



Art seized from a Greater Victoria art dealer accused of stockpiling pieces and cutting off communication with owners. (Courtesy of Saanich Police Department)

Tens of millions worth of art seized from Oak Bay dealer in fraud investigation

More than 1,000 pieces of art discovered in storage units in Saanich, Oak Bay, Langford

[OAK BAY NEWS STAFF](#) / Apr. 28, 2022 1:00 p.m. / [LOCAL NEWS](#) / [NEWS](#)

More than 1,000 pieces of fine art, with a total value estimated in the tens of millions, have been seized from an art dealer in Oak Bay whose operation spanned Greater Victoria.

The dealer was arrested on April 21 after an investigation into reports the dealer was receiving art for consignment and then cutting off communication with owners.

On April 11, an art owner told Saanich police that they entrusted the dealer in March with four pieces of fine art, by two renowned Canadian artists, for consignment and potential sale at an art gallery in Oak Bay. Those pieces included Emily Carr paintings and one David Blackwood watercolour, according to a release from the Saanich Police Department.

After the gallery recently closed and attempts to contact the art dealer went unanswered, the owner got suspicious. A resulting police investigation found that the owner wasn't alone, as several other people reported similar circumstances.

Saanich detectives executed search warrants at storage sites across the region in the following days. Those searches found 600 pieces in Saanich, more than 100 in Oak Bay and a Langford stockpile that eclipsed 300 works of art.

All of those pieces have an estimated dollar value in the tens of millions, Saanich police said. The art was seized and safely transported to a secure location, where it's now being stored.

"The dealer was taking art from people with the intention of consigning or appraising the art, later ceasing all contact, all the while selling the art without reimbursing the owners or artists," said Const. Markus Anastasiades in a statement.

The dealer, whose identity is not being released until charges are approved, was released with several conditions and a court date. Investigators are recommending charges for multiple counts of fraud and false pretence.

Saanich police believe there are more individuals who have attempted to reclaim their artwork but have not been successful in doing so. Police ask those people to email art@saanichpolice.ca.

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