

# MORE TRUTH FOR PARK WEST GALLERY AND ITS LONE DALÍ AUTHENTICATOR BERNARD EWELL

*by Theresa Franks*

The oldest, largest and most widely hailed auction houses in the world, Sotheby's and Christie's, agree that the only definitive universal experts on the original works of Salvador Dalí are Robert and Nicolas Descharnes of Paris, France.

In an e-mail (courtesy copy provided to Fine Art Registry® by the Salvador Dalí Gallery to whom the email was directed), Mr. Jay Vincze, Director of Impressionist and Modern Art for Christie's confirmed that Robert and Nicolas Descharnes are the only experts in the world for the authentication of Salvador Dalí original works of art used by that auction house.

From: "Vincze, Jay"  
Date: September 23, 2008 10:06:39 AM PDT  
To: (Salvador Dalí Gallery)  
Subject: Dalí authentication

Dear Sir  
This is to confirm that, for the purposes of authenticating paintings, sculptures and works on paper by Salvador Dalí, Christie's uses Robert and Nicolas Descharnes.  
I trust this is of use.  
Yours sincerely  
Jay Vincze  
Director, Impressionist and Modern Art

Park West Gallery claims to sell authentic Salvador Dalí prints from the Albaretto collection aboard cruise ships and at land auctions and boasts a worldwide customer base. They frequently cite Bernard Ewell's expertise as evidence that the prints are genuine.

Bernard Ewell, an art appraiser by trade, boldly claims on his website that he is "the foremost authority on the art of Salvador Dalí." Park West make frequent claims that Bernard Ewell is the world's leading authority on Salvador Dalí.

And yet, according to Robert Descharnes, Park West Gallery has never consulted with him or attempted to make contact regarding the legitimacy of the Albaretto/Dalí collection. And neither, to our knowledge, has Bernard Ewell.

Park West Gallery did not seek authentication expertise from the only recognized experts in the world in the authentication of Dalí's original works. They likewise did not approach the Descharnes regarding the authenticity of the Dalí graphic works they bought from the Albaretto and related collections. The question is: Why haven't Park West Gallery or the Albarettos or Bernard Ewell sought the authentication expertise of the world's recognized experts? We believe the answer is obvious. The question was in fact answered by Robert

Descharnes himself who simply commented, “They [Park West Gallery] have never approached us. We know where they are at.”

### **EWELL AND PARK WEST**

**B**ernard Ewell explains his relationship with Park West as follows:

“One of my many gallery clients, Park West Gallery, is the exclusive buyer and seller of Dalí artworks and prints from the Albaretto Collection. I authenticate every artwork before they buy it. If I turn it down, they don’t purchase. I do not provide appraisals or values.”

We happen to know that Park West Gallery has referred many claimants/victims to Bernard Ewell for an appraisal on the Albaretto/Dalí artwork he authenticated for Park West Gallery. We also know that Ewell charged Park West Gallery customers professional fees for his “expert” opinions.

Further, FAR® has reviewed written evaluations authored by Ewell, where he does indeed provide “appraisals and values” on the Park West Gallery Albaretto/Dalí prints. Specifically, Bernard Ewell confirms that the Albaretto/Dalí prints sold by Park West Gallery have no secondary market value as no independent records on values exist (auction records or otherwise) outside the “retail sales pricing” assigned by Park West Gallery at the scores of pseudo-auctions it conducts. It should also be noted that Park West Gallery relies heavily on Bernard Ewell’s authentication and especially so when refunds are demanded by dissatisfied customers from Park West Gallery.

Park West Gallery relies on Bernard Ewell’s authentication to promote and legitimize the Albaretto/Dalí prints. Despite all assertions of independence and integrity, it is quite clear that Bernard Ewell *is* Park West’s Dalí authenticator. The major auction houses don’t use him for expertise. In fact, it seems that the Albaretto and Park West are the only ones who turn to Ewell for authentication.

### **CONFUSING DOCUMENTATION TO “PROVE” PROVENANCE**

**T**he documents that are sent to victims from Park West Gallery to support the authenticity of the Albaretto/Dalí prints are confusing, convoluted, exceptionally complicated and far from credible. Not

a single word of the documentation can be effectively and reliably verified with any independent third party and the Park West authentication documents (which in all cases are nothing more than inferior Xerox or telefacsimile copies) do not, at least in any case we have reviewed, reference the specific print(s) the victim purchased from Park West Gallery. The documents are so exceedingly confusing and deceiving that it is difficult even for world experts to decipher them and, for the average consumer or anyone not familiar with the art industry and its nuances, nearly hopeless to interpret, as nothing in the unregulated world of art is as it seems. The Park West Gallery provenance even includes documents which have been proved by a German police laboratory to be forgeries.

**I**t is a fact that Park West Gallery has been using these dubious authentication documents authored by Bernard Ewell and others to convince many claimants over the years of the authenticity of the Park West Gallery Albaretto/Dalí prints, including lawyers and judges. All have been duped. As the saying goes, you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can’t fool all of the people all of the time. FAR knows the truth, we have reported the truth, and we will continue to report the truth as we discover it in our ongoing investigation.

The reality is that no independent, third party, primary source records exist and none can be accessed or produced to reasonably support the excessive values Park West Gallery assigns to its Albaretto/Dalí collection of prints. It is important to keep in mind too that Park West Gallery is the author of the certificates of authenticity as well as the appraiser of the artwork – a highly undesirable, suspicious and unacceptable industry practice, a conflict of interest, pure and simple.

Additionally, Bernard Ewell’s sole involvement in the authentication of the Albaretto/Dalí collection places the authenticity of the Albaretto/Dalí prints sold by Park West Gallery squarely into question. The cloud of suspicion surrounding the Park West Dalí prints looms so large in fact that it is profoundly disturbing to know that the cruise lines are still permitting and indeed encouraging the sales of these prints to continue. (Not to mention the scads of other questionable art and collectible objects that are sold that do not fall into the Dalí category, such as the Rembrandt Millennium prints

Park West Gallery sells which will soon be the subject of future in-depth FAR investigative reports). FAR has discovered strangely enough that Park West Gallery has very recently removed all traces of its offering of the Albaretto/Dalí collection of prints from its website. Yet we have heard from a number of cruise passengers who recently purchased more of the same Albaretto/Dalí prints at cruise ship art auctions. Despite removing the collection from its website, Park West continues to sell these same dubious prints to unsuspecting cruise ship passengers and land auction attendees worldwide with absolutely no warning or disclosure from the cruise lines or Park West Gallery regarding the controversy that exists.

### **AUTHENTICATION COMES FIRST**

Appraisals are worthless if authenticity cannot be established, as the value of a work of art turns on authenticity and ironclad provenance. This statement is especially true for “blue chip” artists such as Salvador Dalí. If one does not have a certification of authenticity from the world recognized expert for an artist’s work as famous as Salvador Dalí, then the art object is only worth what someone will pay for it. Authenticity is based on proper and provable provenance and adequate, good faith disclosure of same – something Park West Gallery and the cruise lines have failed to provide to many buyers and continue to fail to provide.

### **THE PROBLEM FOR PARK WEST CUSTOMERS**

Bernard Ewell is not and never has been a recognized authority on Salvador Dalí by anyone who matters in the art market – only his paying clients, the Albaretto and Park West Gallery claim him to be so. FAR believes this is a serious problem for those

who have purchased Albaretto/Dalí prints in the past and particularly for Park West Gallery customers who are considering resale. FAR has yet to discover one individual who has successfully sold an Albaretto/Dalí print at auction or privately for what they paid for it, much less realized a return on the investment.

In light of the statements by the world’s most respected auction houses, we wonder where Bernard Ewell stands in the whole Dalí/Albaretto/Print scandal? After all, Bernard Ewell is the authenticator of the Albaretto collection – self-proclaimed and endorsed by the Albaretto – which includes many claimed “original” Dalí works of art. In fact, on Bernard Ewell’s website, he states he recently visited the Albaretto collection a second time where he “again had complete access to the artworks, volume after volume of documentation and photographs of Salvador Dalí and the Albaretto Family. All – especially the artworks themselves – confirmed my 1998 examinations and opinions of authenticity.”

We found the fact that Ewell required a second trip to confirm his “1998 examinations and opinions of authenticity” interesting.

Perhaps Bernard Ewell ought to stick to appraisals and leave the authentication to the experts recognized and respected by the art market, Messrs. Robert and Nicholas Descharnes and Mr. Frank Hunter, Director of The Dalí Archives Ltd. in New York. It should be noted that these distinguished experts have reported to FAR that they believe the Albaretto/Dalí collection to contain many fakes. ✍

For more on this investigation,  
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September 3, 2008

Mr. Bruce Hochman  
c/o Salvador Dalí Gallery  
31103 Rancho Viejo Road  
San Juan Capistrano  
CA 92675-1759

Dear Mr. Hochman,

This letter is to confirm that the only internationally-recognized experts who can authenticate the paintings, drawings and sculpture of Salvador Dalí are Robert and Nicholas Deschames. Sotheby's will only accept expertise certificates from these experts before being able to proceed with the sale of art by that artist.

Sincerely,











