



The Art Forger: A Novel

By B. A. Shapiro

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Almost twenty-five years after the infamous art heist at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum—still the largest unsolved art theft in history—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 masterpiece—the very one that had been hanging at the Gardner for one hundred years—may itself be a forgery. *The Art Forger* is a thrilling novel about seeing—and not seeing—the secrets that lie beneath the canvas.

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The Art Forger: A Novel By B. A. Shapiro Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Guest Essay by B.A. Shapiro, Author of *The Art Forger*



I'm a cowardly writer. Some writers sit down and begin a novel without knowing where it will end, trusting the process to bring their story to a satisfying conclusion. But not me. I don't have the courage to begin a book until I know there's an end--and a middle too. I need an outline that allows me to believe my idea might be transformed into a successful novel. Some writers need a working title; I need a working plot. Which is why it takes me so damn long to get from that first glimmer of an idea to a complete manuscript.

The Art Forger was no different. The first time I encountered art collector and museum founder Isabella Stewart Gardner in 1983, I fell in love. I wanted to hang out with her, walk lions down Boston streets with her, buy famous paintings, and do all kinds of outrageous things that would scandalize the stuffed shirts around us. But, alas, she died in 1924. I dismissed the idea of a "Belle" novel because she intimidated me--see, more cowardice--but I never forgot her.

Then in 1990, she burst on the scene, or at least her namesake, Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, did, when two men dressed as police officers bound and gagged two guards and stole thirteen pieces of art, including Rembrandt's *Storm on the Sea of Galilee*, Vermeer's *The Concert*, and works by Degas and Manet from the collection. Now, I thought, now I might just be able to make it work.

But despite the media taking the theft international, suspects who ran the gamut from the Mafia to the Vatican, and the lack of any arrests, I just couldn't find my story. What could Belle possibly have to do with a heist seventy years after her death? How could I write a book about a robbery that hadn't been solved? What if it was solved before I was finished--or worse just after I'd completed it--and the real solution was nothing like mine? Cowardly writer that I am, I put the idea back in the drawer.

Nineteen years later, the mystery of the Gardner heist still hadn't been solved, and Belle was still haunting me. I read half a dozen biographies and hundreds of letters, and I scoured the Internet. I was thinking I might do something like Irving Stone or Gore Vidal would, writers whose books I loved, and considered a fictionalized biography. But embracing the entirety of Isabella Gardner's action-packed life was too

daunting--some things never change--so, once again, Belle was shelved.

Around this time I began taking a series of art courses that toured galleries and museums with a well-known artist for a guide. She opened my eyes, not just to the wonder of what we were seeing, but to the complicated worlds of creating, collecting, curating, and selling works of art. I also developed a fascination with art theft and art forgery. Now, I thought, now I really might have my Belle book. So I wrote synopses, created plot charts, developed character sketches, then scratched it all and did it again. I was growing closer, but the pieces weren't all quite there; something was missing: I couldn't see the end.

Simultaneously, I was struggling with writing and wondering if I should just give up the whole endeavor. One day, as I was ruminating on how difficult life was for anyone in the arts and feeling more than a bit sorry for myself, my missing link appeared in the form of a question: What would any of us be willing to do to secure our ambitions? Unknown artists, famous artists, collectors, brokers, and gallery owners? Me? Belle?

So I expanded my cast of characters and gave each one a temptation their egos couldn't resist, including a struggling artist willing to make the ultimate Faustian bargain, and then I added them to the mix of art theft, art forgery, the Gardner Museum heist, and, of course, my buddy Belle. Suddenly, just like the Cowardly Lion, who became brave when he had his medal, I became brave when I had my plot. *The Art Forger* is the result.

Review

Boston Globe's Best Crime Books of 2012
2012 NetGalley Pick
Kobo's Best Fiction Ebooks of 2012

"*The Art Forger* is the real thing." ?**USAToday.com**

"[A] nimble mystery."? ***The New York Times Book Review***

"Gripping." ?***O, The Oprah Magazine***

"[A] highly entertaining literary thriller about fine art and foolish choices." ?***Parade***

"Precise and exciting . . . Readers seeking an engaging novel about artists and art scandals will find "The Art Forger" rewarding for its skillful balance of brisk plotting, significant emotional depth and a multi-layered narration rich with a sense of moral consequence." ?***The Washington Post***

"If *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *The Da Vinci Code* had a love child, this would be it." ?***Elle* (Reader's Panel Reviewer)**

"[Shapiro] has such interesting things to say about authenticity?in both art and love?that her novel becomes

not just emotionally involving but addictive.” *?Entertainment Weekly*

"Ingeniously and skillfully plotted." *?The Huffington Post*

“Warning: Don’t dig into this book if you have something to do . . . An addictive thriller.” *?Redbook*

“An engaging tale about art, cupidity, and a Faustian bargain . . . Shapiro convincingly depicts the rarefied art world that lionizes a chosen few and ignores the talented, scrabbling outsiders on the fringe. Shapiro is adept, too, at showing the white-hot heat of an artist engaged in creating a painting. She knows art history, painting techniques, and how forgers have managed through the centuries to dupe buyers into paying for fakes . . . Inventive and entertaining.” *?The Boston Globe*

“Smart, sexy . . . spellbinding.” *?Redbookmag.com*

“An intelligent, cleverly plotted page-turner.” *?Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“Engaging storytelling. Intelligent entertainment.” *?Kirkus Reviews*

Review

“A clever, twisty novel about art, authenticity, love, and betrayal. B. A. Shapiro knows about Degas, and she knows about art theft and forgery, and she also knows how to tell a gripping story.”

—**Tom Perrotta**

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Robert Marques:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite reserve and reading a guide. Beside you can solve your long lasting problem; you can add your knowledge by the e-book entitled The Art Forger: A Novel. Try to make the book The Art Forger: A Novel as your good friend. It means that it can being your friend when you truly feel alone and beside those of course make you smarter than ever before. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you personally. The book makes you considerably more confidence because you can know every thing by the book. So , we need to make new experience and also knowledge with this book.

Linda Christopher:

This The Art Forger: A Novel is great reserve for you because the content that is certainly full of information for you who have always deal with world and also have to make decision every minute. This kind of book reveal it facts accurately using great organize word or we can claim no rambling sentences inside. So if you are read it hurriedly you can have whole data in it. Doesn't mean it only will give you straight forward sentences but hard core information with attractive delivering sentences. Having The Art Forger: A Novel in your hand like having the world in your arm, details in it is not ridiculous just one. We can say that no book that offer you world within ten or fifteen tiny right but this e-book already do that. So , this is good reading book. Hi Mr. and Mrs. busy do you still doubt which?

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