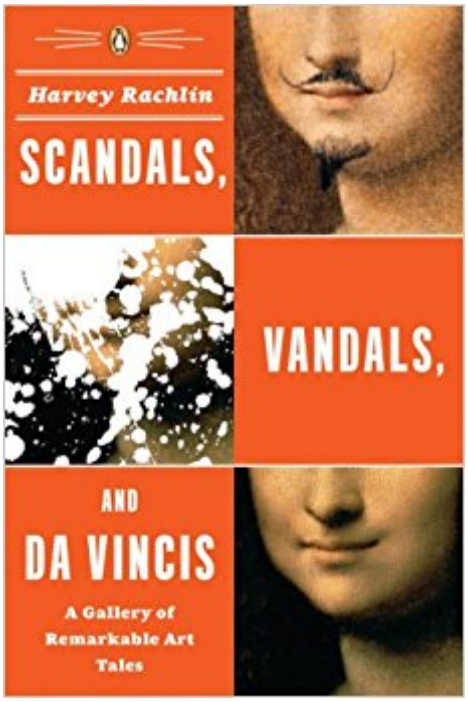
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Scandals, Vandals, And Da Vincis: A Gallery Of Remarkable Art Tales



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Synopsis

The secret histories of the world’s most famous masterpieces Caravaggios, Rembrandts, Monets—the works of immortal artists such as these are indelibly imprinted in the public mind; they are priceless masterpieces whose beauty, artistry, and emotional impact have inspired admiration, awe, and envy through the centuries. Yet behind many of these brilliant paintings and sculptures are fascinating, unique histories. In Scandals, Vandals, and da Vincis, award-winning writer Harvey Rachlin relates in exciting detail how nearly thirty of these works came to be created and how they survived burglary, forgery, revolutions, ransoms, vandals, scandals, religious sects, and shipwrecks to eventually come to their current resting places

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Readers may find an entirely new appreciation for art and its creators after reading Rachlin’s dishy tales of the people behind and beyond 26 famous canvases. Using Caraveggio’s David with the Head of Goliath, Rachlin explores how an artist might "deal on canvas with his own emotional crisis," in this case the years Caravaggio spent as a fugitive following a victorious (but deadly) duel. In A Convalescent, a painting by artist James Tissot, Rachlin sees an artist "unwittingly predicting on canvas the strange circumstances that...befall him many years later," a story of love, death and the supernatural. And using the Mona Lisa, Rachlin deconstructs the perfect crime: the masterpiece’s 1911 heist from the Louvre. The only problem with this fun title are the black and white painting reproductions, which make Rachlin’s frequently hyper-detailed descriptions a bit

frustrating. Still, it’s an entertaining read full of good, gossipy tales for art aficionados or those interested in sounding like one. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Great paintings often have great backstories, and in this lively, gossipy book, prolific Rachlin takes full advantage, amping up the drama in these mostly familiar art controversies. There isn’t much serious criticism here; instead he takes an almost pulp-fictional approach to tales of art theft, vandalism, public trials, and private inspirations. We learn about the burglary of Leonardo’s Mona Lisa from the Louvre in 1911, followed by its bizarre recovery two years later; three separate attacks (by vandals wielding knifes and sulfuric acid) on Rembrandt’s The Night Watch; and the flight of the outlaw Caravaggio and how his troubles might have influenced his David with the Head of Goliath. Best of all, Rachlin follows the line "whatever happened to . . .," as in the case of John Singleton Copley’s Watson and the Shark. The real-life subject of the painting’s depiction of a boy on the verge of having his leg bitten off survived his ordeal and went on to become a Revolutionary War-era American hater and English nobleman, despite his peg leg. Kevin NanceCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

interesting

This is a very nice historical review of a number of historically important works of art and the artists who created them. Most art history books describe the works of art, this tome describes the who, what, when and why of the objet d’arte. Few, when confronted with great art, look beyond the surface. If you want to know why the art was made, or how it cost the artist his life, and twenty-four other dramatic vignettes of historically important masterpieces that few ever knew the story of its creation (I’m not sure if that’s a sentence or not).Scandals, Vandals, and da Vincis: A Gallery of Remarkable Art Tales

Having enjoyed Harvey Rachlin’s other books about the stories behind historical figures and artifacts, I was anxious to get into his latest--about intrigues involving the world’s art masterpieces. I was not disappointed. Rachlin is a tireless collector of historical curiosities, and he has a true storyteller’s knack for ferreting out the most intriguing true tales and turning them into narratives that keep you reading. If you like art, history, mysteries, and you love a good story, check out Scandals, Vandals, and Da Vincis.

As an art lover and historian, I so wanted to like this book, but it was a disappointment. The title was misleading, a marketer’s ploy--these weren’t "remarkable" art tales, a majority were known to me, as they would be to many art lovers, and the tales didn’t reveal many new facts or insights. There were far too many well-known stories-behind-the-paintings, the stories you heard when you took "Art Appreciation 101" at University, and not enough unknown "scandals, vandals" to meet the title’s tease. Nevertheless, I skimmed it cover to cover, but with a space-constrained library, didn’t feel it was a "keeper" so gave it to the neighborhood book sale -- where, I hasten to add, I’m sure it would have been scooped up by someone who would have enjoyed it before passing it on in turn. In short--light reading, and entertaining, but a better title would have been "The Stories Pictures Tell"...or some such.

This book aims to tell intriguing stories "behind" well-known, if not famous paintings, such as Rembrandt’s "Anatomy Lesson". Most of this is rather well-known to art enthusiasts. Those newer to the field will not be stimulated by the pictures themselves, which, in paperback, are about 4" X 6", mostly grainy and in black and white.

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