

Monday, September 29, 2003

**FORMER ASSISTANT DEPUTY WARDEN AT THE RIKERS ISLAND JAIL
CONVICTED IN THE THEFT OF CITY OWNED ARTWORK BY SALVIDOR DALI**

Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson announced today the conviction of a former high ranking official of the New York City Department of Correction in the theft of a valuable work of art by the surrealist artist, Salvador Dali. The still missing artwork is owned by the City of New York and had been on display in a Correction of Department facility on Rikers Island.

Mitchell Hochhauser, who was an Assistant Deputy Warden, pled guilty to one count of Attempted Grand larceny in the 2nd degree, a Class D felony offense.

Acting State Supreme Court Justice Steven Barrett set sentencing for Monday, November 17, 2003 in Part M60. Under terms of the agreement Hochhauser will be sentenced to a term of one to three years imprisonment. He remains free on \$25,000 bail pending sentencing.

Hochhauser, 40, of Queens, was arrested on June 17, 2003 following a three and a half month joint investigation with the New York City Department of Investigation

Hochhauser admitted that he had "acted in concert" allegedly with three other Department of Correction employees, in stealing the artwork which was owned by the Department of Correction.

Still awaiting trial are former Assistant Deputy Warden Benny Nuzzo, Correction Officer Timothy Pina and Correction Officer Greg Sokol.

The untitled Surrealist artwork was on display in a public area near the entrance at the Eric M. Taylor Detention Center on Rikers Island. It was reported missing on March 1, 2003 when someone noticed that a copy had been substituted for the original "Dali" which has an appraised value of \$250,000. The artist gave the work to the Department of Correction as a gift in 1965, when illness prevented him from making a scheduled visit to Rikers Island.

The stolen artwork is a gouache mixed media composition in India ink and pencil on board, depicting the crucifixion of Christ. It measures 59 x 39 1/2 inches and is in a carved, stained, and mahogany wood frame. Anyone with information that could assist investigators in locating the missing artwork should call (718) 590-2277 or (212) 266-1900.

The case is being prosecuted by Senior Trial Assistant District Attorney Donald Levin of the Investigations Division.

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