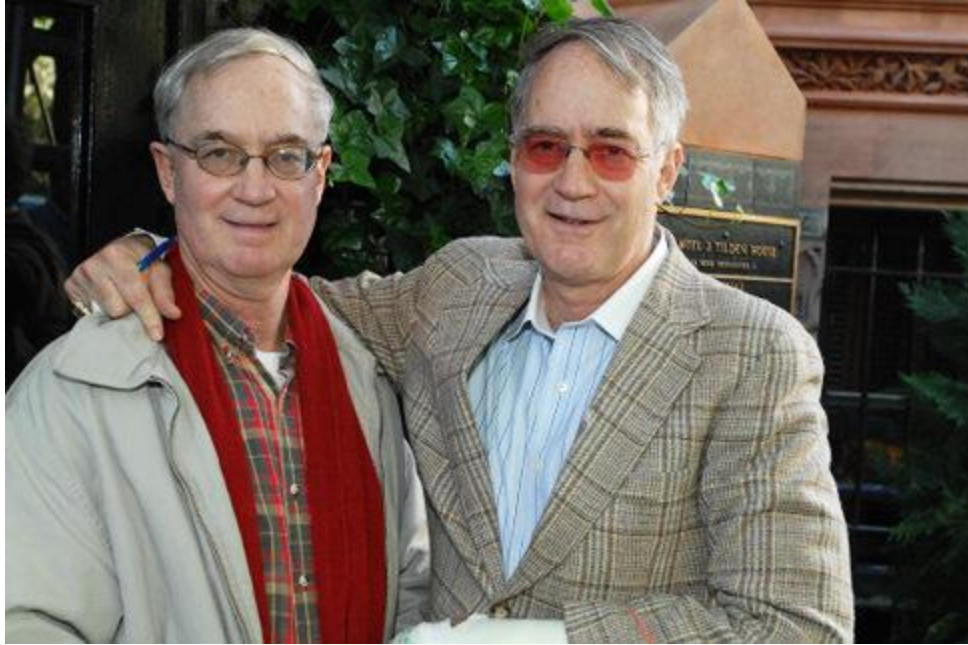


Ex-head of National Arts Club O. Aldon James, twin brother sue landmark's board

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Sam Costanza for News

Aldon James and his twin brother James in front of The National Arts Club.

The quirky ex-head of the National Arts Club and his twin brother filed suit Tuesday to save their apartments and their artwork in a bitter fight with the landmark's board.

O. Aldon James, along with sibling John and a third long-time resident, accused the club of "a mean-spirited, vindictive and wrongful campaign" to kick them out and start charging market rents.

The James brothers also charged administrators at the posh Gramercy Park outpost of wrongfully putting their extensive art collections up for sale.

Most of the objects were gathered during decades of compulsive hoarding, the pair acknowledged in their suit, and they aren't even sure which artworks stored inside the club belong to them.

"The NAC and its directors have cobbled together a host of irrelevant, embarrassing and scurrilous charges and now seek to hold a 'kangaroo court' to seal plaintiffs' fate," according to the 43-page lawsuit.

The club issued a statement complaining the suit will divert "substantial resources" to a court battle.

"Our action in Housing Court was brought to secure units that are being used in an unauthorized manner, and for which no lease was ever signed," National Arts Club President Dianne Bernhard said in the statement.

"We hoped that we could have made this process less painful and less costly for the NAC than it has been, but we have not been able to reach a resolution without litigation," she added.

Aldon James, 64, kept a menagerie of birds and other pets inside the building before he stepped down as NAC president earlier this year. He moved into his apartment in 1986, as did his brother.

The third plaintiff, Steven Leitner, 80, moved into his digs at the club in 1971.

All three received July 11 eviction notices from the landmark building once owned by New York Gov. Samuel Tilden. An NAC spokeswoman did not return a call about the lawsuit.

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