



ROBERT T. JOHNSON
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
OF BRONX COUNTY

<http://bronxda.net>

851 GRAND CONCOURSE
BRONX, N. Y. 10451
590-2234

— PRESS RELEASE —

Tuesday, June 17, 2003

**ASSISTANT DEPUTY WARDENS AND TWO OTHER DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTION EMPLOYEES CHARGED IN THE THEFT OF ARTWORK BY
SALVADOR DALI**

Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson and Commissioner of the Department of Investigation Rose Gill Hearn announced today that two high ranking officials at the City jail on Rikers Island and two other Department of Correction employees have been charged with stealing a valuable work of art by Salvador Dali, owned by the City of New York.

A grand jury has indicted Assistant Deputy Warden Benny Nuzzo, Assistant Deputy Warden Mitchell Hochhauser, Correction Officer Timothy Pina, and Correction Officer Greg Sokol on one count of Grand larceny in the 2nd degree. Grand larceny in the 2nd degree is a Class C felony offense punishable by a maximum sentence of up to fifteen years imprisonment. The grand jury filed the charges following a three and a half month joint investigation that began last March when the theft was discovered.

Bronx District Attorney Johnson said: "This alleged crime is the result of shameless arrogance, fueled by greed. It represents, not only a serious betrayal of the public trust, but also undermines the professionalism of the vast majority of Correction Department employees, who perform their duties with dedication and integrity."



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Commissioner Hearn said: "The crime charged, including how and where it was perpetrated, is extremely brazen. Moreover, it is especially disturbing because two of the defendants are high ranking correction officers, including Mr. Nuzzo, who is also a board member of the Assistant Deputy Wardens Association. We expect to bring the four charged defendants to justice."

It is alleged that Nuzzo, 49, of Brooklyn, Hochhauser, 40, of Queens, Pina, 44, of Staten Island, and Sokol, 38, of Staten Island, "acted in concert with each other" in stealing property owned by the New York City Department of Correction. Nuzzo was appointed to the Department of Correction on February 2, 1979. Hochhauser was appointed on September 16, 1984. Pina was appointed on December 8, 1988 and Sokol was appointed on November 9, 1989. All four defendants surrendered today and were suspended.

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

The missing artwork is a gouache mixed media composition in India ink and pencil on board, depicting the crucifixion of Christ. It measures 59 x 39 ½ inches and is in a carved, stained, and glazed mahogany wood frame. Anyone with information that could assist investigators in locating the stolen artwork should call (718) 590-2277.



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District Attorney Johnson and Commissioner Hearn thanked everyone whose hard work and dedication resulted in today's arrests and indictment: Chief of Investigations, Assistant District Attorney Stephen Bookin; Chief of Rackets, Thomas Leahy, Assistant District Attorney Wanda Perez-Maldonado, Department of Investigations Deputy Commissioner, Daniel Brownell, Assistant Commissioner Michael Caruso, Captain Vincent Valero, Supervising Investigator George Santiago, Confidential Investigator Danielle White and New York City Police Department Detectives assigned to the DOI Squad.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Wanda Perez-Maldonado.

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