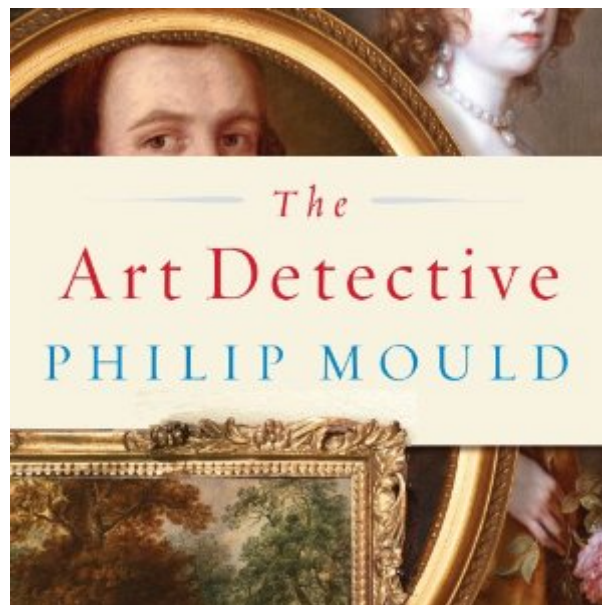




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The Art Detective: Fakes, Frauds, And Finds And The Search For Lost Treasures



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

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. Each is a story in-and-of-itself, and most end conclusively. The last painting in the book, that of a Winslow Homer, "found" in Ireland of all places, has been the subject of ownership dispute which have not been worked out yet. Mould's book is a wonderful read for those interested in art history and in art restoration. Some of the paintings found did not need massive restoration but a few did and Mould recounts the intricacies of physical restoration. Not a long book, Mould makes the most of his subject with descriptions and interviews with his fellow art historians and sellers.

“The Art Detective” by Philip Mould is a fascinating, entertaining, insightful look into the world of art galleries, discovery, restoration, dealing, collecting, and, to some extent, the creative process. Each of the six chapters is a well-written account focusing on the author's own adventure involving the discovery of an important work of art: a hoard of old British portraits in Vermont, a Gainsborough, a Norman Rockwell, a Rembrandt, a portrait of Queen Elizabeth I (and another of Henry VIII's brother, Arthur), and a Winslow Homer watercolor. Without revealing “spoilers”, the text covers the business aspects of dealing in masterpieces far beyond a purely financial perspective: it also addresses the issues of fakes and forgeries, theft, auctions, and the personalities and relationships of collectors, dealers, historians, art subjects, and artists themselves. Mr. Mould recognizes, “Great artists are also risk takers; they constantly push the boundaries of illusion, like ambitious magicians” (page 61). The text is greatly enhanced by two sections of carefully chosen and well-reproduced photographs -- about 35 pictures in all -- that really bring the very visual subject of this book to life. The index is also helpful. As usual,

Iâ€™m pointing out a few (specifically five, primarily typographical / grammatical) things that could be "corrected" in future editions: Page 86: In a sentence that reads, "An intern at the auction house, despite been given a fax", maybe "been" should be changed to "being"? This could just be a difference in American / British English usage. After all, it is said that Britain and America are "two nations divided by a common language". Page 109: For readability, the first sentence of the paragraph beginning with "When Rockwell arrived here in 1939" could have its punctuation modified: maybe move the closing dash after the italicized "Saturday Evening Post", and change the current closing dash to a colon. Page 165: A sentence that recounts dialogue by Ernst van de Wetering begins with, "But during the forty years of my life between 1948 and 1998", it seems "forty" should be changed to "fifty" (or either change 1948 to 1958, OR 1998 to 1988). Pages 194 / 195: Discussion of a portrait being offered by Sotheby's with an estimate of between £700,000 and £1 million (as noted on page 196), is prefaced by Mr. Mould's recollection of having seen the same painting two years earlier for sale by Christie's South Kensington, which he seems to have purchased and re-sold; on page 194 the Christie's estimate is stated as £6,000 to £8,000, but on page 195 the author expresses being "very pleased when it was knocked down to me for £43,000". Maybe I'm just confused, but there may be a misplaced comma or decimal point in there somewhere. Page 207: In a sentence that begins with "Henry VIII was briefly succeed by his son," it seems as if "succeed" should perhaps be changed to "succeeded". Anyway, I highly recommend this thoroughly enjoyable book written by someone who clearly loves his work. His enthusiasm is communicated in a way that makes for riveting reading.

Philip Mould, one of the engaging intrepid experts on Antique Roadshow UK, gives the reader a short, intriguing book of art restoration and art re-discovery centered on his own experiences as a London based art dealer of English portraits. His six stories deal with Thomas Gainsborough, Rembrandt, Winslow Homer, a suspect portrait of Elizabeth I, his encounter with an eccentric New England collector/hoarder and a questionable painting by Norman Rockwell. Charged with the

excitement of the chase, Mould, a mystery writer at heart, builds the stories on biographical insight, pace, his own expertise, his contacts in the art world, occasionally using the argot of the antiques world (dendrochronology), his extensive English lexicon (hoick, tronie, boffin, etc.) and the inclusion of superb color photographs of the paintings he writes about. I enjoyed every page of this wonderful book.

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