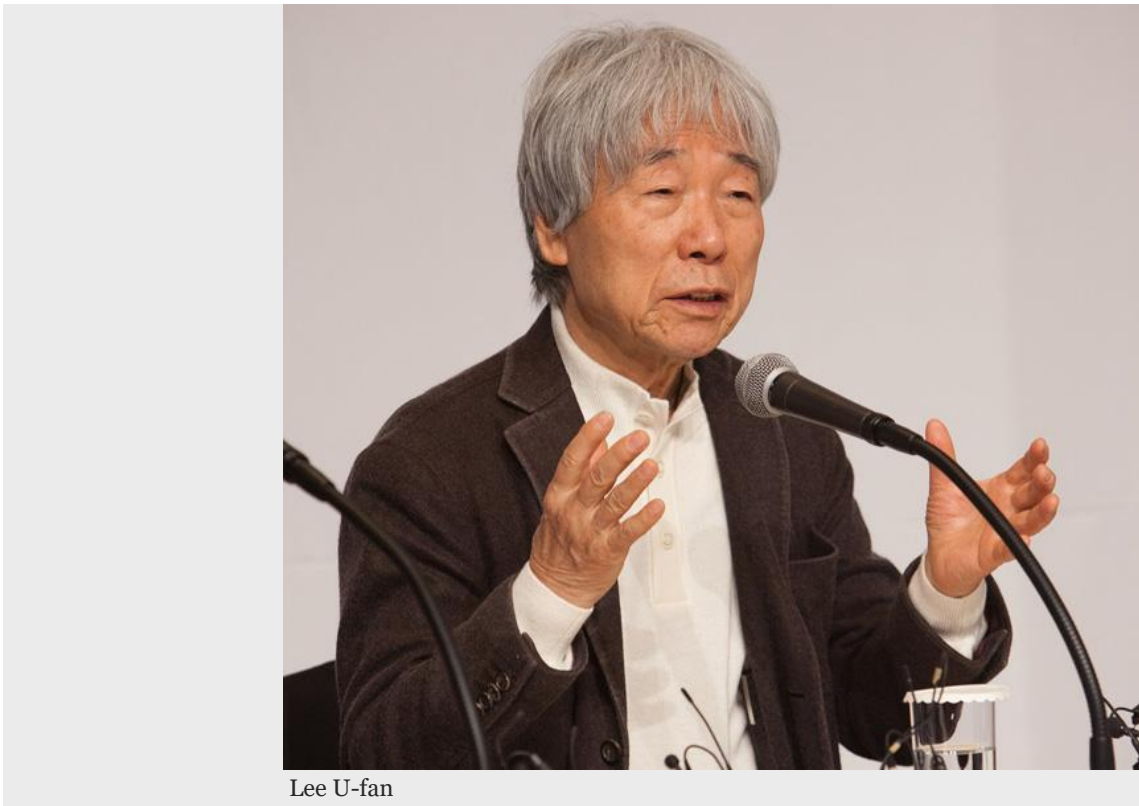


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12 of Lee U-fan paintings believed to be counterfeit



Lee U-fan

By Kwon Mee-yoo

Artist Lee U-fan's works, currently under police investigation on suspicion of forgery, are believed to be counterfeit, said an art expert who took part in the appraisal.

Choi Myung-yoon, director of the International Art and Science Institute, said he and other experts concluded after visual and scientific appraisal that all 12 paintings the police confiscated as part of a forgery investigation were fake.

Choi said his institution was asked to examine the authenticity of the confiscated paintings and after appraisal using scientific equipment, determined all of them were fakes.

One of the paintings in question, "From Point No. 780217," which was sold for 490 million won (\$407,620) at K Auction in December 2015, came with a forged certificate of authenticity. Choi said that painting also turned out to be counterfeit.

"The paintings police asked to be appraised were poorly forged — the canvases were artificially worn out and the frames colored to look old," Choi said.

The director added that he and the five other experts judged all the paintings as fakes just through naked-eye appraisal. "Two of them were appraised to be genuine by the Korean Art Appraisal Board in 2012," Choi added.

The Intellectual Crime Investigation Squad of the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency raided a Seoul gallery on suspicion of selling forged paintings of Lee last October and December.

The police requested a final appraisal of the paintings by the National Forensic Service.

Artist Lee released a statement regarding the issue earlier this month, saying he is the biggest victim of this scandal and would cooperate fully with the police investigation.