

The Telegraph



Sculture owners put on alert as metal art thefts rise

Leading insurers have advised owners of valuable metal artworks to “rethink” their security measures and even consider replacing sculptures with replicas.

Councils and museums were urged to take extra precautions after a spate of thefts of statues and other works from established

artists. Private collectors and home owners were warned to avoid putting “precious metal sculptures in window bays” and to consider growing “spiky hedges to deter thieves”.

One local authority even revealed plans to install motion sensitive alarms on or around its works of art on public display in parks in an effort to prevent them being taken. “It is a sad consequence of the continuing economic crisis that more large metal sculptures are being stolen,” said Annabel Fell-Clark, chief executive officer of insurers AXA ART UK. “We would encourage councils to review the security of any works on public display in conjunction with their insurers. Galleries and private home owners also need to take extra precautions – they can even consider replacing easily accessible works with replicas so as to be able to keep the real work safe elsewhere.

“Have a good sensor alarm system in place – and use it. Grow spiky hedges to deter thieves. Avoid displaying bronze or other precious metal sculptures in window bays.” The new guidance comes after Dame Barbara Hepworth’s bronze sculpture, entitled Two Forms-Divided Circle was stolen from Dulwich Park, south London, earlier this week.

Thieves are thought to have used an axle grinder to sever the seven foot-high piece, valued at £500,000, from its plinth before loading it into a vehicle. If melted down for scrap, the sculpture may fetch as little as £750.

The Telegraph cont.

Yesterday, Southwark Council, which runs the park, said it had written to David Cameron to press for the introduction of new laws governing the sale of metal to scrap yards. Other councils also called for new legislation and announced that they were stepping up security measures, including police patrols, around their most valuable works of art.

Wandsworth Council, which displays Hepworth's 1962 bronze sculpture, Single Form, in Battersea Park, south London, said it was considering installing a motion sensitive alarm to protect the piece. A spokesman said: "The council's parks police service is stepping up patrols in the area and in addition the sculpture is covered by a CCTV camera which is being actively monitored. We are also looking at a range of additional security measures including fitting alarms which would be activated if anyone tampered with the sculpture."



Seven churches in one Lancashire town have been hit by thieves in the run-up to Christmas. Police said stained glass windows were smashed, hundreds of pounds worth of tools and computers stolen, communion wine drunk and collection money taken from churches in the Oswaldtwistle area.