

Gardner art theft still largest on record

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The \$52 million art heist announced yesterday by officials at a museum in Stockholm falls far short of the estimated \$200 million theft at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston more than 3 years ago.

The March 18, 1990, heist at the Gardner Museum, which officials call the largest art theft on record, remains under investigation, William J. McMullin, a spokesman for the FBI in Boston, said yesterday.

Officials said among the art pieces taken by the Gardner thieves were Jan Vermeer's "The Concert," Rembrandt's "The Storm on the Sea of Galilee," "Self Portrait" and "A Lady and Gentleman in Black," a canvas by Edouard Manet and five pieces by Edgar Degas.

McMullin said investigators have not learned of any occasions where the stolen art has been seen either publicly or privately.

"It's still a very active investigation but there's no developments," McMullin said. "None have been recovered."

Joan Norris, marketing director at the museum, said a total of 13 pieces were taken. A \$1 million reward continues to be offered for the return of the artworks, she said.

In the theft, two men posing as Boston police officers rang the museum's doorbell claiming they were investigating a disturbance. Once the two men, believed to be in their 30s, entered the museum they handcuffed and gagged two security officers.

There has been some speculation that an art collector ordered the theft of specific items because the robbers ignored some highly valuable pieces in order to steal certain paintings, drawings and other objects.

"Unfortunately, in art thefts it's not unusual, in tracking these things, for it to take a long time," McMullin said.