

# Gardner heist details offered to FBI But sources say accused criminal has little to trade

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## ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

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Youngsworth, 40, faces trial next month on 1996 charges of receiving a stolen van, illegal possession of ammunition and being a habitual criminal. In addition, he was arraigned yesterday in Norfolk Superior Court on charges of illegal possession of three antique firearms and marijuana.

Howard M. Lewis, Youngsworth's attorney, said yesterday his client met with an FBI agent yesterday to discuss the Gardner theft and made plans for another meeting. Lewis said Youngsworth has not told him if any deal would rely on Youngsworth getting a portion of the \$5 million reward the Gardner museum is offering.

## FULL TEXT

DEDHAM – A Randolph antiques dealer is offering information on the Isabella Stewart Gardner museum heist to federal authorities in exchange for having several state felony charges dismissed, but so far William P. Youngsworth III has not shown any special insight into the 1990 art theft, sources say.

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On March 18, 1990, two men disguised as police officers stole 13 works of art from the Gardner with an estimated value of \$200 million. Among the stolen pieces were Vermeer's "The Concert" and Rembrandt's only known seascape, "The Storm on the Sea of Galilee." There have been no arrests in the case and the paintings are still missing.

Howard M. Lewis, Youngsworth's attorney, said yesterday his client met with an FBI agent yesterday to discuss the Gardner theft and made plans for another meeting. Lewis said Youngsworth has not told him if any deal would rely on Youngsworth getting a portion of the \$5 million reward the Gardner museum is offering.

"There is no master plan yet," Lewis said. "But if the feds have the juice they say they have, they should let him walk out of the Dedham House of Corrections" by persuading state authorities to release him on low or no bail.

Youngsworth's wife, Judy, said after the court session, at which her husband's bail was set at \$5,000 cash, "He

does have information, and he's willing to cooperate."

As a sign of his inside information, Youngsworth told the Boston Herald: that the thieves who posed as police officers and forced their way into the Gardner museum in the Fenway had on an earlier visit left an unalarmed museum window unlocked so they could use it as an alternative entrance; that they damaged several bolts that were used to secure the paintings to the wall, and that one of the thieves pulled out a pocket knife and cut two of the Rembrandts from the frames because of the difficulty of removing the bolts.

Sources familiar with the investigation said it was public knowledge that the paintings were slashed. Beyond that, they said that so far Youngsworth has not offered any convincing details about the heist.

US Attorney Donald K. Stern declined to comment on Youngsworth's credibility.

"The Gardner theft continues to be a high priority for the FBI and this office," Stern said. "And we'll accept information from any source."

At yesterday's arraignment on the new charges, assistant District Attorney Kim Gainsborough argued for holding Youngsworth on high bail by noting the defendant has used 11 aliases and has a felony record that covers 10 pages dating back to 1976. He has a history of defaulting on court appearances and as of yesterday had two outstanding defaults in Worcester and Quincy, Gainsborough said.

But Lewis described his client as a victim of police harassment. He said Youngsworth is being unfairly "squeezed" by law enforcement authorities who searched his home and business on July 8. Besides searching the premises, Randolph police used a backhoe to dig up Youngsworth's yard.

That search led to the new firearms charges, which Youngsworth denies, saying that none of the three weapons was in working order.

Lewis said the museum-theft investigators should take his client seriously because of the role Youngsworth has claimed to have played in the return this summer of the missing beeswax seal of King Charles I of England that was on the founding charter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The seal was stolen 13 years ago.

Lewis is Youngsworth's fourth lawyer since his arrest in the 1996 case. Two of those attorneys said yesterday that he had never mentioned having information on the famed museum heist to them.

Attorney Martin Leppo, who withdrew from Youngsworth's 1996 case, citing "irreconcilable differences," said yesterday the topic never came up.

### **Illustration**

PHOTO; CAPTION: William P. Youngsworth III (right) stands with his attorney, Howard M. Lewis, at his arraignment yesterday in Norfolk Superior Court on charges of illegal possession of three antique firearms and marijuana. / GLOBE POOL PHOTO

## **DETAILS**

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