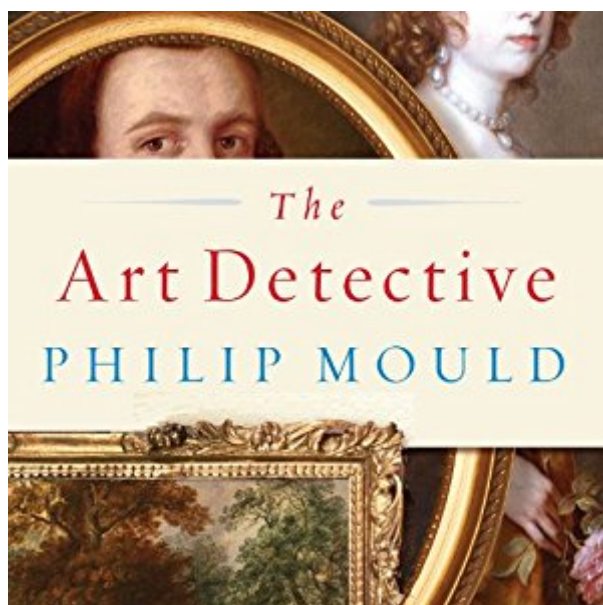


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The Art Detective: Fakes, Frauds, And Finds And The Search For Lost Treasures



Synopsis

What separates a masterpiece from a piece of junk? Thanks to the BBC's Antiques Roadshow and its American spin-off, everyone is searching garage sales and hunting online for hidden gems, wondering whether their attics contain trash or treasures. In *The Art Detective*, Philip Mould, one of the world's foremost authorities on British portraiture and an irreverent and delightful expert for the Roadshow, serves up his secrets and his best stories, blending the technical details of art detection and restoration with juicy tales peopled by a range of eccentric collectors, scholars, forgers, and opportunities. Each chapter focuses on one particular painting and the mystery that surrounds it. Mould is our trusty detective, tracking down clues, uncovering human foibles, and following hunches until the truth is revealed. Mould is known for his ability to crack the toughest puzzles, and whether he's writing about a fake Norman Rockwell, a hidden Rembrandt, or a lost Gainsborough, he brings both the art and the adventure to life. *The Art Detective* is memoir, mystery, art history, and brilliant yarn all rolled into one.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'm not an art connoisseur by any stretch, although I do have my tastes and don't mind the occasional museum stroll. I love history and I love a good story. When you combine art, history and terrific storytelling, you come out with a book like *"The Art Detectives"* by Philip Mould. The book is structured around 6 specific paintings, and the mysteries that surround/surrounded them. Mould is a fantastic writer. He's clear, concise and sometimes poetic. It's an odd thing to focus on when considering a work of non-fiction, but his writing is as expressive and pronounced as anything I've

read recently. Mould avoids the pretension, condescension and patronizing tone that one might expect from a book on high art. And surprisingly, each story is a strong tale in and of itself. At their best, they are very personal, human and touching. At their worst, they're simply good mysteries that Mould unravels layer-by-layer with a blending of personal insight, relevant experiences, historical background and significance. And it all flows beautifully through his solid prose and storytelling abilities. The strongest tale is of Mould's meetings with an eccentric hoarder named Earle Newton. The story ranges from their first interactions, to their first and subsequent visits. Newton is more of an "amasser" than he is a collector, and the real heart of the narrative is Newton's wackiness and the impact of his hoarding on his family. Family is also at the heart of a story that centers on a well known art deception (and recovery) of a Norman Rockwell painting. After subtle clues circulate around Rockwell's "Break Home Ties", two brothers hunt for the truth of whether their father owned a real Rockwell, and whether or not he knew it was a fake.

Philip Mould takes a wonderfully interesting look at how art restoration works. But, in looking at restoration of existing paintings, he also delves into how he, as a gallery owner, along with his team, find work that has remained under-valued or unvalued for centuries. And then how that piece, now restored by Mould's experts, ventures back into the art world in renewed glory. Mould, an appraiser for the BBC's "Antique Roadshow", is also an owner of a gallery in London which specialises in antique portraits. As an aside, I have visited the gallery in the past to see his collection but did not know that this book was written by the gallery's owner until I read the credits. As a book reviewer, I have no reason to falsely rave about his book, even though I have enjoyed visiting his gallery. I suppose that being a fan of antique portraits gave me the impetus to read and review the book, however. Mould takes five or so examples of "found" paintings - one from his "Antique Roadshow" - and writes how instinct and education about a painter, his other work, the painting's subject's history, and other "intangibles" go into Mould and his staff taking on an often dirty and undistinguished painting on the chance that the painting is "the real thing" - a real Rembrandt, a real Homer Winslow, etc. Probably the most interesting story was that of a Norman Rockwell painting on display at the Rockwell Museum in Massachusetts that...wasn't. Wasn't the "real" Rockwell painting, but rather one done by a disciple of Rockwell, who copied the original for reasons sort of murky, and donated to the museum. The "real" Rockwell was found by the copier's sons after his death and turned over to the museum. The other examples Mould cites are almost as interesting.

Considering that I have just finished my series of posts on Portraits as Art Market Currency, I think it

is rather fitting that I post a review of a book about the exploits of a British portrait dealer - a book that I absolutely loved reading and want to encourage everyone else to read. Seeking out works of art that he suspects have hidden secrets has taken world renowned portrait expert and art world super sleuth Philip Mould OBE all over the world on exciting journeys of discovery and enlightenment. His latest book titled 'The Art Detective: Fakes, Frauds, and Finds and the Search for Lost Treasures' is a collection of case histories that provide a fascinating insight into the sleuthing escapades of the art world's answer to Sherlock Holmes. From the identification of a long lost Winslow Homer recovered from a rubbish dump, to the discovery of an amazing early work by Gainsborough that was misattributed to a "follower of Jacob van Ruisdael", Mould's true tales of art world investigation introduce the reader to a world of kookie characters and perturbing mysteries. If you are a fan of the UK Antiques Roadshow then you have probably seen Mould giving valuations to hopeful visitors and would be aware of his position as a valuer of fine art. Die hard Antiques Roadshow fans will also know that Mould gave the first one million pound valuation for a design model of Antony Gormley's Angel of the North sculpture which appeared on the 16 November 2008 episode. What you perhaps didn't know about Mould is that he has made his mark on art history by breathing new life into damaged or misidentified portraits. In the hands of Mould and his team, paintings that once languished in obscurity are given the artistic and historical recognition they deserve.

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