



CRIME ALERT

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WILLIAM J. BRATTON, CHIEF OF POLICE



Vilas V. Likhite Fraud and Fake Art Sales



On December 16, 2004, **Dr. Vilas V. Likhite**, 66, a past physician and Harvard professor, was arrested by LAPD's Art Theft Detail after selling a fake Mary Cassatt painting for \$800,000 to undercover officers.

Likhite was in possession of many other fake artworks purportedly by Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Jasper Johns, Hans Hofmann, Constantin Brancusi, and Marie Laurencin. He was selling these artworks for tens of millions of dollars. Additional fakes were seized from his residence and a storage unit in Mission Viejo, California where he lives.

Detectives also recovered a fake de Kooning artwork that Likhite reported stolen in a burglary of his home in Mission Viejo in 2003. He claimed it was worth \$1.5 million. Likhite had hidden the artwork with a friend after reporting the burglary.

Likhite said he is in possession of 700 artworks worth \$1 billion. He claimed he acquired some of the art from the William Horace Littlefield estate in Massachusetts after the death of the artist. He said he inherited the rest of the art from his father who supposedly obtained it from an Indian maharajah. Both stories have proven to be fabrications.

Dr. Likhite moved to California following a criminal conviction for selling fake art in Massachusetts in 1989. This was the same year his medical license was revoked for gross misconduct. He was also the subject of a federal civil case alleging sales of fake art in 1985. He claims to have additional art stored in Boston and Denver.

Likhite used brokers to sell art to private parties and to invest money in his art collection. He avoided major auction houses and art dealers and preyed on people less knowledgeable about fine art. His art was accompanied by official looking paperwork that gave the appearance that the art was professionally authenticated and appraised.

Detectives would like to speak with those who have had business dealings with Likhite, especially regarding art sales or investments. Anyone who has information about Dr. Likhite's activities can contact the LAPD Art Theft Detail at 213-485-2524 or by e-mail at: artcop@lapd.lacity.org

