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## FBI seeks connection between art thefts

FBI agents in Boston said yesterday they are awaiting information from police in the Netherlands to determine whether there are similarities in the armed theft there Saturday by two men of some 20 van Gogh paintings and the art theft at the Gardner Museum here a little more than a year ago.

The multimillion-dollar paintings taken from the Vincent van Gogh National Museum in Amsterdam were found abandoned in the get-

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WILLIAM McMULLIN  
*FBI agent*

away car; many had been damaged when stuffed into two garment bags. The car, which was left outside the Amstel railway station less than two miles from the museum, was discovered about a half-hour after the robbery.

FBI agent William McMullin, spokesman for the Boston office, said yesterday, "It's premature until we get all the details from the Netherlands. We don't know yet whether there is anything there worth pursuing."

"We'll analyze the information as it comes in and make an assessment as to whether any elements might be worth a further look."

On March 18, 1990, thieves dressed as Boston police officers tricked two college-age security guards into opening doors at the Gardner Museum about 3 a.m. on a Sunday. They stole 13 paintings worth millions of dollars after disarming an alarm system. They have disappeared without a trace.

In Amsterdam, about 3 a.m. Saturday, a ski-masked man armed with a pistol, who apparently had hidden in the museum until after closing, confronted two guards and ordered them to disarm an alarm system. He then admitted an accomplice through the front door. The guards, who sounded the alarm shortly after the men left, said the pair sounded as though they had American accents.

However, after spending an hour and forty minutes to take the paintings, the men abandoned them shortly after leaving the museum. In Amsterdam, police spokesman Foeke Wagenaar said that although the robbery looked well planned, "if you look at the outcome, it looks pretty amateurish."

Among the paintings taken were "Still Life With Sunflowers," "Still Life With Irises" and "Wheatfield With Crows." The latter, painted shortly before van Gogh's suicide in 1890, was damaged during the robbery.

ANDREW BLAKE