

Picasso garden gnome stolen and damaged

By David Lea
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

A stolen \$16,000 garden gnome has been returned to his owners, though not in the best of shape.

The two-foot-tall, 30-pound (13.5-kilogram) clay sculpture of Pablo Picasso pushing a lawnmower was stolen from the backyard of a southeast Oakville home in late June.

Last weekend, it was discovered in Raymar Park with damage to its feet, legs and head along with some marker tattoos someone had added to its face and knuckles.

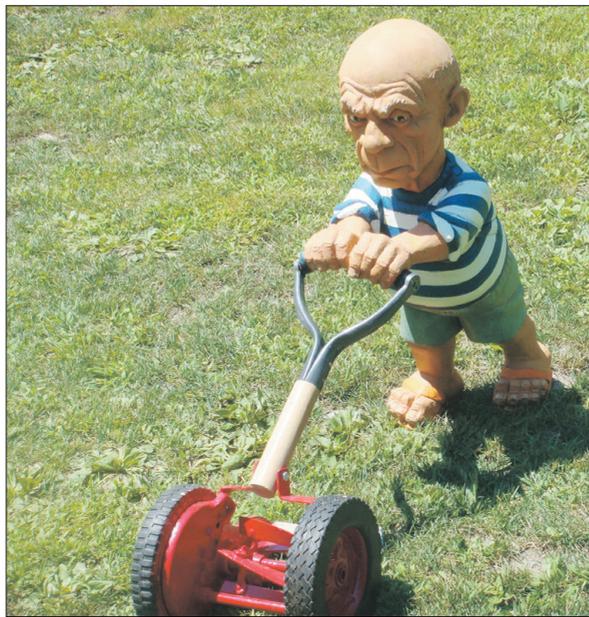
"It's disappointing," said Claire Govan, the statue's owner.

"I think whoever took it probably just thought it was a funny prank not realizing it was of significant value to us."

Govan said the statue is valuable to her family not only monetarily, but because they know the artist, Elliott Arkin, who created it.

Govan said the New York artist, whose works can be seen in galleries and museums around the world, worked at the same Massachusetts summer camp attended by her daughter.

The Picasso sculpture was one of a special series created by Arkin, which also included sculptures of Georgia O'Keeffe planting flowers, Andy



SUBMITTED PHOTO

SEASONAL STEAL: This garden statue was stolen from a southeast Oakville home and later found damaged in a nearby park.

Warhol as a pool boy, Vincent Van Gogh sowing seeds and Louise Bourgeois catching a spider.

After the statue was stolen, Govan and her family posted flyers throughout her neighbourhood advertising a \$500 reward for the statue's return.

This reward was given to the woman who located the statue in Raymar Park.

"The police actually checked Raymar Park

when he went missing and so did we. So I suspect whoever took it must have dumped it back there," said Govan.

"They probably realized what they had taken had significant value and decided to return it... well, not exactly return it."

Govan said she has been in contact with Arkin who intends to repair and repaint the sculpture.

This work is expected to have considerable cost and also means the family will have to deliver the sculpture to New York and then retrieve it.

"This is a bit of a hassle for us," said Govan.

This is not the first time vandals have damaged a piece of art in the process of pulling off a prank.

In September someone removed a life-sized wolf sculpture from the grounds of Erchless Estate and placed it on a family's doorstep in Bronte.

One of the sculpture's legs was broken off during the transport.

Anyone with information about the garden gnome incident is asked to contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).



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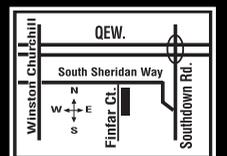
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