



Stealing Rembrandts: The Untold Stories of Notorious Art Heists

Anthony M. Amore , Tom Mashberg

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A spellbinding journey into the high-stakes world of art theft

Today, art theft is one of the most profitable criminal enterprises in the world, exceeding \$6 billion in losses to galleries and art collectors annually. And the masterpieces of Rembrandt van Rijn are some of the most frequently targeted.

In *Stealing Rembrandts*, art security expert Anthony M. Amore and award-winning investigative reporter Tom Mashberg reveal the actors behind the major Rembrandt heists in the last century. Through thefts around the world - from Stockholm to Boston, Worcester to Ohio - the authors track daring entries and escapes from the world's most renowned museums. There are robbers who coolly walk off with multimillion dollar paintings; self-styled art experts who fall in love with the Dutch master and desire to own his art at all costs; and international criminal masterminds who don't hesitate to resort to violence. They also show how museums are thwarted in their ability to pursue the thieves - even going so far as to conduct investigations on their own, far away from the maddening crowd of police intervention, sparing no expense to save the priceless masterpieces.

Stealing Rembrandts is an exhilarating, one-of-a-kind look at the black market of art theft, and how it compromises some of the greatest treasures the world has ever known.

Stealing Rembrandts: The Untold Stories of Notorious Art Heists Details

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From Reader Review Stealing Rembrandts: The Untold Stories of Notorious Art Heists for online ebook

Roger says

After attending an entertaining talk given by the author on the subject matter in the book, my wife and I purchased a copy from Mr. Amore. Having visited the Gardener Museum many times over the years and being a life long admirer of Rembrandt's paintings, this well researched book that chronicles the surprising number of thefts of the master's works, is a great read for any lover of Rembrandt, fine art, and un solved mysteries.

Kasia says

throughout the whole book you can feel the pain the authors are feeling bc of paintings stolen from the world and srsly? #same

this book is a great insight into real-life art heists and why it actually doesnt pay. my fav story tho is the Stockholm heist from 2000 where the thieves set two cars on fire, blocking the whole downtown so the police can't get to the crime scene fast and then they escaped by a boat with paintings. almost like a movie right

Jonathan Lopez says

In 1997, a gang of criminals escorted Boston Herald Sunday Editor Tom Mashberg to an undisclosed warehouse and showed him an old master oil painting.

Inspecting the painting by flashlight, Mashberg believed it to be Rembrandt's *Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee*, famously stolen, along with several other priceless pictures, from Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in 1990. Since Mashberg's possible sighting, the missing Gardner artworks have gone back underground, and the crime remains unsolved.

Mashberg has now teamed up with the Gardner Museum's head of security, Anthony M. Amore, to write *Stealing Rembrandts*, a detailed look at numerous robberies targeting works by the great Dutch master over the past century. Combining impressive shoe-leather reporting skills with solid art-world knowledge, this fascinating book debunks many myths about museum heists while providing vivid profiles of the criminals and their motives.

The rest of my review is available free online from the Associated Press:

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/07/10...>

Stephanie Matthews says

Wonderfully fascinating book, and an amazingly quick read overall. The only thing stopping it from getting a full five stars was the (frankly astonishing) decision not to look at the Gardner heist, probably the most famous of all art thefts featuring stolen Rembrandts. Perhaps because it's still unsolved? Who knows. For anyone interested in art, crime or art crime, this is heartily recommended.

Jimmy says

Disclaimer: This is NOT a real review because I never finished the book. I LOVE heists, so I thought this would be a good book to read. But I realized my error upon reading the first few chapters.

The author is intent on destroying the myths around heists... but that's the part I love about heists! Their mythical power! He's like "your concept of a heist is probably tainted by hollywood, let me show you how unglamorous and anticlimactic it really is."

The author has all the entirely wrong attitudes towards heists! He wants to stop them because it's stealing and it's wrong. Boo fucking hoo. Heists are exciting and mysterious and glamorous! They're something to be celebrated, and if you want to stop them it's only so that the next heist will be even more impossible and the stakes even higher and the eventual successful heist all the sweeter because of the challenge. Forget the artwork. The heist IS the art. This author totally doesn't get that, and that's why I'm not finishing his book.

Margo Brooks says

An entertaining book about the daring and bumbling theft of Rembrandt's works of art from around the world. This book highlights both the vulnerability of great master works, as well as the impossibility of selling such works on the black market. Additionally, the motivation of the criminals, from money, to dissatisfaction with government are quite eye opening. Although the book was cowritten by the current chief of security at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, home of one of the most famous Rembrandt heists in history, don't expect to read any juicy information about the whereabouts of the missing paintings. Amore revealed in a recent lecture that they actually know WHO stole the paintings, but that the paintings' whereabouts are still unknown. Since the statue of limitations for prosecuting the thieves is over, they are sitting on the information in the hope that the paintings will one day be returned.

Scott says

thanks goodreads.com for the free book. Entertaining read! The book dismantles the notion of the debonair art thief and the high tech caper (sorry whitecollar fans!).

Nana says

Read this in one sitting on a plane - interesting, not too deep or long overview of a number of historical art heists where a work by Rembrandt was the target, with a focus especially on the mechanics of the heist & how (lax) museum security played into it. Doesn't give too much art historical background besides cursory sort of overviews which it may have benefitted further from, and some parts felt a little under developed (ie: the Isabella Stewart Gardner robbery is mentioned many times throughout, but is never given a full overview, one suspects that the authors kind of expect you to know the details of it which, if one is an art/art crime nerd such as myself this may apply, but probably not to most). However, the authors do have some interesting insights and the interviews and quotes from the perpetrators themselves are a real treat to read. Plus, the style is not too dry nor too technical. It's a collaboration between a journalist and a museum security expert, and the play off each other well. Not the most compelling art crime book you'll pick up, but worth a read anyway.

Artguy says

I don't know why I have been obsessed with reading about art thefts. Don't get the wrong idea-- I am not planning a major heist! However, I do find it intriguing, a bit like my fascination with being stranded alone on an island.

This book focuses on Rembrandt paintings and etchings that have been stolen over the years. Sprinkled in it are tales from the life of Rembrandt himself, which were some of my favorite portions of the book. Even so, there are some interesting tales of criminals and how they pulled off the job. Without giving away too much, here is what I learned:

1. It is one thing to steal art, it is quite another thing to sell it. Many robbers ended up trying to return the work to avoid long jail sentences.
 2. Most art thieves know nothing about art. One even stored multi-million dollar paintings in a barn for years.
 3. Forged etchings of Rembrandt are far more common and nearly impossible to detect. Beware.
-

Constance says

This book is such a disappointment. It should have been a can't-put-down sort of book: it has true crime, exotic locales, master criminals -- and I was bored to tears. I can't quite pin down why. Somehow, the writing was tedious. Read for the information. Don't read it to be enthralled.

Lance Charnes says

In 2005, Anthony Amore took on the second least desirable job in the museum world: security director at Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. (Least desirable: being security director in 1990 when thieves stole 13 artworks from the museum, at \$350 million the single largest heist in American history.) As part of his effort to try to recover the stolen paintings, he began to study a very narrow niche of the art-crime world - thefts of Rembrandts. *Stealing Rembrandts* is the result of his homework.

ISGM lost three of the Dutch master's works, which joined in limbo the other 94 Rembrandts that have gone missing worldwide. Mr. van Rijn's daubs have been stolen for decades, by a wide range of personalities for

the whole gamut of reasons. The author recounts some of the more interesting cases in this book. In each instance, he gives us some background on the stolen goods (Rembrandt's life was a rags-to-riches-to-rags tale, and he created several of the stolen paintings at key points in his career), then describes the theft, the players involved in both the crime and the investigation, and how everything turned out in the end. Along the way, you'll learn a good deal about the realities of the stolen-art market, museum security, and what really happens when you stash an Old Master in the attic.

Amore is a security guy, not an art guy. When he writes about the paintings themselves, he comes at it from the viewpoint of an educated layman; no highfalutin' MFA-speak for him. The rest of the text is equally plainspoken. The descriptions of the robberies are straightforward and easy to follow. His co-author, Tom Mashberg, was an investigative reporter for the *Boston Herald*, and it shows: each chapter reads like a newspaper feature.

This is also this book's major (though survivable) shortfall. The stories are interesting enough, but they're told without the sense of drama and character that made *Hot Art: Chasing Thieves and Detectives Through the Secret World of Stolen Art* read like a detective novel. This may or may not appeal depending on whether you like your true-crime tales hot or cool.

The art-crime books that work best for me are the ones that feature a strong central character or characters who can bridge the inherently episodic nature of the narratives. That's not the case here. What you get is a series of short stories loosely tied together by the artist whose works are disappearing into the night. While this book isn't about the author (unlike, say, *Priceless: How I Went Undercover to Rescue the World's Stolen Treasures*), Amore may have been a bit too thorough in removing himself from the narrative. Again, you'll have to decide whether this bothers you.

About the only other complaint I have is about the miserably small selection of photos. I've said it before, but I'll repeat: in any book about art, we need to *see* the art.

Stealing Rembrandts is a solid journalistic exploration of art theft as it really is. If you're into real-life, big-ticket thievery, this book delivers plenty. Expect "interesting" rather than "exciting" and you won't be disappointed.

Rick F. says

"A spellbinding journey into the high-stakes world of art theft

"Today, art theft is one of the most profitable criminal enterprises in the world, exceeding \$6 billion in losses to galleries and art collectors annually. And the masterpieces of Rembrandt van Rijn are some of the most frequently targeted."

A truly thrilling and extremely fascinating foray into a much under-appreciated issue- the theft of priceless paintings. Mr. Amore- who certainly knows from what he writes about- has managed to make a topic which should receive more attention, into a book that this reviewer feels will indeed bring to light this most terrible of crimes.

The writing style is both informative and gripping, full of fascinating events and characters (real life characters!) - handled in such a way as to make this superb book read as much like a thriller as the sadly-

non-fiction work it is. Mr. Amore's section on the thefts at the Isabelle Stuart Gardner Museum in Boston is just one breath-taking part of a MUST READ book

HIGHEST RECCOMENDATION- OFFICIAL JAMES MASON COMMUNITY BOOK CLUB MUST READ

RICK FRIEDMAN
FOUNDER
THE JAMES MASON COMMUNITY BOOK CLUB

Marion says

Co-authored by the director of security at the Isabella Stewart Museum (scene of a still-unsolved, infamous art theft in 1990) in Boston and an investigative reporter, this book focuses mostly on Rembrandt thefts around the world which HAVE been solved. However, it stresses the number of unsolved thefts. It is really a plea to thieves that stealing famous Rembrandts rarely results in big bucks and often badly damages priceless paintings, etchings etc. due to mishandling and poor/humid storage conditions outside museum or home settings. I agree with the authors' assessment that "the art theft book" is now a genre unto itself. I have a number of them on my shelves and found this one to be an excellent addition. The book, together with its footnotes and bibliography, offer further reading and movie rental ideas. A list of known Rembrandt thefts is also included in the back. A shocking piece of reporting that I had not known previously: in the 1960s and 70s, prisoners got work-release in art museum basements - where some of them learned the intricacies of "the system" and quite easily stole from treasures not being displayed.

JP says

Stealing Rembrandts was a fun book that kept me interested, but had some pretty massive holes that I didn't expect. First, it's basically one big warning to would-be thieves that crime doesn't pay. Amore is obsessed with pointing out that most people who steal artwork don't have any idea what to do with it, and so they end up just holding onto or destroying any art that they're not caught with. If they're caught, they do to jail. I know Rembrandts weren't the target, and this book is alllll about the Rembrandts, but this "crime doesn't pay... EVER" narrative doesn't really hold much weight for me coming from the security adviser of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, home of one of (if not the single) largest art heists in American history. (That art still hasn't been recovered 25 years later, and most believe it's already made its way around to other owners on the black market).

Amore points out that most of what we think we know about art crime - namely, that there are evil supervillains out there who have hit lists of art that they hire professional thieves to steal - is a ruse. It's created by the media in movies like The Thomas Crowne Affair or television shows like White Collar. Experts in the phenomenon of Art Crime do not all agree with Amore, and though he purposefully picked thefts that resulted in the criminals' capture or in damage to the art to prove a point, Art Crime, by John Conklin, shows a much more comprehensive breakdown of how art crime can play out... Supervillain and super thieves and all.

It's a good beach read. Fun, fast, and interesting. What it isn't is an academic exploration of art theft or of the totality of Rembrandt crimes (that second point is more than okay.. Rembrandts have been the number one target of theft in the last 2 centuries).

Recommended, for sure, but only if you're looking for light fare.

Cynthia says

This is such a rich subject that it was disappointing how flat and dull this book was. Yes, yes, I know it was written by a security expert and not a New Yorker writer but ... There is very little compelling history of the artwork itself and the description of the many thefts (Rembrandt works are apparently stolen more than any other works of art, because there are so many of them and because they have such a high value) is laid out in a kind of scattershot way that makes it hard to follow and almost impossible to care about. There's another book about art theft by the FBI's Robert Wittman, who is apparently a legend in the art investigation business. Amore even refers to it several times. If you had to choose between the two books, Wittman's book is much much more compelling and a great read. This one? It's fine but ... hard to recommend.
