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Thieves Make Off With a Painting From New York's Team Gallery in Broad Daylight After a Half-Mile Chase

The gallery has been dusted for prints and police are on the case.

**Sarah Cascone**, January 11, 2019



Ann Pibal, *CBLT*. The painting was stolen from Team Gallery. Photo courtesy of Team Gallery/Adam Reich.

Although movies depict art theft as an *Ocean's 11*-style, high-budget crime, the reality is often less sophisticated. New York's Team Gallery was struck by two thieves on Thursday afternoon, with a man and woman making off on foot with a blue painting on aluminum by artist Ann Pibal worth \$12,000.

Dan Barrett-Friere, whose husband, Jose Friere, owns the gallery, became suspicious of the couple after the man disappeared into Pibal's exhibition in the back room. Hearing shuffling sounds, Barrett-Friere went to investigate. The robber bolted, presumably with the stolen painting stashed inside his large black Carhartt jacket.

"No one should ever be running in an art gallery," Barrett-Friere told the *New York Daily News*. Reacting quickly, he chased the man out the door. The thief's accomplice, a woman with bleached hair with dark roots who had asked if the space was an art gallery, ran out behind them. Barrett-Friere continued his pursuit for around half a mile before giving up.

He warned that the thieves might be disappointed when they find out "there's no resale market for this.... They're unique works. It would be impossible for somebody to place this work without identifying who the artist is."



Team Gallery in Soho, New York. Photo by John Phelan via Wikimedia Commons.

Immediately following the robbery, Jose Friere called Pibal to let her know what had happened. After initially laughing over the absurdity of the day's events, the reality of the situation sunk in and "she felt completely violated," the gallerist told artnet News.

The stolen artwork, titled *CBLT*, is a 16-by-13 inch aluminum panel. It was one of three abstract works in Pibal's current show, "Surf Type," which also includes a grid

of works on paper based on images from surf magazines. The gallery is worried that the thieves might damage the fragile piece since any scratch or indentation would be permanent.

“[Ann is] really an artist who is very gentle and very thoughtful... the idea that someone just snatched the work off the wall and in so doing probably destroyed it is really disheartening,” said Friere, explaining that his focus is on “getting the conversation back on the work that she makes” as the exhibition enters its last week.

It’s only the second time in the gallery’s 23 years that a work of art has been stolen from the premises, according to Friere. On the other hand, he noted, “we’ve been on a ground floor in Soho for 13 years, and I can’t tell you how many laptops have been stolen from us.”

Unfortunately, the beloved SoHo gallery is not equipped with security cameras—although that oversight will soon be rectified. Police are also looking to neighboring businesses for security footage that might have captured the thieves.

“The detective who is an expert on art theft was here for about five hours and I think that they have a plan for how they are going to pursue this,” Friere added, noting that the male thief used the gallery bathroom, and that everything has been dusted for prints.

The gallery has put up a printed image of the stolen work in its place with a note about the theft and plans to hang an alternate work later today. “When you put up a show, you think that it’s perfect,” said Friere. “[Ann and I] are going to look at it like something with a scar for the rest of the exhibition.”

