

Georges Lederman

SPECIAL COUNSEL | NEW YORK



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Georges is special counsel in the white collar defense and investigations team.

Georges is a white collar defense attorney and former New York prosecutor who has over 35 years' experience working in the private and public sectors. He has represented well-known individuals and institutions in matters involving money laundering, fraud, tax evasion, conspiracy, smuggling, asset forfeiture and internal corporate investigations. He has successfully tried over 30 criminal jury trials to verdict. His handling of both criminal and related civil matters has received international media coverage.

Georges is well-known for having represented high profile clients who have been accused of or are victims of art crime. He is one of the few lawyers in New York with an expertise in state and federal criminal laws as well as complex international cultural heritage laws as applied to the art market. Georges has advised collectors on how to comply with government regulations involving the sale, transfer, repatriation or other disposition of art and cultural assets; defended art dealers who have been accused of participating in international conspiracies involving the theft of cultural heritage property from foreign countries and its importation into the United States; developed protocols for prominent art galleries to comply with evolving anti-money laundering regulations; represented individuals who have been targets, witnesses and victims in art fraud and forgery cases; and defended individuals accused of creating offshore accounts for the purpose of evading taxes on the purchase of high value artwork.

In representing clients who have been under investigation by the government, Georges has appeared before the U.S. Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control; the U.S. Attorneys' Offices for the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York and the Eastern District of Pennsylvania; the New York County District Attorney's Office; the New York State Attorney General's Office; the Department of Homeland Security; the U.S. Customs and Border Protection; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; the IRS Criminal Investigation Division; the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance; and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Office of Investigations.

Georges is recognized by Chambers as a leading lawyer in Art and Cultural Property Law and is highly regarded for his advice. "His expertise is first-rate," says a source, adding: "He was responsive and he has a true talent for simplifying very complex matters so that they are understandable to a wide audience." One interviewee says that Georges "has an exceptional reputation in the community as being a straight shooter," and another adds: "He is a thoroughly good investigator. He is honest, judges like him and juries like him, and that is a big deal."

Georges is frequently quoted in the international media on hot topics involving the intersection of white collar defense and the art market. He has written extensively and lectures widely on matters involving art crime and is a regular guest instructor at law enforcement agency training programs. Bilingual in French and English, Georges works directly with foreign counsel on matters that are international in scope.

Track record

#MeToo investigation

Represented a senior curator at a major international museum in a #MeToo investigation alleging sexual assault and other misconduct in the workplace

Art galleries anti-money laundering compliance

Representing prominent art galleries before the US Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control with anti-money laundering compliance as relating to "blocked persons" who have provided financial support to international terrorist organizations.

Notorious antiquities dealer

Representing a notorious antiquities dealer who has been indicted by the New York County District Attorney's Office for conspiracy, grand larceny and related crimes and is accused of being the mastermind behind an international smuggling ring that has stolen over \$100 million of cultural heritage property belonging to India.

Commercial palaeontologist

Represented a "commercial paleontologist" who was charged by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York with smuggling into the United States dinosaur fossils from Mongolia, assembling a life-size Tyrannosaurus skeleton and attempting to sell the skeleton at auction. The case became the subject of an award-winning book entitled "The Dinosaur Artist" in 2018.

Artist's catalogue raisonné

Represented the authenticators and authors of an artist's catalogue raisonné in a federal civil action in the Southern District of New York accusing them of fraud involving the purchase and resale of one of the artist's paintings.

Cultural heritage property theft

Represented one of the leading dealers in New York of South Asian antiquities in a criminal complaint filed by the New York County District Attorney's Office alleging an international conspiracy involving the theft of cultural heritage property from foreign countries and its importation into the United States.

"Turnover" proceeding

Represented collectors in a "turnover" proceeding instituted by the New York County District Attorney's Office to repatriate an archaic marble bull's head to the source country and in a related federal civil action in the Southern District of New York to clear title to the artifact.

New York State sales tax investigations

Represented targets and witnesses in multiple New York State sales tax investigations conducted by the New York County District Attorney's Office, the New York State Attorney General's Office and the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance regarding the purchase of high value artwork and other high net worth assets.

Unlawful seizure of antiquities

Represented the owner of \$90 million in antiquities in a federal civil action in the Southern District of New York against the Swiss Government and its instrumentalities for unlawful seizure of those antiquities in violation of international law.

Theft of high-value minerals

Represented a dealer of fine minerals before the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York in an investigation involving the theft of high-value minerals from a major collector.

Cultural heritage property possession and transfer

Advised auction houses on issues relating to the possession and transfer of cultural heritage property.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Represented collectors before the United States Fish and Wildlife Service involving the seizure of items derived from endangered species.

Issuance of fraudulent loans

Represented multiple witnesses before the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation in an administrative proceeding investigating the issuance of fraudulent loans that resulted in a bank's receivership.

Employee misconduct investigation

Conducted an internal investigation into employee misconduct for an international retailer of fine jewelry and watches.

Labor relations arbitration

Represented a victim of sexual assault in a labor relations arbitration in which an internationally renowned orchestra is seeking the dismissal of two of its section musicians.

Talks

- *'The law of international cultural heritage property and the case of the Mongolian Tyrannosaurus Bataar,'* Charleston School of Law November 14, 2022, speaker
- *'Art Law Day 2022 - Political Risk Management,'* Appraisers Association of America, Inc., New York - November 11, 2022, speaker
- *'Art & Crime: Exploring the Impact of New Anti-Money Laundering Laws on the Art Market and Understanding the Works of the FBI's Art Crime Squad,'* San Francisco Bar Association - September 29, 2022, speaker
- *'China's Stolen Treasures | A Question of Ownership,'* BBC Podcast - March 29, 2022, speaker
- *'Next Steps in AML compliance in the art market,'* Withers (Webinar) - March 16, 2022, speaker
- *'Study of the facilitation of money laundering and terror finance through the trade in works of art,'* Sotheby's Institute of Art - March 14, 2022, guest lecturer
- NYCBA Art Law Committee - November 9, 2021, speaker
- *'Protecting your art: What you need to know about copyright, restitution, money laundering and other art transactions,'* American Society of Appraisers (Webinar) - October 20, 2020, speaker
- *'Hot Topics in Art Law 2020,'* New York City Bar - October 1, 2020, speaker
- *'US Sanctions and New Anti-Money Laundering Legislation: What it Means for the Art Market,'* San Francisco Bar Association - February 26, 2020, speaker
- *'Sales and Use Tax: Do's and Don'ts,'* The National Arts Club - November 6, 2016
- Guest Faculty Member, New York County District Attorney's Office Annual Trial Advocacy Program, 2008-present

External publications

'How Two Manhattan DA Classmates Hold Trump's Fate in Their Hands,' The Daily Beast - April 10, 2023, quoted
'How an Offer to Testify Before a New York Grand Jury Signals Trouble for Trump,' The Daily Beast - March 14, 2023, quoted

'Rich Russians' art-buying is target of U.S. crackdown on trade-sanction cheats,' Bloomberg - February 1, 2023, quoted

'Global investigations: Representing individuals in investigative interviews in the UK and US,' Global Investigations Review - January 9, 2023, co-author

'US seeks extradition of London businessman arrested on suspicion of moving art to help Russian billionaire avoid sanctions,' The Art Newspaper - October 20, 2022, quoted

'The Art Basel & UBS Global Art Market Report 2022,' co-contributor

'It's about setting the record straight': A Warhol of disputed authenticity and chequered association heads to auction,' The Art Newspaper - September 12, 2022, quoted

'Do You Own Your Art?,' Arts & Collections - June 2022, co-author

'Inigo Philbrick's 7-Year Sentence for \$86 Million Fraud Has Rattled the Art World,' ARTnews - May 26, 2022, quoted

'The U.S. Supreme Court Sends Decades-Long Case Over Nazi-Looted Picasso Back to California Court,' ARTnews - April 22, 2022, quoted

'The Financial Community Is Shutting Its Doors to Russia. Will the Art Market Follow?' Artnet - March 1, 2022, quoted

'U.S. Treasury Identifies Art Market Money Laundering as Area of Concern,' Trust & Estates - February 23, 2022, co-authored

'US Treasury's AML report weighs against increased regulations in art market for now,' Withers article - February 16, 2022, co-author

'Top Croatian government official sentenced for corruption involving art,' The Art Newspaper - February 14, 2022, quoted

'Prince Andrew still has options in his sex abuse civil case. But none look good.' CNN - January 13, 2022, quoted

'Why Ghislaine Maxwell's witness may have 'powerful and credible' evidence from Prince Andrew,' The Bharat Express News - January 12, 2022, quoted

'Why Ghislaine Maxwell Witness May Have 'Powerful and Credible' Prince Andrew Evidence,' Newsweek - January 12, 2022, quoted

'Standby for more information: New AML regulations governing antiquities trade are on the way,' Withers Insight - December 17, 2021, co-author

'Billionaire Michael Steinhardt Surrenders \$70 Million of Stolen Antiquities,' Trusts & Estates - December 9, 2021, quoted

'A swindler's playground: why is the art market so appealing to fraudsters?' The Art Newspaper - November 26, 2021, quoted

'DOJ Reloads Key Weapon In Fight Against Corporate Crime,' Law360 - October 29, 2021, quoted

'Authorities Return 248 Looted Antiquities to India,' The New York Times - October 28, 2021, quoted

'FinCEN advance notice of proposed rulemaking regarding the antiquities trade,' Withers Insight - September 23, 2021, author

'Prince Andrew Lawsuit Over Jeffrey Epstein Is 'Game Over' for Queen's Son, Lawyer Says,' Newsweek - August 10, 2021, quoted

'National Gallery of Australia to return \$2.2M of 'stolen' artworks to India,' CNN - July 29, 2021, quoted

'What the US government sanctions of prominent Bulgarian art collector Vassil Bojkov mean for the art market,' The Art Newspaper - July 23, 2021, quoted

'Withers global art team recognized by Chambers 2021 HNW guide,' Withers Insight - July 23, 2021, co-author

'A digital art gold rush? - the regulators are watching,' Withers Insight - April 1, 2021, co-author

'Why Ghislaine Maxwell's Jeffrey Epstein bail bid is 'not going to work,' Newsweek - February 25, 2021, quoted

'New York State continues to investigate tax evasion in art sales,' Withers Insight - November 12, 2020, co-author

'OFAC advisory notice highlighting potential sanctions risks stemming from dealing in high-value artwork,' Withers Insight - November 4, 2020, author

'What a senate investigation means for the art market,' Withers Insight - August 12, 2020, author

'Sales Tax Legislation - the Bane of the Art Market?' Arts & Collections - May 22, 2020, co-author

'Art Market Enforcement During the Pandemic,' Trust & Estates - April 24, 2020, co-author

'Christie's To Pay Up To \$16.7 Million In Tax Violation Settlement,' Forbes - April 10, 2020, quoted

'The Art Market Adjusts: The impact of the government's decreased oversight of private sale of antiquities and other artwork,' Withers - March 31, 2020, co-author

'Mary Boone sued by former director for withholding wages and 'misappropriating' more than \$10m,' The Art Newspaper - February 27, 2020, quoted

'Investigator Say a Rig Smuggled \$145 Million in Ancient Artifacts,' The New York Times - July 10, 2019, quoted

'New York Files Charges Against Disgraced Art Dealer Subhash Kapoor in \$145 Million Smuggling Ring,' Artnet News - July 11, 2019, quoted

'NYC Art Dealer Charged with Smuggling \$145 in Artifacts,' Law360 - July 11, 2019, quoted

'Tough New Scrutiny by District Attorney Rattles New York Antiquities Trade,' The Art Newspaper - March 9, 2018, quoted

'Stolen "Bull's Head" Headed Back to Lebanon,' The Wall Street Journal - October 11, 2017, quoted

'Prominent Antiquities Dealer Accused of Selling Stolen Artifacts,' The New York Times - December 21, 2016, quoted

'Galleries' Records are Subpoenaed,' The New York Times - February 4, 2015, quoted

'New York DA Launches Secret Art Sales Tax Investigation,' Artnet News, January 22, 2015, co-author

'Emergency Advice for Art Dealers Facing a Sales Tax Investigation,' Artnet News, February 10, 2015, co-author

Admissions

New York, 1986

Education

Georgetown University Law Center, J.D. 1984

Brown University, A.B., Honors, 1979

Institut de Hautes Études Internationales et du Développement, Geneva, Switzerland, 1977-1978

Languages

English

French

Memberships

New York City Bar Association

Key dates

Year joined: 2019

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