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**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

## **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement**

### **News Releases**

**June 1, 2009**

### **Stolen Italian artifact smuggled into the United States found at auction house**

NEW YORK - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) today recovered today a Corinthian column krater from Christie's auction house. The item had been noted on the Italian Carabinieri website, which lists stolen art work. The recovery was the result of an ICE-led investigation.

The column krater form of Corinthian pottery dates to 580 to 570 B.C. and derived its name from the unusual form of the handles, which look like small columns.

Christie's cooperated fully with ICE Special Agents in New York who, with the assistance of the ICE attaché in Rome, collaborated with Italian authorities to determine that the Corinthian column krater is indeed part of Italy's cultural property and was stolen.

"The recovery of this unique cultural artifact signifies the return of a piece of Italian history and heritage," said Peter J. Smith, special agent in charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in New York. "ICE is committed to working closely with foreign governments to find delicate treasures and returning priceless works of art and antiquities to their rightful owners."

The investigation into the Corinthian column krater revealed it may have been illegally introduced into the art market by Giacomo Medici and a third party at Sotheby's Auction house in 1985.

Medici was arrested in Italy in 1997. During judicial proceedings in Italy against Medici for the smuggling of antiquities, it was concluded that the Corinthian column krater originated from the archaeological sites of Latium, a region of Lazio, Italy. Hundreds of pieces of ancient Greek,

Roman, and Etruscan art were identified by authorities during the investigation as having been illegally handled by Medici. He was sentenced in 2004 by the Tribunal of Rome to 10 years in prison and fined 10 million Euros, which is one of the largest penalties ever meted out for antiquities crimes.

Giacomo Medici's operation was thought to be one of the largest and most sophisticated antiquities networks in the world. His operation is believed to be responsible for illegally digging up and illicitly introducing thousands of antiquities into the international art market.

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

For more about ICE's cultural heritage investigations, please go to: <http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/index.htm>.

-- ICE --

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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