PCGG Statement on the Indictment of Vilma Bautista

PCGG Chairman Andres Bautista lauded the efforts of the New York District Attorney’s Office in indicting Ms. Vilma H. Bautista, the social secretary and confidante of former First Lady Imelda R. Marcos, and her two nephews. Ms. Bautista was arrested and arraigned on November 20 in New York City.

The indictment charged that Ms. Bautista and her nephews with illegally conspiring to possess and sell valuable paintings they did not own, and thereafter keeping the proceeds for themselves, and hiding the said proceeds from tax authorities.

The investigation was commenced when the NYDA were apprised of the suspicious sale of a water lilies painting by Claude Monet in late 2010 by Ms. Bautista and her co-defendants.

The NYDA thereafter contacted the PCGG as there appeared to have been other attempts by the defendants and their associates to sell other paintings publicly known to be missing since 1986 and claimed by the Republic as ill-gotten wealth. The PCGG has been cooperating with the NYDA investigation since mid-2011.

In July 2011, aside from bank accounts containing tens of millions of dollars, the authorities in New York seized three paintings of internationally significant value from Ms. Bautista and her relatives: (1) Claude Monet’s L’Eglise at la Siene a Veuthevl; (2) Albert Marquet’s Le Cyprès de Djanan Sidi Saïd; and (3) Alfred Sisley’s Langland Bay. These paintings are all included in the PCGG’s Missing Paintings list, and have been recorded with Art Loss Register, the world’s largest private database of lost and stolen art.
“This criminal trial in New York will serve an important pedagogical purpose as it would highlight the point that ‘crime does not pay’ and eventually the long arm of the law will catch up with you, Chairman Bautista remarked. “Our cooperation with the NYDA’s investigation reflects the Commission’s determination to pursue its mandate for as long as we have such mandate. This also highlights President Aquino’s unrelenting crusade against graft and corruption.”

For more information, you may check these links:
