which I made many financial concessions but refused to compromise editorial integrity and conduct, Mr. Helander abruptly terminated my editorial duties. In an attempt to force me to accede to his demands, Helander and his staff threatened me with legal action, damage to career and reputation, and - in front of witnesses - even attempted to intimidate me physically in a scene lifted from a Grade B ganster movie.

Helander then caused the institution of a vindictive and malicious suit against me for \$500,000. While totally without grounds, the suit was nonetheless used to justify Helander's spurious claims of improprieties on my part and was used to justify a campaign of slander and false allegations against me to staff, former staff, investors and art world professionals. My lawyers advised me to make no statement until this time, and Helander even used my discreet silence to suggest that I was somehow "guilty."

Mr. Helander's suit has now been concluded in my favor. After being dropped by his New York law firm, Helander was forced to resort to a Providence law firm which includes one of his own partners and could hardly refuse to represent him. Even so, we forced Helander to discontinue his suit. The suit itself was frivolous. The discontinuation saves Bruce Helander the embarrassment of a defeat in court and merely delays my collecting damages, substantial legal fees and court costs. Helander's suit against me was the act of a bully. The manner in which he discontinued is the evidence of a coward.

It is well known that I was the founding editor of Art Express. Within days after my termination, the vast majority of editorial staff resigned. Helander has been forced to withdraw his offices from New York to Providence. Despite boastful interviews in the Providence press with headlines such as "Taking on New York," Helander is having a difficult time dealing with an art world in which he has no credibility. His success as a publisher with no track record in publishing is in serious doubt, and is now under question, not only by former staff, but by advertisers and investors.

It is less well known that I am a partner in Art Express. Helander engaged me because of significant prior publishing and editorial experience. I did what he asked me to do: to take his fuzzy ambition to create an art magazine which he called "International College Art," to re-name it, build a staff, create a credible reputation and develop a national art magazine. Not merely effort was involved, but substantial amounts of money which my family and I invested in Art Express. It is clear that Bruce Helander intended to defraud us of our investments. It now appears that his self-dealing and financial manipulations may further threaten the well-being of all investors in Art Express. I am now planning to sue Mr. Helander for fraud. The failure of Bruce Helander's action against me sets to rest his claims about what happened at Art Express. The fraud action will make the remainder clear.

-- Kenneth S. Friedman