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Police Nab a Suspect in the Brazen Theft of a Renoir From a Vienna Auction House—But Others Remain at Large

Three middle-aged thieves stole the painting from the auction house last month.

Henri Neuendorf, December 13, 2018



A branch of the Dorotheum Auction house is pictured on March 10, 2015 in Vienna. Image courtesy Dieter Nagl/AFP/Getty Images.

One of the suspects behind the audacious theft of a Pierre-Auguste Renoir landscape from the Dorotheum auction house in Vienna has been apprehended by police.

On November 26, three middle-aged thieves removed the painting from its frame and slipped out of the building undetected in a bold heist. The stolen painting, *Golfe, Mer, Falaises Vertes* (1895), was estimated to fetch between €120,000 and €160,000 (\$136,421 to \$181,895) and was on display ahead of the prestigious house's Modern art sale. The auction house's surveillance cameras filmed three male suspects, who made no attempt to hide their identities, stealing the painting before leaving undetected through separate exits. The theft was over within minutes.

On Wednesday afternoon, a spokeswoman for the Vienna prosecutor's office, Nina Bussek, confirmed that a Ukrainian man was arrested in Amsterdam over the weekend or on Monday in connection with the heist. She added that the judiciary was working toward the extradition of the suspect in collaboration with Dutch authorities.



Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Golfe, Mer, Falaises Vertes* (1895).

According to the Austrian Press Agency, the two other suspects are still on the run, but authorities declined to reveal further details citing the ongoing investigation.

“Dorotheum congratulates the police on the success of its investigation,” a spokeswoman for the auction house told artnet News in an email. “The identification of the arrested suspect was possible because of the high quality photos from

Dorotheum's security cameras. We assume the other two perpetrators will be caught soon and the investigation will conclude successfully."

Despite the progress of the investigation, a number of important questions remain unanswered. Neither the Austrian prosecutor's office nor the Viennese police spokesman were willing or able to say if the stolen painting has been recovered, how the suspected Ukrainian thief was traced to the Netherlands, or if there were any leads on the whereabouts of his accomplices.

