



by Stefan Koldehoff &
Tobias Timm

Galiani Berlin

March 2020 / 328pp

Non-Fiction



The Goethe-Institut
supported the English
translation of this book.

Art and Crime

Kunst und Verbrechen

review

Art and Crime shines a light onto the extensive range of crimes linked to the art world and reveals how the rich use art to get richer.

Few people now collect art due to a love of art for its own sake, being driven instead by the desire to turn a fast profit. Art crime is consequently rife, and Stefan Koldehoff and Tobias Timm's latest book is a fascinating catalogue of the many and varied forms these crimes can take. Art theft is perhaps the most fundamental such crime and the book highlights some high-profile examples, including the theft of the Mona Lisa in 1911 (an inside job), the theft of a painting by Munch in 2004 (armed robbers) and that of a Turner from a poorly secured gallery in Frankfurt in 1994. Other artworks are stolen for their raw materials, including a gold coin from the Bode Museum in Berlin and two bronzes by Henry Moore.

The book examines the disappearance of works of art during times of political upheaval. Over the years, certain artists or works of art have been deemed unacceptable by a given regime, such as the Russian Avant Garde under Stalin or what the Nazis designated 'Degenerate Art'. As a consequence, countless works have been smuggled out of their country of origin and have become almost impossible to trace, leaving the door open for forgeries. The authors include a chapter on smuggling and the illegal acquisition of antiquities, using the example of the Getty museum, which was found to have stolen goods on display and was forced to return them to the country from which they were taken.

Money laundering is rife in the art world, with drug traffickers and weapons dealers gravitating towards art deals because of the huge amounts of cash involved. Many sales are also secret and thus completely unregulated. The book exposes the role of 'dark rooms' in facilitating shady art deals. Freeport, near Singapore airport, is one such example: a purpose-built warehouse that is maintained at an optimum temperature and has private conversation rooms and X-ray security for packaging goods, and is used to facilitate deals on which no taxes are payable.

Art and Crime is a well-researched, high-quality art history book that will appeal both to art aficionados and to readers with an interest in the fascinating and multifaceted world of art crime.

about the authors

Stefan Koldehoff and **Tobias Timm** previously collaborated on a book about the Beltracchi case called *Falsche Bilder, echtes Geld* ('Fake Art, Real Money'), which won the Prix Annette Giacometti and the Otto Brenner prize. **Koldehoff**, born in 1967, is culture editor at Deutschlandfunk and writes for *DIE ZEIT* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, among others. In 2008, he won the puk journalism award. **Timm**, born in Munich in 1975, studied urban ethnology, history and cultural studies in Berlin and New York. As editor for *DIE ZEIT Feuilleton* he writes about art, architecture and the art market from his home in Berlin. He previously wrote for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

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