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**The
Guardian**

New York art dealer says he found six De Koonings in New Jersey locker

- **David Killen paid \$15,000 for contents of locker in Ho-Ho-Kus**
- **1955 De Kooning sold with a Jackson Pollock for \$500m in 2015**



Sun 22 Jul 2018 18.49 BST Last modified on Mon 23 Jul 2018 12.55 BST

A gallery-goer contemplates Untitled XXI by Willem de Kooning, displayed in London in 2015. Photograph: Tristan Fewings/Getty Images

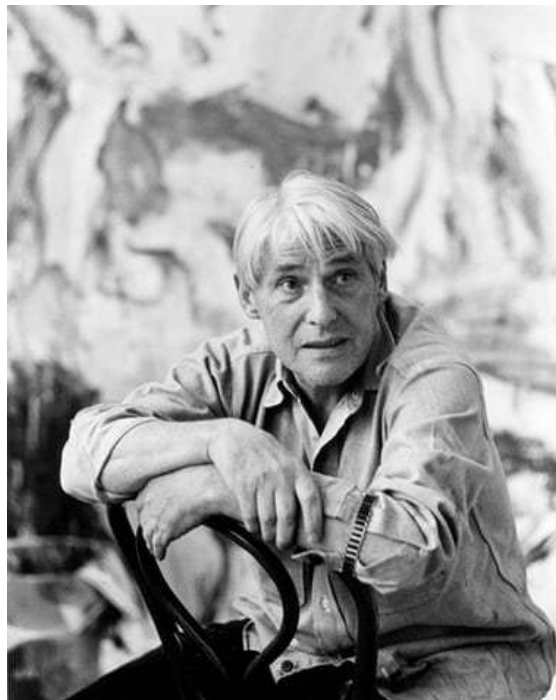
A New York art dealer who bought the contents of a New Jersey storage locker for \$15,000 says he has found six paintings he believes are by Willem de Kooning.

David Killen, who runs an eponymous gallery in Chelsea, told the New York Post he believes he also found one work by the early 20th-century Swiss-German modernist Paul Klee.

De Koonings can attract huge prices. In autumn 2015, the hedge fund billionaire Ken Griffin reportedly paid \$500m (£350m) for Interchange, a 1955 painting by De Kooning, and a work by another abstract expressionist master, Jackson Pollock. In 2016, a single 1970s work by De Kooning sold for \$66.3m (£50.4m) at auction.

Killen told the Post he bought the contents of the locker in Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey, last year, after an auction house passed on the chance. The 200 works of art were from the studio of an art conservator, Orrin Riley, who died in 1986, and his partner Susanne Schnitzer, who died in 2009.

Killen said he had not expected much from his purchase, as “what they showed me is a bunch of junk, basically. I didn’t see anything good.” But when he opened the locker, he saw “these huge boxes that say De Kooning on them”.



Willem de Kooning in his Long Island Studio, in 1987. Photograph: Robert R. McElroy/Getty Images

“What are the odds of finding a De Kooning in a storage unit?” he asked. “It’s unheard of!”

Executors, Killen said, thought the works labeled as De Koonings were prints.

The paintings are not signed. The Willem de Kooning Foundation, which is based in Manhattan, does not authenticate works. So Killen engaged an expert, Lawrence

Castagna, who worked for Riley and for De Kooning and his wife, the painter Elaine de Kooning. Castagna told the Post: “In my opinion, they are [by Willem de Kooning]. There’s no doubt about it.”

Willem de Kooning was born in Rotterdam in 1904. He moved to the US – as a shipboard stowaway – in 1926, living first in New Jersey then settling in New York. He worked as a commercial artist and house painter before establishing himself in the burgeoning Greenwich Village art scene alongside such famous names as Pollock, Franz Kline, Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko.

De Kooning achieved critical acclaim and commercial success in his 40s, the high point of his output being the Women paintings, starting in the 1950s, and abstract pastoral landscapes inspired by his home on Long Island, where he moved in 1963. He suffered from dementia in old age and died in 1997, aged 92.

Castagna told the Post he thinks De Kooning painted the newly discovered works in the 1970s, in East Hampton. Killen said “they weren’t that big a deal in the 70s.”

But tastes change, as do the views of critics. At Christie’s in New York in November 2016, Untitled XXV, a De Kooning from 1977, was sold to an unidentified “international buyer” for \$66.3m.

Killen said he would show the paintings on Tuesday and sell them in the autumn.

“Life is full of extraordinary discoveries,” he told the Post. “I’ve paid my dues. I’m ready for membership in the million-dollar club.”

