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MIAMI-DADE

## Real estate veteran's odd death leads to court battle

Real estate executive Andrea Greenberg was found dead in her home on Oct. 10, 2017. Now her sister Valerie is squaring off against her boyfriend, Alejandro Aparicio, in court. In the balance: an estate worth more than \$1 million.

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The 911 call came in shortly after 1 a.m. on a steamy October night. Alejandro Aparicio told the operator he had fallen asleep on the couch alongside longtime girlfriend Andrea Greenberg inside their home in Morning-side. When he woke up, Greenberg was unresponsive.

Aparicio performed CPR until a Metro-Dade Fire Rescue team arrived and transported Greenberg to Jackson Memorial Hospital. She was pronounced dead at 1:37 a.m. Oct. 10, 2017. The apparent cause: cardiac arrest.

A shaken Aparicio, 60, spent the rest of that day receiving visits from stunned friends. How could Greenberg, a healthy 54-year-old woman and popular figure in Miami's real estate industry, have died so suddenly?

But Aparicio did something else that day, too. According to court records, he logged into his dead girlfriend's bank account and withdrew \$10,000 — the first of several such withdrawals over the next few days. Gradually, the grief shared by Greenberg's friends would curdle into suspicion — and eventually anger.

According to the Miami-Dade County Medical Examiner Department, Greenberg's Oct. 11 autopsy did not conclusively determine the cause of death.

Greenberg had been taking diet pills under the supervision of a doctor as part of a weight-loss regimen, according to friends. In an interview with the Real Deal, Aparicio said the pills had been making her sick.

But her toxicology report, delivered in November, concluded Greenberg died from "acute combined drug toxicity" from three kinds of the opioid fentanyl, which the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has warned can be lethal even in tiny doses.

How did three kinds of fentanyl end up inside Greenberg? That's one of the questions haunting her friends.

Though fatal overdoses of opioid-laced heroin have reached epidemic proportions, Greenberg's toxicology report did not reveal traces of any kind of street drug.

"Andrea's drug of choice was shopping," said Lisa Ross, Greenberg's friend of 30 years and president of rbb Communications.

"That was her way of coping with things. You gave her a glass of wine and some shopping and she was good to go."

Despite her friends' suspicions, police are considering the case an overdose, Miami Police Chief Jorge Colina said Friday.

Detectives have met several times with the Miami-Dade Medical Examiner and the assistant state attorney assigned to the case. As of March 23, "there is no evidence of a homicide," Colina said.

Police are clearing loose ends. But unless something new develops, "there is no evidence to consider otherwise," he said.

### A LEGAL BATTLE

From the start, though, Greenberg's friends and family have been skeptical about the cause of her death.

"I was uncomfortable from the first day, when we were gathered at Andrea's house wondering how this could have happened," said Amy Zakarin, a publicist and longtime friend of Greenberg. "But Alejandro refused to participate in the conversation. He just kept saying it didn't matter, it wouldn't bring her back."

Their suspicion grew after Aparicio filed a petition to probate a will on Oct. 20. That will would have made him the sole beneficiary and executor of her estate, valued in excess of \$1 million.

Greenberg's sister, Valerie Greenberg, responded with an emergency petition to be appointed personal representative of Andrea's estate. In a court filing on Jan. 31, Valerie's attorney, Bruce Katzen, challenged the validity of the will, citing two sworn affidavits from friends who testified Greenberg was in Orlando on July 10, 2017 — the day she had supposedly signed and notarized the will in Miami-Dade County.

Katzen's filing also cited Florida Statute 732.802, commonly known as the Slayer Statute, which prohibits a killer from receiving any property or other benefits by reason of a victim's death. A hearing was scheduled to determine the validity of the will.

Two days later, Aparicio withdrew his claim and dismissed his petition for administration of Greenberg's estate.

On Feb. 12, the court approved Valerie's request and appointed her personal representative of her sister's estate, replacing Aparicio. The following day, she participated in a court-ordered estate inventory, filmed on video, cataloging Andrea's home and its contents. The inventory revealed that several pieces of Andrea's expensive jewelry — including a Rolex watch, a Cartier bracelet and a pair of diamond rings — were missing, according to a court transcript of the inventory.

That transcript also revealed that all of Andrea's business and personal records, client contacts, bank statements and personal mail were missing. Aparicio explained he had "cleared out" those documents soon after his girlfriend's death.

That wasn't all that was missing. According to allegations in a motion filed in mid-March, Aparicio digitally withdrew \$10,000 from Andrea's Bank of America checking account on the day she died, followed by another \$15,000 over the next few days. By Nov. 7, a total of nearly \$585,000 had been withdrawn from Greenberg's checking and money market savings accounts, according to the motion. Aparicio was a trustee on the account.

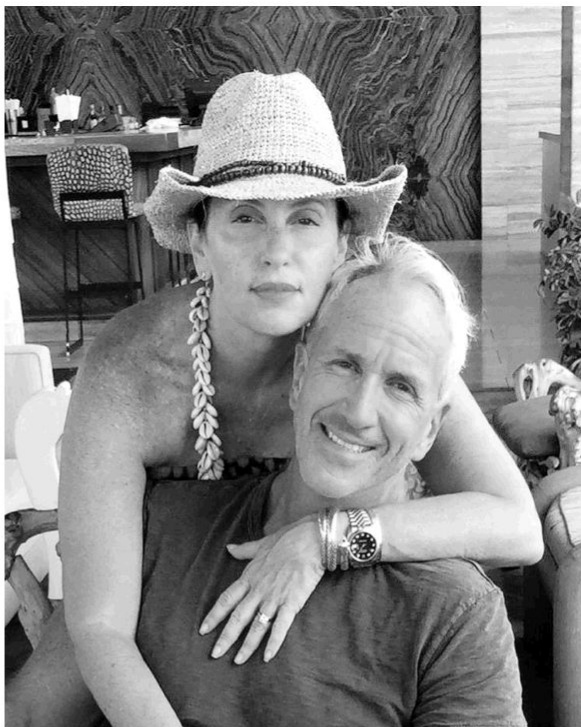
Neither Aparicio nor his lawyers responded to a request for comment for this article. But in a live interview conducted March 20 in Spanish by Colombian radio host Julio Sánchez Cristo on his morning talk show La W, Aparicio denied transferring any monies.

"I never logged into any computer or utilized any electronic means to move any funds," Aparicio told Cristo during the broadcast. "This is completely false. The transfers were made by the bank."

During the interview, Aparicio also defended the validity of the will he had filed with the probate court; he did not address questions about his decision to dismiss his claim.

But Adriana Compañet, a longtime friend of the couple, also appeared on the broadcast and accused Aparicio of not cooperating with the investigation into her death. She questioned his motivation for withdrawing the will and claimed he was lying outright about Greenberg's missing computer and other items.

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Updated photo of Andrea Greenberg and Alejandro Aparicio taken from Greenberg's Facebook memorial page.

for a very long time," Compañet said on the program. "What I cannot comprehend are his lies, his way of not wanting to investigate what happened to her."

### MET ON THE JOB

On his LinkedIn page, Aparicio lists himself as a hospitality and real estate developer and consultant, entrepreneur and international adviser with "vast corporate and turn-around management experience" — for the past 18 years as

consultant. Concurrently, he spent four years as founder of a "green" marketing startup, a year as a managing partner and investor of a car wash group, and five years as president and CEO of a

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Greenberg's résumé details a 20-year history of professional advancement: public relations professional for Turnberry Isle, marketing director for the Oceania Development, marketing vice president at

Fortune International Group and chief marketing officer at Douglas Elliman Real Estate before establishing her own firm in 2017. She and Aparicio met at Fortune, where he worked as executive vice president of hospitality.

For now, the lovers — one dead, one alive — are locked in a legal battle. At the request of her sister, Andrea Greenberg's assets have been frozen. The estate is seeking to compel Aparicio to make up missed mortgage payments from January and February 2018; a hearing is scheduled for March 26. She also is seeking to force Aparicio from the couple's house.

For his part, Aparicio has filed legal motions to confirm his right to withdraw funds from the Bank of America account and to recover \$700,000 he maintains he spent to renovate the home where they lived together. When a process server delivered a summons to Aparicio at the house earlier this month, Aparicio "stated he would not receive the documents and closed the door" of the home, according to the process server's report. When the server informed him the summons was still valid and would be left at his door, Aparicio reportedly "said he did not care."

Katzen, who has been serving as Greenberg's probate lawyer since Jan. 30, said that behavior is indicative of Aparicio's attitude toward the case.

"He has gone to great lengths to avoid explaining his actions on the record," said Katzen, a partner at Klugler Kaplan law firm in Miami. "He has been ducking service of a deposition, a subpoena and a summons to remove him from Andrea's house. ... We want the opportunity to show our evidence in a court of law and to connect the dots on his wrongful conduct."

For Andrea's sister, the case is understandably personal.

"I am doing this to honor my sister's life," she said. "Alejandro and Andrea were never married. He says he cared about my sister, but his actions say the opposite. My sister deserves better. Andrea will be my sister forever, and I will not stop working for her until I get the truth."

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On Sept. 22, 2017, Andrea Greenberg participated in a Hurricane Irma relief drive led by Aria Development Group. She died in her home three weeks later.