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FBI: Local man copied paintings, sold as originals

FBI found 150 suspected fake paintings inside Larry Ulvi's apartment

By **KOIN 6 News Staff** Published: March 9, 2015, 10:59 pm Updated: March 14, 2015, 3:50 pm

PORTLAND, Ore. (KOIN 6) — A Portland artist accused of trying to pass off his own paintings as masterpieces was arrested by Portland FBI Monday, officials said.



Canticle, casein on paper, 1954. (Mark Tobey)

The FBI said they found 150 suspected fake paintings inside Lawrence Ulvi's Northwest Portland apartment. They also found art supplies of the same material as

the original paintings, and papers that showed Ulvi practiced signing the artist's name.

Ulvi allegedly told buyers they were getting original [Mark Tobey paintings](#). Tobey, who worked out of Seattle starting in the 1920s, was an abstract artist known around the world.

(Editor's Note: The painting shown here is a photograph of an actual Mark Tobey painting, not a forgery.)

"Mark Tobey is an artist you've always had to watch out for," Portland art curator Jeffrey Jahn told KOIN 6 News.

Jahn said Tobey's work has become increasingly popular since the rise of yoga and Buddhism.

"It's not like it was in the '50s when it was kind of the avant garde thing to do to be interested in Eastern philosophy," Jahn said. "It's very mainstream now."

But Jahn said Tobey's unique, signature style has made him an easy target for forgeries.

In 2013, a buyer in California had an expert check out the paintings he said he bought from Ulvi — and they turned out to be fake. Agents then tracked down a Seattle art dealer who said they also bought paintings from Ulvi — those, too, turned out to be fakes.

Ulvi has not responded to KOIN 6 News requests for an interview at this time. He was booked into the Multnomah County Detention Center on a United States Marshals hold by the Portland FBI.