

Boston Museum Tells Of Ransom 'Inquiry'

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BOSTON — The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum said Wednesday it had received a ransom inquiry involving the dozen priceless works stolen from the gallery in the biggest art heist in U.S. history.

The FBI, meanwhile, released composite pictures of the two thieves who robbed the Gardner in a daring pre-dawn heist Sunday, cutting two Rembrandts from their frames and walking off with a Vermeer, one of fewer than 40 known to exist.

Museum director Anne Hawley told reporters that the ransom inquiry had been relayed by a woman in the art world whose work she was familiar with.

Hawley said the woman, whom she would not identify, had received an anonymous call from someone who claimed to know the whereabouts of the stolen art.

"The call was from out of the city and was from an individual who claimed to have had an anonymous phone call from someone who knew where the works were and what the amount of the reward was," Hawley said outside the museum's cordoned-off Dutch Room.

The call was made an hour before the museum announced Tuesday that a \$1 million reward, underwritten by the international auction houses Christie's and Sotheby's, would be offered for the safe return of the artworks.

Hawley said she had no way of knowing if the tip would pan out. Many calls have been received by the FBI and the museum and "every tip is followed up," she said.

The museum also disclosed Tuesday that a 13th item had been discovered missing — a gilt eagle finial from the pole of a silk Napoleonic flag.