

Gardner rebuts 'details' of heist Says ex-convict's claims are wrong

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

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FULL TEXT

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"Given the widespread publicity surrounding these details, the museum has decided to let the public know that those details are inaccurate," said Joan Norris, the museum's director of marketing.

Meanwhile, convicted art thief Myles J. Connor Jr., one of Youngworth's longtime associates, was en route to Boston from a federal prison in Pennsylvania to meet with federal prosecutors about the missing paintings.

Authorities want Connor, who was not expected to arrive until last night, to appear this week before a grand jury.

Martin Leppo, Connor's lawyer, said he was unsure what Connor knows about the Gardner heist, but he is sure his client won't allow himself to become a stool pigeon.

"Myles Connor is not interested in giving any information that would lead to an indictment of anybody," said Leppo. "He's not an informant."

In March 1990, 13 paintings, valued at more than \$200 million, were taken from the Gardner by two men, dressed as police officers, who forced their way inside.

Though he was in prison at the time, Connor's name almost immediately surfaced as the possible mastermind because of his reputed ability to rip off -- and secure the return of -- valuable artworks. Since then, he has tantalized investigators by offering his expertise in stolen objets d'art.

The stakes elevated when Youngworth, of Randolph, was charged with drug and weapons violations last month. Youngworth went public with an offer: He and Connor would broker the return of the Gardner paintings in exchange for immunity and the \$5 million reward.

As collateral, Youngworth told the Boston Herald earlier this month that he had secret information about the theft.

But sources familiar with the investigation believe that Youngworth -- who has already met with the Gardner's head of security and with federal investigators -- was recycling inaccurate details from old news reports.

"Connor and Youngworth have not come up with one piece of new information," said one source close to the case.

Still, Youngworth yesterday behaved as though he held vital details, holding court from a motel room out of state.

"Myles Connor will be released, or there will be no deal," he declared.

DETAILS

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