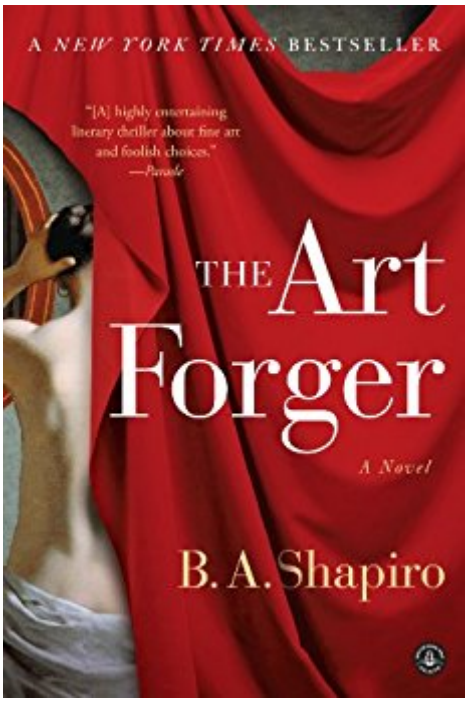
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The Art Forger: A Novel



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Synopsis

Almost twenty-five years after the infamous art heist at the Isabella Stewart Gardner MuseumÃ¢â ¬â •still the largest unsolved art theft in historyÃ¢â ¬â •one of the stolen Degas paintings is delivered to the Boston studio of a young artist. Claire Roth has entered into a Faustian bargain with a powerful gallery owner by agreeing to forge the Degas in exchange for a one-woman show in his renowned gallery. But as she begins her work, she starts to suspect that this long-missing masterpieceÃ¢â ¬â •the very one that had been hanging at the Gardner for one hundred yearsÃ¢â ¬â •may itself be a forgery. The Art Forger is a thrilling novel about seeingÃ¢â ¬â •and not seeingÃ¢â ¬â •the secrets that lie beneath the canvas.Ã Â

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Customer Reviews

What’s the difference between a reproduction and a forgery? Sounds simple, but the "The Art Forger" takes us deeper into the distinction than we maybe want to go. See, I have a degree in Fine Arts, but I never had the inclination (or, I suspect, the talent) for painting in oil so much of what’s

presented here is a part of my education that I didn’t get. Neither did I ever get into the world of exhibits, collecting, buying and selling, museum competition, or the underworld of fake art, let along theft.Even if you’re one of the "I don’t know much about art but I know what I like" folks, this book will take you into the artist’s studio with smells of oil, turpentine and even formaldehyde. Yikes! Formaldehyde? Yep, you’ll find out how valuable this is to the art forger, er, reproduction artist.The narrator, Claire Roth, is a gifted artist trying to break into the upper echelons and starting as an accomplished reproduction artist. In trying to help her mentor over a rough spot, she creates a masterpiece for which he takes credit. In trying to clear her name, she just makes it worse and becomes the butt of criticism and hostility. Then the owner of a famous (fictitious, but who cares--it’s just a book) gallery brings her what he claims is an original Degas that was supposedly stolen from Boston’s Belle Stewart Gardner Museum (real) in a burglary that has never been solved (also real.) He says that because Claire is a renowned expert of the work of Edgar Degas he wants her to reproduce it for a mysterious client. Stop right here--you gotta read the book to find out who winds up in prison, how the FBI gets involved, and more.No violence, no car chases or explosions, but enough intrigue to make up for the lack of gore.What if the painting Claire is commissioned to reproduce isn’t the genuine Degas supposedly stolen from the museum? How can she tell one way or the other? What can she do? Oh, and there are a couple of interesting subplots if you get tired of reading somewhat tedious descriptions of the many ways of daubing paint on unsuspecting canvas.

The bones of the book are great. An (partially historical) art heist, art forgeries, a lot of history on forgerers and their techniques - all interspersed with a contemporary story of a budding artist, the delightfully scandalous tale of a quirky art afficianado at the turn of the century, and a look at the contemporary Boston art scene. Lots of information, lots of colorful characters, and skillful writing and discussion of art. It reminded me a great deal of The Goldfinch (thought this book is not aiming that high).Some aspects of the book fell flat. There were parts of the book that felt like chick-lit (the sexual descriptions in the romance storyline, the cattiness between female characters, the commentary on the snobbery of fashion, the flamingly stereotyped gayness of the best friend, etc.) that felt like chick-lit and cheapened the overall feel of the book for me. Our heroine made some particularly awful choices, especially in her relationships and I found myself being annoyed by her naivete repeatedly. Her panic attacks seemed overblown. While I liked the idea of Claire’s volunteer job at the juvenile detention center, the actual scenes seemed a bit clunky and didn’t add much to the story other than some clumsy foreshadowing.All in all, I enjoyed this book immensely. The art information was interesting. Trying to figure out both what would happen to Claire and what

happened in Belle's time was enjoyable. The writing is smooth, with lovely descriptions, interesting exploration of relationships, and well-researched historical information. Shapiro is an author I'm going to watch!

I enjoyed THE ART FORGER: A NOVEL by B.A. Shapiro because I couldn't figure out how the story would end. I thought the necessary art history and art technique blended easily into the story, and found the story-behind-the-story with Belle Stewart intriguing, adding depth to the main plot. I didn't think the story ever "took off" in the way some gripping thriller mysteries do, nor did I find a few key actions believable. Those problems were easy enough to ignore though, because the main plot was compelling and the art world fascinating. This is a story that I felt could have been more, but wasn't, and yet was a satisfying, entertaining read.

Yes, there really are artists who copy famous art. This book is partly about a very talented artist who fell into forgery through love. She is hired to copy one of the paintings stolen in 1990 during the Isabella Gardner Stewart Museum heist. Who got the art? No one knows, but B.A. Shapiro has an idea. She writes about the hard work required to forge a painting, about love, and about success.

This was a surprisingly fun book to read. It read quickly and also was able to teach me about art forgery (not that I plan to take it up). I like to learn things painlessly. LOL While the overall ending was a little too neatly tied up, that was ok with me. She writes with a good plot line, the settings were believable (Boston), and her dialogue didn't make me wince. Perhaps my standards are too low? Regardless, it is a book I enjoyed reading and would recommend it to people looking for entertainment and a bit of education.

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