

art theft detail

case files

Acrylic Sculpture Thieves



On Saturday, January 5, 2002, two suspects entered the New Otani Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. They both wore large coats and sunglasses. They briefly cased the hallways and then entered The Henken Gallery separately. One suspect stopped in front of a Michael Wilkinson acrylic sculpture while the second suspect positioned himself to block the gallery manager's view of the first suspect. After they left, the manager noticed the sculpture stolen.

Hotel surveillance cameras revealed the thief who had taken the sculpture had drapped the coat over his shoulders to make it look like his arms were in the sleeves at his side. Instead, his hands were free to take the sculpture, hiding it inside the coat.



Two days later, on Monday, January 7, 2002, the same suspects hit the Kaleidoscope Gallery in a mall in Mission Viejo. Again, they entered the gallery separately. One suspect, wearing a baseball cap, lured the employee to a far wall. He spoke Spanish and claimed he was from Argentina. After distracting the employee, the second suspect entered with a jacket draped over his shoulder. He removed a Michael Wilkinson sculpture from a pedestal and hid it under his coat and walked out of the gallery, soon followed by the first suspect.

The suspects are described as:

#1 - male Hispanic, dark hair, 5-8/5-10, 200 lbs, 35-40 yrs - dark glasses & baseball cap - heavy Spanish accent.



#2 - male Hispanic, balding & receding hairline, 5-6/5-8, 160-175, 35/40 yrs - glasses.



The Michael Wilkinson sculptures taken are depicted above and described as:

1. *Crystal Fire* - #90/900 - 17 S" tall
2. *Moonscape* - #16/25 - 24" tall

This appears to follow a pattern of thefts that have been occurring since at least 1997. A loose band of thieves have been targeting Fredrick Hart and Michael Wilkinson acrylic sculptures at galleries along the coast of California from San Diego to San Francisco and as far east as Colorado. The thefts usually involve distraction shoplifts or window smashes of galleries after the gallery closes. Most of the suspects have been described as Hispanic.

If you have any information about the above crime pattern, please call Detectives Hrycyk or Garay at 213-485-2524.