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Thieves Steal a Renoir Landscape Right Off the Walls of the Dorotheum Auction House

In an audacious heist, the suspects removed the canvas from its frame and left the Vienna building within minutes.

Kate Brown, November 29, 2018



Visitor look at antique paintings in Vienna's Dorotheum. Photo: SAMUEL KUBANI/AFP/Getty Images.

Three thieves stole a landscape by Pierre-Auguste Renoir at Dorotheum's Vienna auction house, swiftly removing it from its frame on Monday evening before slipping out of the building undetected. The 1895 study of a coastal landscape was taken in what the Vienna police think was a professional heist. They are searching for the missing painting and the suspects, who are still at large.

Titled *Golfe, Mer, Falaises Vertes*, the lesser-known work by Renoir was valued at between €120,000 and €160,000 (\$135,379 to \$180,505). It was due to be auctioned on Wednesday evening in Vienna's most prestigious auction house's Modern art sale.

According to Viennese police, three male suspects were seen on camera removing the Renoir from its frame before leaving through different exits. The trio triggered a silent alarm when they removed the painting from its frame; some reports have suggested that two of the thieves distracted the supervisory staff while another one took the work. Two of the men had large shopping bags that appear as though they could have fit the small painting, although it is unclear if the work was transported out of the building that way. The middle-aged thieves made no attempt at hiding their faces from the security cameras.



Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Golfe, Mer, Falaises Vertes*. Courtesy of Dorotheum. It was all over before anyone could notice—all told, the painting and the robbers were gone within minutes. The police would not explain how the painting was removed from its frame, for fear it would inspire copycat thefts.

The auction house has not made an extensive official comment beyond confirming that all its works on display are insured, and saying that this is the first painting to have been stolen from its premises, which handles around 250,000 objects a year.

The Impressionist painting was on offer from an undisclosed private European collector, who had acquired the work in 1996 at Sotheby's London for around £35,000 (\$44,720).

