

**ART THEFT AND FORGERY
INVESTIGATION**

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For Gail
Confirmatio, fides, et amor.

PREFACE

“Boston Bandits Bag Vermeer, 3 Rembrandts.” “Manor House Burgled in Sussex.” “Picasso Snatched Off Gallery Wall.” Thirty years ago, we rarely saw headlines like these. Now they are common.

These news reports represent a crime epidemic of about three decades duration. Therefore—so I thought—there should be a book instructing professional criminal investigators about art crime. To my surprise, I could not find one, and so I wrote this manual.

Half a century ago, writing a book about art crime would have been like writing one about cattle rustling. For, of course, different reasons, neither was a serious social or economic problem at that time in history. With respect to art crime, that situation has changed.

Art and collectible theft are now at least among the top 10 in types of property stolen. This does not even consider the problem of fraud and forgery, which are more difficult to quantify but are generally considered to involve a much greater monetary value than robbery and burglary put together.

To make matters worse, over a million Boston area school children and college students have, since 1990, been required to travel a great distance if they want to see a Vermeer painting. Boston’s stolen Vermeer is in this way symbolic of a condition that has infected societies and cultural-educational environments all over the world.

If we accept the proposition that art crime has become a significant problem today, the basic question about why this manual is needed or even helpful is still not answered. In other words, can an investigator with experience with thefts and frauds investigate an art theft or art fraud just as well?

The differences between various types of thefts and fraud investigations depend on the type of victim and the type of tangible or intangible property involved. Banks, warehouses, automobiles, and negotiable instruments are all different types of victims and property. Theft or fraud involving them requires different investigative approaches for a reasonable chance of success. Criminal investigators have known this for a long time.

Then, it follows, that we criminal investigators should take some kind of different approach to art and rare collectible theft and fraud, which involves museums, art galleries, collectors, and a broad range of collectibles themselves. These are unique victim and property types about which most of us know little. This manual will, I hope, help change that and make you aware of investigative methods that will significantly improve your rate of success in the art crime field.

Almost all of the knights of modern society have been trying to slay art crime dragons of growing strength, power, and numbers with weapons unsuited to the task. I hope this book will contribute to the goal of arming criminal investigators with tools and weapons that are suitable and effective against art theft and forgery.

I have tried to put everything I have learned in over 25 years into this manual, because, due to the nature of criminal investigation, I know that it will still not be enough on many occasions. On the other hand, I believe that most of your questions about art crime will be answered. I also believe that the tips, techniques, and ideas set forth in this manual will help diminish the level of frustration experienced by criminal investigators required to handle the growing number and magnitude of art crimes.

The structure of this manual is simple: The first part both guides the reader in the use of it and describes the art world environment. The second part deals with your interaction with the victim, the third with the offender, and the fourth with specialized art crime solution techniques. A glossary and bibliography, both fiction and nonfiction, are also included.

Homicide investigators around the world have had their own professional specialty for years. A similar specialty needs to develop for art crime.

R.E.S.

WITH GRATITUDE

If this piece of work could be judged by the quality of the people listed below, instead of by my far from perfect efforts, there could be no doubt as to the superlative level of approval it would universally enjoy. To not acknowledge these special people would be an odious act of subterfuge, because you simply would not be holding this manual in your hands without their collective encouragement, support, guidance, assistance, caring, patience, incubational and direct inspiration, insight, friendship, and plain old fashioned hard work.

That is what they did. This is who they are: John Bonk, Bruce Borland, Park Brown, Margot Dennedy, Jerry Dillon, Josette Faingold, Josh Farlow, Chris Fikaris, the late Don Fisher, Sam Goodyear, Jack Heinz, Charles Hill, Butch Hubbard, Kevin Illia, the late Fred Inbau, Steve Keller, The Lake Forest Public Library Staff, Don Mason, Tom McShane, Harriet Milstein, Maurice Pickard, Chuck Richmond, Bob Rutledge, Jay Saffarzadeh, Francine Sanders, Judy Saner, Jon Sazonoff, Chuck Sennewald, Andy Spiel, Gail Spiel, Jenny Spiel, the late Marie Spiel, Mike Thomas, Jim Thompson, Bob Volpe, Jon Waltz, Tricia Worthan, Mike Wynne, and last, but very, very far from least, Camille Ziccardi.

CARTOONS AND GRAPHICS

The cartoons in this manual are provided by the imagination and skill of Sam Goodyear, and the graphic designs are a result of the talents of Chris Fikaris and Tricia Worthan.

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