

Pleads Guilty In Theft Of 4 Museum Statues

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The only person charged and held in connection with the thefts earlier this year from the St. Louis Art Museum has pleaded guilty in connection with the January theft of four statues.

John A. Crenshaw, 25, pleaded guilty Tuesday of burglary and stealing.

He also pleaded guilty to tampering with an automobile and assault on an unrelated incident in April 1977 in which policeman Edward Magee was beaten. Crenshaw, who is unemployed, has no permanent address.

St. Louis Circuit Judge Ivan Lee Holt sentenced Crenshaw to four years in prison on each of the charges. The terms are to be served concurrently.

Crenshaw was arrested in February in connection with the Art Museum burglary of Jan. 29, in which a bronze cast of the "Bronco Buster" by Frederick Remington, was one of the four items stolen.

At the time of his arrest, Crenshaw had a 17th-century pearwood and boxwood carving of St. Sebastian in his possession. He was arrested in a garage in the 4000 block of Vest Avenue.

The St. Sebastian statue also had been stolen in the January burglary. Two German bronzes, "Hope" and "Prudence," also were stolen, but both were recovered in a cardboard box in a motel room after a tip to police.

"Bronco Buster" was recovered from a Goodwill collection box. Three statues taken in a subsequent break-in in Febru-

ary were recovered in the yard of a scrap metal company.

Police had been hoping that Crenshaw would name accomplices and the person or persons for whom the statues were stolen. Well-known works of art generally are stolen only if a buyer has been lined up in advance.

After the thefts, two men identified by police as associates of Crenshaw met violent deaths.

In June, the body of Samuel E. White, 42, was found in a field in Madison County. He had been shot three times, and then was severely burned.

In February, the body of Charles H. Gunn, 29, was found behind the 5900 block of Hamilton Terrace. Gunn had been shot in the head. Police said they believed that he had accompanied Crenshaw in the January burglary.

Both the dead men and Crenshaw were associates of Russell Byers of Rock Hill, police say. Authorities believed that Crenshaw had committed the first burglary for Byers, but a burglary charge against Byers was dropped when Crenshaw would not testify against him.

Last month, Byers was identified as the man who told the House Select Committee on Assassinations that he was once offered \$50,000 to arrange for the killing of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King.

The FBI learned of Byers' claim in 1973 but misfiled a memorandum on it. The information did not surface until a routine file search at the time of the Art Museum thefts.