

# Man Breaks Into Dallas Museum of Art and Damages Artworks Valued at Up to \$5 Million

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**Brian Hernandez broke ancient Greek artifacts and a contemporary ceramic piece**



Elizabeth Djinis - History Correspondent

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The 21-year-old suspect, Brian Hernandez, broke into the Dallas Museum of Art around 9:40 p.m. Wednesday. Photo by Raymond Boyd / Getty Images

On Wednesday, what started as an argument between a Dallas man and his girlfriend ended in as much as \$5 million worth of damage to ancient artifacts housed at the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA).

Security cameras caught 21-year-old Brian Hernandez holding a metal chair outside the Texas museum's entrance around 9:40 p.m. The footage then shows him "walking from room to room, smashing display cases and the items inside," writes NBC News' Claire Cardona.

Angry at his girlfriend after their argument, Hernandez—for reasons unknown—decided to break into the museum and destroy some of the oldest pieces in its collection. As Tommy Cummings reports for the Dallas Morning News, he used a metal stool to shatter glass cases and damage multiple ancient Greek objects, including a sixth-century B.C.E. amphora depicting combat scenes from the Trojan War and a black-figure kylix, or wide drinking cup, dated to between 550 and 530 B.C.E. and decorated with vignettes of Heracles fighting the Nemean lion.

Hernandez also broke a red-figure pyxis, or cylindrical box that held jewels, perfume bottles or cosmetics. Portrayals of women in domestic settings adorn the artifact.

Next, Hernandez utilized a hand sanitizer stand to destroy a glass case that held the Batah Kuhuh Alligator Gar Fish Effigy Bottle, a 2018 ceramic piece by Native American artist Chase Kahwinhut Earles. He destroyed the artwork by slamming it "to the ground," reports NBC



Black-figure kylix Dallas Museum of Art

Police initially placed the total value of the amphora and pyxis at roughly \$5 million. The kylix was worth \$100,000, while the effigy bottle was valued at \$10,000. Per the *Dallas Morning News*, museum director Agustín Arteaga later said in a statement that “the real total could be a fraction of the original \$5 million estimate.”

Police officers arrived at the museum around 30 minutes after Hernandez was spotted outside, according to an arrest warrant obtained by WFAA’s Paul Wedding. A museum security guard called the police when they realized someone was inside the building after hours. When authorities arrived, Hernandez was “sitting on a bench inside, where the guard told him to stay,” according to the warrant.

A statement released by the DMA on Thursday indicated that no one was harmed in the break-in and that the museum would remain open to visitors.

“This was an isolated incident perpetrated by one individual acting alone, whose intent was not theft of art or any objects on view at the museum,” the statement reads.



Hernandez was charged with criminal mischief greater than \$300,000 and is currently being held at Dallas County Jail on a \$100,000 bond, reports [CBS News](#)' Julia Falcon.

"The items inside of the display cases that were destroyed are rare ancient artifacts that are extremely precious and one of a kind," says Hernandez's arrest sheet, per NBC News.

The Dallas break-in comes less than a week after a man dressed as an elderly woman leapt out of a wheelchair at the Louvre and smeared cake on the glass covering Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*.

"There are people who are destroying the Earth," said the man in a video captured by an onlooker, per [Agence France-Presse](#) (AFP). "... That's why I did this. Think of the planet."



The damaged *Pietà* [Public domain via Wikimedia Commons](#)

On display to the public with little protection, art is often at risk of destruction by museum visitors who have something to prove or are simply having a bad day.

In 1972, Hungarian man Laszlo Toth took a hammer to the *Pietà*, Michelangelo's sculptural masterwork of Jesus Christ lying in the Virgin Mary's arms. The 15 hammer hits dealt by Toth knocked off parts of Mary's left arm, nose and an eyelid; according to *Wanted in Rome*, experts painstakingly restored the artwork before putting it back on view behind bulletproof glass.

Other artworks have been subjected to similar indignities. Rembrandt van Rijn's sprawling *Night Watch*, for instance, was the target of two separate knife attacks, first in 1911 and then in 1975.

For the people overseeing the DMA's artifacts, the focus is on picking up the pieces—perhaps literally. Board member Mary McDermott Cook, whose parents donated more than 3,100 artworks to the museum, learned of the incident the following morning, when Arteaga called her personally. It “made me sick to my stomach,” she tells the *Dallas Morning News*.

“I feel like everything has gone nuts, and this is one thing that went nuts,” Cook says. “But what I also said is, ‘Let's face it. It's just things. No person was hurt. And we have the technology and the expertise to put broken things back together.’ And thank God for that.”

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