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The Man Who Made Vermeers: Unvarnishing The Legend Of Master Forger Han Van Meegeren



Synopsis

It's a story that made Dutch painter Han van Meegeren famous worldwide when it broke at the end of World War II: a lifetime of disappointment drove him to forge Vermeers, one of which he sold to Hermann Goering, making a mockery of the Nazis. And it's a story that's been believed ever since. Too bad it just isn't true. Jonathan Lopez has done what no other writer could--tracking down primary sources in four countries and five languages to tell for the first time the real story of the world's most famous forger. Neither unappreciated artist nor antifascist hero, Van Meegeren emerges in *The Man Who Made Vermeers* as an ingenious, dyed-in-the-wool crook--a talented Mr. Ripley armed with a paintbrush, who worked virtually his entire adult life making and selling fake Old Masters. Drawing upon extensive interviews with descendents of Van Meegeren's partners in crime, Lopez also explores the networks of illicit commerce that operated across Europe between the wars. Not only was Van Meegeren a key player in that high-stakes game during the 1920s, landing fakes with powerful dealers and famous collectors such as Andrew Mellon (including two pseudo-Vermeers that Mellon donated to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.), but the forger and his associates later offered a case study in wartime opportunism as they cashed in on the Nazi occupation. *The Man Who Made Vermeers* is a long-overdue unvarnishing of Van Meegeren's legend and a deliciously detailed story of deceit in the art world. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

"The Man Who Made Vermeers" tells the story of Dutch art forger Han van Meegeren in greater

detail, with deeper insight, and providing a more compelling sense of historical context than any other treatment I have seen of this subject. The author, Jonathan Lopez, is an elegant prose stylist, and he manages to synthesize an extraordinary amount of original research into a tight and extremely entertaining narrative that combines elements of a real-life mystery story with a wide range of thought-provoking ideas. At the heart of "The Man Who Made Vermeers" is the notion that forgeries are always in some way "about" the way the present looks at the past. In the case of Van Meegeren, who was an ardent fascist sympathizer, it seems that the forger incorporated, either consciously or unconsciously, the visual repertoire of Nazi culture into the fake Vermeers that he created from 1936 onwards, after his visit to the Berlin summer Olympics. (He had faked other Vermeers in a more 1920s-influenced style before that.) In particular Lopez's discussion of the effect of Nazi Volksgeist painting on these post-1936 "Vermeers" is a tour de force - completely riveting to read and extremely convincing. The way that he ties Van Meegeren's practice as a forger to larger questions of fascist ideology is also quite impressive. In general, the author's understanding of the historical and culture trends of the era is very solid, as is his knowledge of Dutch art history and of the history of Holland in general (According to the information in the back of the book, he apparently also writes in Dutch, so maybe he is of partly Dutch background.) As a work of narrative story telling, "The Man Who Vermeers" holds together beautifully.

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