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Artist Revealed in \$80M Art Fraud at Center of Hughes Hubbard Client Lawsuits

News & Events

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A struggling artist has been identified as the suspected creator of more than 60 forgeries sold by two prestigious New York City galleries to various art collectors, including three Hughes Hubbard & Reed clients, for more than \$80 million.

According to a front-page report in the Aug. 16, 2013 print edition of The New York Times, Pei-Shen Qian, a 73-year-old Chinese national who lives in Queens, New York, is suspected of drawing or painting each of the forgeries at the request of art dealer Jose Carlos Bergantinos Diaz. Neighbors told The New York Times in an Aug. 19, 2013 story that Qian had left for China.

Bergantinos Diaz first discovered Qian when the artist was selling his original work on the streets of lower Manhattan. Qian is referred to (although not named) in a recently revised federal criminal indictment of Bergantinos Diaz's girlfriend and business partner, art dealer Glafira Rosales, who was arrested in May on charges of money laundering and tax evasion.

According to that indictment, Bergantinos Diaz and Rosales sold or consigned the fakes to two well-established Manhattan galleries, claiming that they belonged to a recently discovered collection of works by many of the best-known figures in Abstract Expressionism: Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, William de Kooning, Robert Motherwell and others. The galleries in turn passed the works on to their customers.

At least eight art collectors have brought suit against Bergantinos Diaz, Rosales, the galleries or the galleries' directors for their fraudulent conduct in the sale of Qian's works. Hughes Hubbard represented international art dealer Marc Blondeau and his gallery, Killala Fine Art Limited, in the first of these lawsuits, which settled successfully in 2011 with Blondeau obtaining a full refund.

The firm currently represents two of the six plaintiffs in ongoing actions: Sheika Paula Al-Sabah of Kuwait, whose

privately owned company filed a \$3 million lawsuit last October against art dealer Julian Weissman and his gallery; and former United States ambassador to Romania Nicholas Taubman, along with his wife and family trust, who initiated a RICO action in May against Bergantinos Diaz, Rosales, the Knoedler Gallery and that gallery's ownership and former director.

Dan Weiner and Webster McBride lead the Hughes Hubbard team.

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