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Pryor Cashman Adds Asset Forfeiture, Art Law Pro From DOJ

By **Lisa Ryan**

Law360, New York (November 15, 2013, 5:57 PM ET) -- Pryor Cashman LLP has landed a former federal prosecutor who went after the assets of disgraced attorney Marc Dreier and won back stolen artwork for France, bolstering the firm's white collar and art law groups in New York, it announced Thursday.

Jeffrey Alberts is joining the firm as a partner and leader of its white collar defense and investigations practice, after serving six years as an assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, where he worked in the criminal division and was a key player in the asset forfeiture unit.

"While I was a prosecutor, I spent a good amount of time working on white collar investigations and asset forfeiture," Alberts said. "I saw that, out in the marketplace, there were a lot of people who needed representation because either their assets had been seized or they were victims of crime."

Alberts said he was drawn to working with Pryor Cashman while looking for a platform to assist those in need of representation.

"Pryor Cashman saw a gap in the marketplace and brought me on," he said.

At the firm, Alberts will work on government investigations and prosecutions, as well as regulatory proceedings, asset forfeiture, victims' rights representation and complex civil litigation.

He will also work with the firm's art law practice, representing galleries, lenders, collectors, dealers, artists and heirs in disputes regarding ownership, provenance and authenticity of priceless art works.

"While the majority of asset forfeiture cases involve financial crime, there is a significant subset of cases that involve stolen art," Alberts said. "The firm happens to have a really impressive art law practice."

Alberts worked extensively in the realm of art law while serving as a federal prosecutor, namely in a 2010 asset forfeiture jury trial over a stolen artwork created by artist Camille Pissarro, which resulted in the work being returned to the French government.

"The French government reached out to the United States government for help," he said. "Almost all of the evidence that we had to use to prove our case in the United States was located in France, so we had to fly out witnesses, work with US and French agencies to collect documents, and establish the provenance of the artwork with evidence that was a decade old."

Alberts also worked on the infamous securities fraud case against Refco Inc., which led to the forfeiture of \$500 million in assets. He was awarded the 2009 Department of Justice National

Asset Forfeiture Award for his work in the case. Alberts later received the 2010 Department of Justice John Marshall Award for his role in the asset forfeiture proceedings against Dreier over his \$100 million Ponzi scheme.

Although he will no longer be representing the government in asset forfeiture matters, Alberts does not believe that his new position will be much different from his previous work.

"At the U.S. Attorney's office, it's a 24/7 job where at any moment we could get a call from the FBI or Secret Service and immediately have to snap into action," he said. "The main difference will be that now, instead of my time being primarily at the service of law enforcement agencies, it will now be at the service of our clients."

Pryor Cashman has more than 130 attorneys in New York City and Los Angeles, where it has broad transactional, intellectual property and litigation practices.

--Editing by Elizabeth Bowen.

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