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Colleen Weinstein disputes Hotel Chelsea's handling of late husband's art; demands return

Works displayed in the halls by Arthur Weinstein were improperly removed and handled, says widow

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The Hotel Chelsea, now undergoing renovations, has a state-of-the-art dispute.

The widow of NYC nightlife legend Arthur Weinstein wants the Hotel Chelsea's new owners to return her husband's artwork. Pronto.

On Wednesday, the lawyer for Colleen Weinstein fired off a letter to a Chelsea lawyer, Michael Brown, claiming Weinstein's artwork had essentially been stolen from the walls and threatening a lawsuit if it's not returned in 10 days.

"Your clients have unlawfully refused to return the artwork to Ms. Weinstein, illegally removed the artwork from the premises of the hotel, and have illegally failed to properly handle and

safeguard the artwork,” wrote attorney Samuel J. Himmelstein , whose firm also represents three Chelsea residents the hotel’s new owner, Joseph Chetrit , is trying to evict.

Arthur Weinstein, who opened such trailblazing nightclubs as Hurrah and World, turned to art later in life. When he died in 2008, Colleen inherited his work, some of which hung at the W. 23rd St. landmark where she still lives.

According to Himmelstein’s letter, Colleen informed the Chelsea’s new manager, “ Lilly ” Sirkin , that she was arranging for the art to be taken down.

When Sirkin requested a list of the work, Weinstein complied, but in August the art, 25 pieces in all, disappeared before she could have it moved.

In September, one of Chetrit’s executives, Michael Butler , told Weinstein she needed to provide a letter from the hotel’s previous manager, Stanley Bard , stating the work was hers.

When she did just that, Himmelstein claims Butler told her the letter was insufficient and that Bard “had to sign off on each and every piece of art.”

Again Weinstein delivered, “but the artwork was still not returned,” her lawyer writes.

In November, Himmelstein claims the artwork was put on a truck and that his client saw one of the works loaded and “not properly wrapped.” He says Sirkin refused to reveal where the art is and that the hotel won’t let Weinstein remove a mobile of her husband’s that hangs on the 10th floor.

Himmelstein also indicates that in a Dec. 30 phone conversation he had with Brown, a lawyer for Chelsea Dynasty LLC, the entity that owns the hotel (Chetrit is a principal) said “there were multiple people making multiple claims about the art.”

When Himmelstein asked Brown if he was referring to Weinstein’s art or “artwork in general” that was removed from halls, the lawyer promised to get back to him with an answer and with “contract language” backing up his claim that buying the hotel gave his clients “title to the art.”

Brown, he says, never got back to him.

A spokeswoman for the hotel responds: “All of the Chelsea artwork has been carefully catalogued and stored safely off premise” during the hotel’s restoration.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/gossip/colleen-weinstein-disputes-hotel-chelsea-handling-late-husband-art-demands-return-article-1.1008385?localLinksEnabled=false>