



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 21, 2008

**CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
YUSILL SCRIBNER,
REBEKAH CARMICHAEL
JANICE OH
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600**

**ART DEALER OPERATING IN NEW YORK AND FLORIDA
CHARGED IN SCHEME TO SELL FORGED PAINTINGS**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and MARK J. MERSHON, Assistant Director-in-Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's New York Field Division, announced today that GIUSEPPE CONCEPCION, the owner of an art and antiques dealership doing business as Proarte Gallery in Miami, Florida, and New York, New York, was arrested today in Miami on charges of transportation of stolen property and wire fraud. According to the Complaint unsealed today in Manhattan federal court:

CONCEPCION, doing business under the name of various Proarte entities, engaged in a scheme to defraud customers by selling or offering for sale fake paintings that he represented to be authentic works of famous artists such as HENRI MATISSE, ALEXANDER CALDER, MARC CHAGALL, ADOLPH GOTTLIEB, and TOM WESSELMANN. One way CONCEPCION did this was by acquiring authentic works via purchase, consignment, or otherwise, and then acquiring or commissioning forgeries that he then sold to his victims. To induce customers to purchase the forgeries, CONCEPCION created false provenances (ownership history), forged certificates of authenticity, forged gallery and auction labels, and altered banking and third party documents. CONCEPCION also represented to victims that the forged versions were genuine, or deliberately failed to disclose that they were forgeries. CONCEPCION engaged in this fraudulent activity from approximately May 2005 through March 2007.

CONCEPCION is charged with one count of interstate transportation of stolen property (specifically, the checks used to purchase certain of the phoney works of art), and one count of wire fraud. If convicted, he faces a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison and a fine of the greater of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss caused by his crimes.

CONCEPCION appeared today before a United States

Magistrate Judge in Miami federal court.

The case is being prosecuted by the Office's Major Crimes Unit. Assistant United States Attorney AMY LESTER is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

08-301

###