Stolen art and collectibles checklist

What to do if art, antiques or collectibles are stolen. Work down the list in order and tick each step as you finish it. The full guide, with the reasons behind every step, is at confirmedstolen.com/stolen-art/.

In the first hour

- [ ] **Call local police and report the theft**
  Call 911 if a break-in is in progress or just happened; otherwise use the department's non-emergency line. The FBI's art crime guidance (www.fbi.gov/investigate/violent-crime/art-crime) tells victims to contact local police first.

- [ ] **Leave the scene as you found it**
  Keep people away from the area where the objects were displayed or stored so investigators can look for evidence. Do not clean, rehang or rearrange anything.

- [ ] **Note when each object was last seen**
  Write down the last confirmed sighting of each missing item, who had access since then, and anything unusual that happened in the area.

- [ ] **List every missing object, even minor pieces**
  Thieves often take smaller items along with the obvious target. Walk each room, safe and storage area and compare what is there with your inventory.

Within 24 hours

- [ ] **Gather photographs, appraisals and purchase records**
  Collect every image, appraisal, invoice, certificate of authenticity, exhibition label and insurance schedule that describes the missing objects.

- [ ] **Write an Object ID description for each item**
  Record type, materials and techniques, measurements, inscriptions and markings, distinguishing features, title, subject, date or period, and maker. See the ICOM Object ID page (icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/objectid/).

- [ ] **Give the police the descriptions and images**
  Ask the officer to attach them to the report, and request the report number and a copy of the report. You will need both for insurers and registries.

- [ ] **Notify your insurer or broker**
  Report the loss promptly and ask what documentation the policy requires. Check your policy for its notice requirements rather than assuming a deadline.

- [ ] **Record serial, certificate and grading numbers for collectibles**
  For graded coins, trading cards, watches and jewelry, list every serial number, grading certificate number and laboratory report number you have.

This week

- [ ] **Ask police to submit the items to the FBI National Stolen Art File**
  Only law enforcement can enter objects in the National Stolen Art File (artcrimes.fbi.gov/), so ask the investigating officer to make the request for any item that may qualify.
- [ ] **Ask about an INTERPOL submission for high-value or cross-border cases**
  INTERPOL works through national police agencies. Ask your investigator whether the case warrants a submission to its Stolen Works of Art database.
- [ ] **Search the databases yourself**
  Use the free NSAF search and INTERPOL's ID-Art app (www.interpol.int/Crimes/Cultural-heritage-crime/ID-Art-mobile-app) to confirm entries appear correctly once police have submitted them.
- [ ] **Alert auction houses, dealers and specialist trade groups**
  Send a short notice with images, your police report number and an investigator contact. Focus on firms and shows that handle the type of object taken.
- [ ] **Decide whether to register with a private stolen-art database**
  Commercial registries such as the Art Loss Register are searched by parts of the trade before sales. Review their terms and fees before you register.
- [ ] **Watch online marketplaces and auction listings**
  Set saved searches for the artist, maker or object type. If you spot a match, tell the investigator; do not contact the seller or try to buy it back yourself.

Recovery

- [ ] **Let police handle any lead or recovery**
  Pass sightings, tips and contacts to the investigator. A ransom demand or an offer to sell the work back is a matter for law enforcement.
- [ ] **Tell everyone you notified once an item is returned**
  Notify the police, your insurer, the FBI NSAF through law enforcement, and any private registry. The FBI notes that unreported recoveries can stay listed.

Prevent it happening again

- [ ] **Build a photographic inventory with Object ID details**
  Photograph front, back, signature, labels and any damage, and store copies off site. ID-Art's My Inventory feature can hold Object ID records.
- [ ] **Update appraisals and insurance schedules**
  Ask your insurer or broker how often valuations should be refreshed for the items you own.

- [ ] **Check provenance before you buy**
  Ask for ownership history, search the stolen-art databases, and keep the search results with your purchase records.

Your case record

Object description and Object ID record

Police report number and officer

NSAF / INTERPOL submission (via police)

Insurance claim number

Auction houses and dealers notified

Notes

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