



CSI tests authenticate Pollock's final work

By Jennifer Gould Keil
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The painting is abstract — but its origin is now crystal clear. One of the art world's greatest mysteries has finally been solved — as CSI tests have proven a painting owned by Jackson Pollock's late mistress is truly the master's final work. Pollock paramour Ruth Kligman insisted until her death in 2010 that the pioneering New York painter gave her "Red, Black & Silver" as a love letter shortly before he died in a drunken car crash in 1956.

But since the artist's wife, Lee Krasner — who hated the younger Kligman — ran the group that authenticated his works, the final painting was never declared a true Pollock.



SOLVED: Fur from a bear rug at Jackson Pollock's Hamptons home was found in "Red Black & Silver" (left), owned by his mistress, Ruth Kligman (right with the artist).

Until now.

In an announcement likely to change art history, Kligman's estate will reveal at a conference Friday the findings of a former NYPD detective that it says authenticates the work — including a hair from a polar-bear rug owned by the artist.

Forensics expert Nicholas Petraco, who was hired by the estate, found traces of rug fur stuck in the artwork's paint.

Other telltale clues found in the paint were Pollock's own hair and sand unique to the area around his East Hampton home.

It marks the first time crime-scene-style trace analysis has been used on fragments found in a painting, rather than just on the paint itself.

The discovery, if accepted by the art world, could lead to a huge payday for the Kligman estate.

A similar-size Pollock painting (about 2 by 2 feet) sold for \$58.3 million at a Sotheby's auction last May. "There's a f--king polar-bear hair in the painting . . . It's Dick Tracy," said artist Jonathan Cramer, one of the estate's co-trustees.

"The world was flat. Now it is round. It's Galileo. Science can now be used to authenticate the art . . . We are [tracing] the painting back to where it was executed. It's very CSI."

Kligman was in the car when a boozed-up Pollock skidded off a curve in East Hampton on Aug. 11, 1956. She survived; he and another woman were killed.

Afterward, she knew better than to present "Red, Black & Silver" to the board run by Krasner and waited until the widow's death in 1984 to attempt to get it named a real Pollock and his final work.

But the board was still populated by Krasner's pals and "Red, Black & Silver" never got recognized.

Kligman died in 2010, leaving a trove of 700 artworks and letters from her lovers and friends, including artists Willem de Kooning, Jasper Johns, Franz Kline, Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg.

Her estate's executors turned to Petraco, who consults for the NYPD.

Kligman had no beneficiaries, so the painting's future is unclear.