



## Lucky Bidders Claim Abandoned Artwork

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Wednesday, August 14, 2013

EUGENE, Ore. (CN) - In a lawsuit against a well-known Iranian artist, a company claims it owns 114 of Tala Madani's paintings after buying them from an abandoned storage locker.

Independence Collection LLC sued Tala Madani in Federal Court.

Madani's paintings have been featured in U.S. and European galleries, and she has received multiple awards for her work. One of her paintings recently sold for more than \$30,000.

The Independence Collection, based in Albany, Ore., claims it bought the 114 paintings by bidding on a storage locker in Independence, Ore.

It claims Madani had abandoned the storage locker she rented, and Independence principals Brad Daily and Mike Claxton bought its contents at auction.

"After the purchase of the contents of the storage locker, the principals discovered the paintings, and through contents of the storage locker were able to identify the owner and author of the paintings. Also found were a number of obvious personal items, including photo ID cards of defendant, personal photographs and negatives, a handwritten journal, and other items," the complaint states.

It continues: "The principals contacted defendant in an attempt to return the personal items.

"The principals also discussed the return of several of the paintings believed to be of notable value, but negotiations quickly degenerated.

"Independent documentation and the defendant's mother have confirmed the items and paintings in the storage locker belong to defendant Tala Madani."

The plaintiffs claim that the Phillips Gallery of New York agreed to a single painting at auction in May, with an estimated price \$15,000 to \$20,000.

"On learning of the scheduled New York auction, it is believed and reported that agents for Tala Madani contacted The Phillips Gallery and threatened the gallery with suit if the work was listed for sale or sold, denying authenticity, asserting rights under The Visual Artists Rights Act, and questioning the legitimacy of plaintiff's ownership," the complaint states.

The plaintiffs say the gallery refused to sell the painting, and that Madani's lawyers threatened them with legal action if they sold any of her paintings.

The Independence Collection seeks declaratory judgment that it owns the 114 paintings, quiet title, and an injunction to keep Madani from interfering with its plans for them.