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## The Paris heist will lead to a rise in art theft

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Sunday, June 13, 2010 0:30 IST

Last month, a thief broke into the Musee d'Art Moderne in Paris and helped himself to five extremely valuable artworks, including a Picasso and a Matisse. Two days later, thieves robbed a private art collector in his villa, making off with another Picasso. Mark Durney, founder of Art Theft Central and business director of the Association for Research into Crimes against Art (ARCA), provides a perspective on the rise in art crime in an interview with DNA.

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### What types of theft fall under the umbrella of 'art crime'?

Art crime includes archaeological looting, art theft, vandalism, iconoclasm, the illicit art and antiquities trade, forgery, and fakes, among many other fields. The success of ARCA hinges on its ability to unify professionals from the very diverse backgrounds related to the many fields encompassed under art crime.

### Which kind of art theft is the most common?

Unfortunately, statistics on art crime are quite lacking for a variety of reasons. The FBI examined its solved cases and determined that 88 per cent of solved art thefts were actually insider thefts. However, the looting of archaeological sites is a global enterprise and quite likely the most common art crime.

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time the thief spent in the museum might imply insider knowledge. It was not your traditional smash and grab theft. Also, I think it is worth noting that in the past two months Matisse and Picasso works set records at auctions. The amount of publicity surrounding the two sales might have motivated the thief to nab works by these artists.

Unfortunately, this theft occurred at a world renowned museum, and it was well publicised that the museum had recently undergone a 15 million euro upgrade of its security operations. It is likely that this may lead to an increase in art thefts across Europe, and possibly elsewhere. In criminological terms this is called the boost effect. Essentially, the poor security, the high value attached to the works, and the success of such a large theft could motivate new offenders who see art as a suitable target. Thus, there was actually an art theft from a private residence only a couple of days after the Paris heist.

### How is India affected by art theft?

India is a culturally rich nation. It is considered by archaeologists mainly as a source country, that is, rich in archaeological artefacts awaiting their discovery, but it also has a fast growing art market fuelled by the influx of wealth into the region. Additionally, due to its history and association with the British Empire - like many commonwealth countries - substantial amounts of its cultural patrimony have been removed and relocated in Western institutions as well as private collections. This can be considered to be almost a cultural diaspora. Education is critical in order to spread a greater awareness of the problem of art theft and its many negative externalities on society from the loss of the cultural record to ways in which looted art/antiquities can fuel terrorism.

### What are your views on the latest art heist in Paris?

The recent Paris museum theft underscores the fact that no matter how complex or advanced an institution's security system is, it requires constant attention and maintenance by members of staff. It seems as if human error was the culprit, that is, inattentive night guards and the most obvious, an alarm system that had been broken for two months. Additionally, the amount of

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