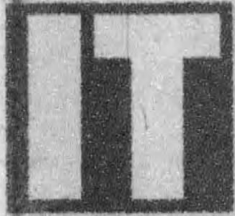


New life and growth at the Gardner

By Maureen Dezell
GLOBE STAFF



It was early on a Sunday morning in March 1990 that a pair of professional art thieves dressed as Boston police officers walked into the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, tied up two college-age security guards, dismantled an alarm system and walked out a few hours later with a \$200 million art haul that included a Manet, two Rembrandts and one of the world's rare Vermeers.

The theft, still unsolved, devastated the world-famous museum in the Fenway, an American art palace that Boston's legendary Mrs. Jack Gardner left "in its original arrangement . . . for the education and enjoyment of the public forever" when she died in 1924.

The robbery ravaged Gardner's handpicked, eclectic collection of 2,500 objects spanning 30 centuries, an array that ranges from the spectacular – Titian's "Rape of Europa" – to the strange – a plaster cast of Franz Liszt's hand. It also disturbed the sublime serenity of Gardner's Venetian-style palazzo, with its 15 galleries turned inward on a skylit courtyard filled with exotic plants and flowers, Roman statuary and an elaborate fountain. Since

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