# Trial underway for suspect in £4.75 million toilet theft at Blenheim Palace



Michael Jones, 39, is currently on trial at Oxford Crown Court, charged with the theft of a unique art installation valued at £4.75 million. The case revolves around the audacious burglary of a solid gold toilet entitled "America," created by Italian conceptual artist Maurizio Cattelan. This artwork was installed at Blenheim Palace, the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill, and was taken in a swift and meticulously planned operation in the early hours of September 14, 2019.

The toilet, which weighed nearly 100 kilos, had only been part of the exhibition for two days when it was stolen. The heist was executed in a mere five minutes after the thieves drove through locked wooden gates and broke into the palace through a window. Prosecutors allege that Jones had conducted reconnaissance for the burglary, as evidenced by his search history on a mobile device, which included titles of news articles related to the theft shortly after it occurred.

In one such instance, shortly after the incident, Jones reportedly searched for local news stories detailing the burglary, including “66-year-old man released on bail after toilet stolen from Blenheim” and “police hunt for two stocky men after spate of burglaries.” Additionally, police discovered that he had visited Blenheim Palace two times prior to the theft, alongside his partner, suggesting a degree of preparation for the crime.

The prosecution outlined that the theft was indeed a well-rehearsed operation, as Jones and his accomplices were able to locate the toilet within the palace quickly. Prosecutor Julian Christopher KC remarked, “They went to the wooden door to the cubicle and broke it down... they removed the toilet despite it being fully plumbed in... overall they spent just five minutes at the building.”

The court also heard testimony from staff members of Blenheim Palace who were present during the burglary. Night duty manager Abel Clarke was awakened by the sound of shattering glass, initially believing it to be an explosion from an appliance. He later reported seeing headlights from two vehicles pulling away swiftly from the scene. Clarke mentioned, “I saw two vehicles, including a truck, were pulling away 'at speed'." His colleague, visitor service supervisor Eleanor Paice, also recounted hearing noises that are typical of breaking glass, further confirming the chaotic moments during the theft.

Co-defendants in the case, Frederick Sines, 36, and Bora Guccuk, 41, face charges related to conspiracy and transferring criminal property, denying their involvement in the crime. Another accomplice, James Sheen, 40, has pleaded guilty to burglary and is reported to have been active in the attempts to sell the gold after the theft. Metal fragments consistent with the toilet’s composition were found on Sheen's belongings, along with DNA evidence linking him to the crime scene.

Since the masterpiece's disappearance, it is believed that the solid gold toilet may have been dismantled and sold for its precious metal value. The trial continues, with the jury yet to deliberate on the evidence presented regarding Jones and his alleged accomplices' involvement in this high-profile theft.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/maurizio-cattelan-gold-toilet-trial-theft-video-2613738> - This article corroborates the theft of Maurizio Cattelan's gold toilet from Blenheim Palace and the ongoing trial of the accused individuals, including details about the audacious nature of the heist.
2. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2025/02/25/cattelans-%C2%A348m-gold-toilet-stolen-in-five-minute-raid-and-split-into-smaller-parts-court-hears> - This source confirms the swift execution of the theft, lasting only five minutes, and provides details about the trial of the men accused of the crime.
3. <https://www.insurancejournal.com/news/international/2025/02/27/813536.htm> - This article supports the claim that Michael Jones conducted reconnaissance before the theft and provides additional details about the planning and execution of the burglary.
4. <https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/rulesofcourt.pdf> - Although not directly related to the specific case, this document outlines general court procedures and rules, which can provide context for how legal proceedings like the trial of Michael Jones might be conducted.
5. <https://www.justice.gov/opcl/overview-privacy-act-1974-2020-edition/disclosures-third-parties> - This source discusses legal principles related to privacy and disclosure, which might be relevant in understanding the legal framework surrounding the case, though it does not directly address the theft.
6. <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source of the original article, but it does not provide independent corroboration as it is the primary text itself.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/man-accused-of-stealing-gold-toilet-checked-web-headlines-about-raid-court-TPKYPZP4NVPZPFLXZHPW4WOYWA/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
8. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24968955.blenheim-palace-golden-toilet-theft-alleged-thief-read-articles/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data