

Art Thefts

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Goya's portrait of Duke of Wellington, valued at \$392,000, was stolen from London's National Gallery



"Card Players," one of eight Cézannes taken from museum in Aix-en-Provence, is called a million-dollar loss.

During \$500,000 art theft from home of Pittsburgh collector G. David Thompson, this Picasso was crudely ripped by thieves.



paintings for room and board. By the time of his death, Roux' collection had become fabulous.

Roux' son did not insure the treasures. He believed in people—until he came down to breakfast on April 1 and found the walls of his dining room bare. His 20 favorite paintings were gone! Roux immediately offered \$10,000 ransom for them.

Several times the Sûreté just missed finding the Colombe d'Or paintings—in a deserted villa at Antibes, a grotto in the Maritime Alps, a wine cellar in one of the ant-runs that pass for streets in old Nice—but each time the agents arrived too late. Whether or not the tips came from a cafe owner named Giudicelli who was also a notorious procurer and, according to rumor, a police spy, the Riviera underworld obviously thought so. Last July 19 Giudicelli was found shot to death in his luxurious villa at Cap d'Antibes. Ten days later the mysterious call came to Lavalette.

THE POLICE are convinced that the anonymous caller was really a go-between for the thieves in dealing with Roux for the return of the Colombe d'Or paintings. They also suspect that Roux was forced to up the ransom considerably, although he will not discuss the matter. He did receive mysterious telephone calls, he admits smilingly, and he always seemed one jump ahead of the police. When at last his pictures were found in Marseilles, and he was told that one was missing, he said blandly, "Yes, I know—the Bazaine. I'm told it's in South America."

Similar recovery of the half-million dollars' worth of moderns taken from the suburban Pittsburgh home of G. David Thompson, wealthy retired industrialist, also seems an ultimate probability. Thompson has offered a no-questions-asked reward and named Allegheny County Judge Henry

X. O'Brien to act as intermediary. If the value of the loot—six Picassos, two Légers, a Dufy, and a Miro—is as much as the experts estimate, Thompson may have to raise the ante. The standard rate demanded by Mafia extortionists for the secret return of stolen goods is one-third the value of the booty—and police are convinced that the Thompson gallery was pillaged by roughneck mobsters lost in an unfamiliar field.

The rash of art robberies shows no signs of abating. On the night of Aug. 12-13, thieves, who were not only connoisseurs but human flies as well, plundered a loan exhibition of Cézannes at Aix-en-Provence, home town of the late great Postimpressionist, 18 miles north of Marseilles. Of the 60 works on exhibit, the crooks selected eight of Cézanne's most famous oils. The motive is no mystery. The paintings are heavily insured, so negotiations may ultimately be expected.

Is this current epidemic of art thefts the work of an international gang with a professional mastermind? Commissaire Victor Clot, long-time chief of the Fine Arts Squad of the Paris police, doesn't think so. He believes a fad is sweeping the underworld, that racketeers thrown out of work by the collapse of the postwar black markets have found a new wrinkle, just as prestigious as jewel thievery but much simpler. The ransoms involved are just as remunerative as kidnapping, but the risks involved are much less.

And because most of the thefts seem to be committed for ransom, rather than for possession or resale, the chance of recovering such treasures is a little better than even—but only after the first excitement and indignation have died down. After all, it was more than two years before the Mona Lisa came back to smile again in the Louvre.

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