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## U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

### News Releases

June 1, 2009

### **ICE seizes a cultural artifact reported stolen in Italy almost 12 years ago**

NEW YORK - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) today seized a Pompeii wall panel fresco from a Manhattan auction house that was reported stolen in Italy 12 years ago.

The fresco panel, which was the subject of an international search by INTERPOL, was located by the Art Loss Register of New York and brought to the attention of ICE and Italian Authorities. Italian authorities provided ICE agents via the ICE attaché in Rome with information and documents identifying the fresco panel as stolen and part of the cultural property of Italy.

The panel, rectangular with a white background depicting a female minister, white wash on plaster with a modern wooden frame, was previously located at the excavation office in Pompeii and was reported stolen with five other fresco panels on June 26, 1997.

The investigation revealed that, between 1903 and 1904, the Italian government authorized a farmer, Giuseppe De Martino, to restore his farmhouse, which was located on an archeological site in Boscoreale, province of Naples. During the restoration, six important frescos, originating from Pompeii were found.

On July 12, 1957, the Government of Italy purchased the frescos. On June 26, 1997, after the completion of work to the excavation site, the Italian government observed that the six frescos were missing and subsequently reported the theft.

The Carabinieri cultural patrimony unit previously recovered the other five of the six frescos.

"We are pleased to assist in the recovery of this fresco panel. It completes the collection of the six panels reported stolen from the Italian government close to 12 years ago." said Peter J. Smith, special agent in charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in New York. "ICE applauds the ALR for coming forward with information on the whereabouts of this precious cultural artifact, which will soon be returned to the Italian government.

ICE, the largest investigative agency of the Department of Homeland Security, handles investigations into lost or stolen cultural artifacts that appear on the world market.

For more about ICE's cultural heritage investigations, please go to:

<http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/index.htm> (<http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/index.htm>)

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.

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