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Police arrests alleged art forger of Lee U-fan paintings

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A 66-year-old Korean man has been arrested for allegedly making copies of Korean art master Lee U-fan's paintings, the Seoul Metropolitan Police said Friday.

The man surnamed Hyun is suspected of creating fake works of Lee's abstract paintings. The Seoul Central District Court issued an arrest warrant for him on Friday, the police said.

According to the police, Hyun was arrested in Japan on April 13. Hyun fled to Japan after the Korean police carried out an investigation into art forgery rumors surrounding Lee's major paintings.



Artist Lee U-fan (Yonhap)

In January, a certificate of a 1978 painting by Lee was confirmed to be forged, rekindling controversy over allegations that some of Lee's major works have been forged and distributed in the Korean art market for the past four to five years.

In December 2015, the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency raided galleries in Seoul that were suspected of circulating alleged counterfeits of Lee's major painting series "From Point" and "From Line. The police booked two owners of the galleries without detention and seized six paintings to have them appraised by the National Forensic Service.

"The appraisal results have not been released yet. It's taking longer," said Choi Sun-yong, Lee's attorney said, in a phone call.

Lee is considered one of the most representative Korean artists. He is well-known in the global art scene for his abstract paintings. His paintings have enjoyed surging sales in the international art market with the emerging popularity of Korean monochrome paintings, or Dansaekhwa.

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