



THE MUSEUM OF LOST ART

NOAH CHARNEY

PHAIDON

Imagine a Museum of Lost Art. It would contain more masterpieces than all the world's existing museums combined. From ancient sculptures of Athens and Rome to icons and paintings erased by the Reformation, from artworks destroyed by the Nazis to those looted and smashed by ISIS, a Museum of Lost Art would provide a cutting reminder of the fragility of the world's treasures.

The Museum of Lost Art examines the adventures and misadventures of art lost, but also sometimes found. The sparkling gold Byzantine mosaics in Istanbul's Hagia Sophia were concealed for 400 years under whitewash before being revealed again in 1934. Missing works by Goya, Picasso and Malevich have been discovered beneath later over-painting, by virtue of X-ray and other technologies. And a canvas by Willem de Kooning, stolen from a museum gallery, was rediscovered in 2017, having hung on the wall of a suburban bedroom for more than thirty years. These and other finds offer hope that all is not necessarily lost.

In this book, art historian and art crime expert Noah Charney brings back to life a selection of lost artworks and some that have been found again, each with its story to tell. Welcome to the Museum of Lost Art.



THE MUSEUM OF LOST ART

Bib.

Item.....

Barcode.....

Call no.

.....

.....

Date

**THE
MUSEUM
OF
LOST
ART**



INTRODUCTION:	6
A MUSEUM OF LOST ART	
THEFT	20
WAR	46
ACCIDENT	78
ICONOCLASM & VANDALISM	98
ACTS OF GOD	128
TEMPORAL WORKS	156
DESTROYED BY OWNER	178
BURIED & EXHUMED	210
LOST, OR NEVER WAS?	244
CONCLUSION:	268
LOST IS JUST ANOTHER WORD FOR WAITING TO BE FOUND	
NOTES & INDEX	282

INTRODUCTION

A MUSEUM OF LOST ART

Imagine a Museum of Lost Art. It would contain more masterpieces than all the world's museums combined. From the treasures of Rome to the library of Alexandria, from the religious art smashed in the Reformation to the masterpieces taken in the Gardner heist, from the looting of the Iraq Museum and hundreds of thousands of archaeological sites to the ancient structures and statues smashed by ISIS, from the hundreds of thousands of treasures seized by the Nazis to the millions of objects stolen, hidden or destroyed throughout the modern era and never found, a Museum of Lost Art provides a cutting reminder of the fragility of the world's treasures. Many of humanity's greatest artworks have been lost to theft, vandalism, iconoclasm, misfortune, and wilful or inadvertent destruction. Still more have disappeared, at the mercy of thieves, with only a sliver eventually recovered, often after dramatic investigations. It is important to study what has been lost and why, to understand how art can best be preserved in the future, to appreciate what has survived, and just how delicate is that miraculous fraction of mankind's creative history that has endured for centuries or even millennia. It is important, also, to recognize that the art blessed with survival is not necessarily the art that was most important or influential when it was first displayed. Just because an object had the bad luck to have been lost or destroyed, by man or by nature, does not mean its place in history was insignificant.

For most artists of the pre-modern era (prior to the Industrial Revolution, around 1750), only a fraction of their known oeuvre is extant, its location known. For instance, around one-third of the roughly fifteen paintings by Leonardo da Vinci that are referred to in contemporary and later written sources is accounted for; at least eight works are lost. Caravaggio painted some forty works for which we have any written evidence (as with Leonardo, the number varies among different scholars), with an uncertain number lost, ranging from eight to 115.¹

Scholars know of many other lost works by masters such as the Athenian sculptor Phidias, the Venetian painter Giorgione and the German artist Dürer: art destroyed, stolen or simply

missing. Collected, these lost works comprise a compelling negative-space history of art, for these works were as renowned in their time as their extant counterparts. Had it survived, Leonardo's monumental sculpture *Sforza Horse* would be as important as the *Mona Lisa*; Rogier van der Weyden's *Justice of Trajan and Herkinbald* was more famous during his lifetime than his iconic *Deposition*, now at the Prado in Madrid; Picasso's burned *Portrait of Dora Maar* would hang proudly beside his *Portrait of Marie-Thérèse Walter*; and the original bronze version of *Laocöon and His Sons* would outshine the Roman marble copy that holds pride of place in the Vatican Museums. Many lost works were more important and celebrated than those that have survived, but our understanding of art is skewed, inevitably, towards works that can be seen, that have outlived the numberless dangers that can befall a work of art that is often as brittle as a piece of paper. This book seeks to correct this prejudice in favour of the survivors and to resurrect and preserve the memory of the lost.

The lost works here were chosen not only because they are high-profile, feature the lost (or nearly lost) artworks of famous masters, and have fascinating stories populated with bizarre characters and plot twists. The works selected also offer an alternative history of art. Most art history today uses a core of some two-hundred or so extant historic works, illustrated and discussed over and over again. But there are lost works that, while they existed, were as important and praised as these, if not more so. The chapters to follow tell not only the stories of how many great works were lost, but also the stories behind the works themselves, what we can learn from them and how they enrich our understanding of the history of art.

A MASTERPIECE GOES UP IN FLAMES

Of all the lost art that was more important culturally, historically and in terms of influence than works by the same artist that have survived, foremost might be Rogier van der Weyden's fire-consumed paintings for the Golden Chamber of Brussels Town Hall.

We know precious little about the life of Rogier van der Weyden, one of the greatest and most influential painters of mid-fifteenth-century Renaissance Flanders. The archives of Rogier's native city of Tournai were completely destroyed during the Second World War and, with them, the secrets of the painter's early life and work. Some archival material had been partially transcribed in the nineteenth century, and it is from these fragments that we know as much as we do about the man called Maistre Rogier de le Pasture, who would later change his name to the more Dutch Rogier van der Weyden.

During Rogier's lifetime, his most famous and important work was a series of four colossal paintings, each on the theme of justice, commissioned for the Gulden Camere (Golden Chamber) of Brussels Town Hall. Unusually, two of the four works on panel, both dated to 1439, were signed – a convention that was not regular for painters until the nineteenth century, but which Rogier and his contemporary, Jan van Eyck, practised on occasion). The other two panels were probably painted later, but all were complete and in place by 1450. The bombardment of Brussels by French troops on 13–15 August 1695, during the Nine Years' War (1688–97), and the subsequent fire that raged through the city obliterated all four of them (along with a third of the city's buildings), and they survive only in numerous descriptions by visitors who admired them (including Albrecht Dürer, who in 1520 made a special point of visiting the chamber to see them), as well as several copies in drawings, paintings and tapestry. This tapestry from 1459 represents the most intact and complete indication of how the paintings looked, even including inscriptions along the edges of the tapestry that are thought to have originally been inscribed on the framing of the panels.

The paintings were each around 3.5 metres (12 ft) high, and the four spanned some 10.5 metres (35 ft) across – enormous



Rogier van der Weyden, *Justice of Trajan and Herkinblad*, c.1459, tapestry, 430 × 864 cm (14 ft 1¹/₄ in × 28 ft 4 in), Bernisches Historisches Museum, Bern





Rogier van der Weyden, *Deposition*, 1435, oil on panel, 220 × 262 cm (6 ft 10 in × 8 ft 7 in), Museo del Prado, Madrid

for panel paintings, a size to rival frescoes. Their subjects were meant to provide a moral example to the judges of the Golden Chamber, demonstrating the exemplary moderation of justice by the Roman emperor Trajan and the rather more summary version carried out by the mythical Duke Herkinbald of Brabant. Paintings of famous scenes of justice being fairly meted out in Flemish town halls were popular at the time, and other renowned examples have survived: Dirk Bouts decorated the town hall of Louvain with *Justice of Emperor Otto III* (c.1473–75), and Gerard David's *Justice of Cambyses* (1498) – a particularly gruesome scene of the live flaying of a corrupt judge – looked down on the chamber of the aldermen in Bruges Town Hall.

The first panel of Rogier's *Justice Cycle* showed the emperor Trajan, mounted on a steed and setting off to battle the Dacians, stopped by a peasant woman who demanded justice, for one of Trajan's soldiers had murdered her son. As we 'read' the painting chronologically, moving from left to right, we see the murderer beheaded, while Trajan and his nobles look on (as does an anachronistic Franciscan monk). This tale comes from the

thirteenth-century *Alphabetum Narrationum* ('The Alphabet of Tales') by Etienne de Besançon, though in the original, c. AD 100, Trajan offers the old woman his own son in exchange for her murdered child. The second panel sees the sixth-century Pope Gregory I praying before Trajan's Column in Rome, then examining the skull of Trajan in the presence of a bevy of cardinals while a doctor points to Trajan's tongue, which is miraculously still intact and ready to resume pronouncing fair death sentences. Akin to the uncorrupted bodies of dead saints, an emperor's ability to bestow justice never dies. The third panel shows a legendary Duke of Brabant, Herkinbald, lying ill in bed. We then see him suddenly rise from the bed and slit the throat of his evil nephew, whom he has summoned to his side and now executes for the crime of rape that the good duke felt would go unpunished if his nephew were to be tried in a more traditional manner. Another section of this panel sees the witnesses to this private execution, including the painter himself. The fourth panel also features Herkinbald in bed, while a bishop ministers to him before a huge crowd. The duke is shown miraculously receiving the Host, despite the fact that he did not confess to the murder of his nephew, believing the death to be just, not sinful. God, it seems, concurred. The panels offer up a balance of public justice, dealt out by Trajan, and private, meted out by the infirm and bed-ridden vigilante, Herkinbald. Both were considered praiseworthy secular historical examples, to be emulated by the judges who would hear cases in the Golden Chamber.

Its large scale, dozens of figures and formal complexity of this work place it alongside van Eyck's *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (the Ghent Altarpiece) among the crown jewels of Flemish painting in the mid-fifteenth century. Contemporaries certainly thought that they were on the same level, and both were sought out by intellectual travellers from around Europe. *The Mystic Lamb* survives to this day, despite fire, theft, iconoclasm, looting, rogue vicars, dismemberment and more, while the bombs and blazes of the Nine Years' War laid waste to Brussels and the work that was the pinnacle of Rogier's career.

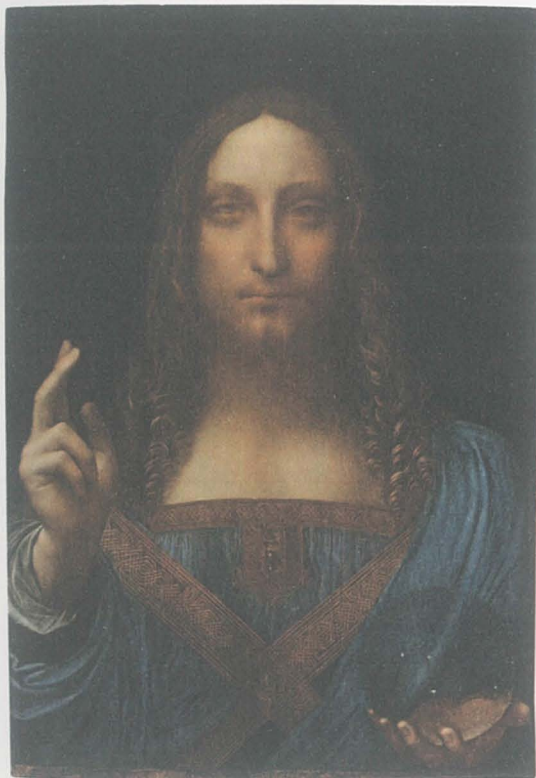
It is sobering to consider how many masterpieces by renowned artists we have lost. Rogier is now best known for his *Deposition*, but during his lifetime, his *Justice Cycle* was his

monument. The *Deposition* can boast an impressive influence over the centuries, held in a prominent collection, accessible to admirers, thinkers and artists. One wonders what different, maybe greater, influence the *Justice Cycle* might have had, had fortune allowed it to act as a point of pilgrimage for artists for centuries more. It is easy to forget that works we associate with great artists were not necessarily their greatest, most influential creations; often they are just the ones that happen to have survived, winning the historical roll of the dice.

LOST ART FOUND

All is not lost, though, and key to this story is a message of hope. For lost artworks, even those thought to have been destroyed, sometimes resurface.

In 2011 two lost Leonardo paintings were displayed in London at the National Gallery's 'Leonardo at the Court of Milan' exhibit, part of the list of fifteen authentic works generally agreed on as by his hand. *Madonna of the Yarnwinder* was stolen from a Scottish castle in 2003 and only recovered in 2007. *Salvator Mundi* was part of the art collection of the English king Charles I (reigned 1625–49) but disappeared, only to resurface in 2005, bought for a pittance because its owner did not realize it was a Leonardo.² A third work is more controversial. *La Bella Principessa*, a painting on vellum, is thought by several leading scholars to be another lost Leonardo that was mislabelled as a nineteenth-century German painting.

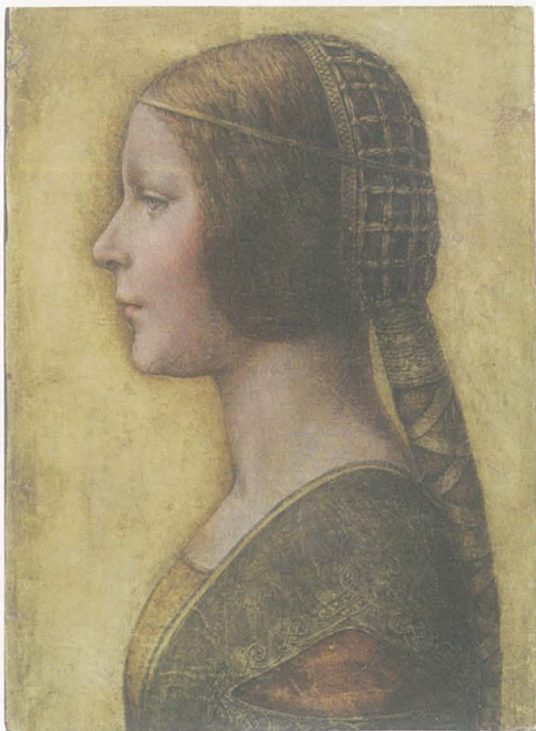


Leonardo da Vinci, *Salvator Mundi*, c.1500, oil on walnut panel, 65.6 × 45.4 cm (25¾ × 18 in), Private collection; the painting was auctioned by Christie's for 450.3 million dollars in November 2017, making it the most expensive work of art ever sold

Others are certain it is not, and a famous forger, Shaun Greenhalgh, has claimed authorship, confusing things further.

An investigation began in 2007 to find a lost Leonardo fresco, the *Battle of the Anghiari*, which numerous scholars believe is hidden behind a false wall in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, deliberately walled in by the artist Giorgio Vasari in 1563 in order to preserve it when he was commissioned to repaint the Sala dei Cinquecento. He may even have left a clue painted into the scene, a single piece of text written on a waving flag high above floor level, which reads *Cerca Trova*, 'Seek and You Shall Find'. The search has been on hold since 2012 due to bureaucratic in-fighting.³

In 2010, a newly discovered crucifix thought to have been carved by Michelangelo was bought by the Italian State. Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ* hung, grime-encrusted, in a shadowy corner of a Jesuit seminary in Dublin until it was discovered in 1987 and identified as a lost masterpiece; it is now the main tourist attraction at the National Gallery of Ireland,



La Bella Principessa, possibly a portrait of Bianca Sforza, attributed by some to Leonardo da Vinci, 1495?, chalk heightened with pen and ink on vellum, laid on oak panel, 33 × 23.9 cm (13 × 9½ in), Private collection



Top: Peter Paul Rubens, *Battle of Anghiari*, after Leonardo, 1603, brown ink on paper, heightened with gouache and lead white, 45.3 × 63.6 cm (17³/₄ × 25 in), Musée du Louvre, Paris
 Bottom: Caravaggio, *The Taking of Christ*, 1602, oil on canvas, 133.5 × 169.5 cm (52¹/₂ × 66³/₄ in), National Gallery, Dublin

Dublin. These stories of seemingly miraculous rediscoveries of works thought definitively lost at once inspire optimism and help to contextualize the value of the works that do exist. Our museums are full of treasures, and it is a small miracle that so much has survived, and highlighting what has been lost helps us appreciate what endures.

FOR THE LOVE OF ART

Listing departed artworks may sound like a roll call of the dead after battle, the names carved into a memorial. That is, in fact, an appropriate parallel. Just as the name of a person no longer living acts as a placeholder for a full life story, a biography that one hopes will not be forgotten simply because the person is no more, so with the story of a painting or sculpture or building. The importance of remembering what no longer exists is amplified when we consider that these works were, for the most part, by great artists and were owned by politically and historically important individuals, and therefore played a role in the shaping of history. Each artwork was crafted with purpose and passed through numerous hands, was loved and admired (or sometimes disliked or even reviled) by scores of viewers. Each artwork exerted an influence, sometimes mild, sometimes great (consider public commissions such as Michelangelo's *David*), raising ardour in some (Savonarola, the villain of Chapter 4, on iconoclasm, was so incensed by fifteenth-century Florentine art that he ordered it burned for indecency in the Bonfire of the Vanities of 1497), love in others (Adam Worth may have kept the stolen Gainsborough *Portrait of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (1787) because it reminded him of his true love, who had scorned him for another man). This book brings back to life a selection of dead artworks, delving into the stories of some works in depth, mentioning others in passing, just as another book might offer a selected history of men and women no longer with us, but nevertheless with stories to tell – stories important to recall, since their absence means that they are too often unjustifiably overlooked, forgotten.

THEFT

A midnight in May, 1876. Old Bond Street in London is deserted. The air is warm, the sky inky and starless. Through the dark, two men walk past the galleries that line the street. One is short and tightly built, with an elegant moustache, impeccably dressed. The other is enormous, with a bulging barrel chest and a gorilla-like carriage. The two men stop in front of number 39, the office of Agnew's Art Gallery.

Agnew's was in the newspaper headlines at the time, having purchased an infamous painting – Gainsborough's *Portrait of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* – for what was then the highest price ever paid for a work of art at auction: 10,000 guineas, a number that raised eyebrows the way the 140 million euros paid for Mark Rothko's 1951 *No. 6 (Violet, Green and Red)* did in 2014.¹ The portrait's subject, Georgiana Spencer, was a fashion icon famous for her beauty and a purported sexual athlete, living in a *ménage-à-trois* with her husband and his lover. She claimed much the same popular interest as her descendant, Lady Diana Spencer. Debate had raged over the authenticity of this painting, some proclaiming it Gainsborough's masterwork, others certain it was a fake. The debate only increased popular interest in the monumental canvas, and after its purchase from Christie's the Duke of Devonshire denied that it was genuine. Whatever the truth, it was the talk of the art world.

Junius Morgan, an American banker, decided to purchase the Gainsborough as a princely gift for his son, John Pierpont Morgan (after whom the investment bank is named), and had even fixed a price with Agnew's. The sale was agreed in principal, but the painting would remain on display at Agnew's for a specified period before money and canvas would change hands. Junius Morgan had an ulterior motive in acquiring the painting, beyond mere aesthetic appreciation. In the early 1870s, a genealogist had traced his family roots, and Morgan was delighted to learn that his mother, *née* Sally Spencer, was related to the noble Spencers of the estate of Althorp through a common ancestor, a sheep farmer from Northumberland called Henry Spencer. Morgan had books and charts printed up to display his newfound pedigree. He already possessed wealth and power, and now he had a foundation of aristocracy beneath them. Gainsborough's portrait of his newly



Thomas Gainsborough, *Portrait of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, 1787, oil on canvas, 127 × 101.5 cm (50 × 40 in; cut down from its original size), Chatsworth House, Yorkshire

discovered ancestor would ground his vision of himself as a member of America's aristocracy.

But it was not to be. Not yet, at any rate. For on that warm May midnight, the large beast of a man lifted the smaller man up to the first floor window ledge of Agnew's gallery. The small man used a crowbar to pry open the window just enough to climb inside. The guard on the ground floor never heard a thing.²

—

The desire to own rare objects of beauty and skilled craftsmanship gives artworks a value beyond the sum of their component parts. A vase is just clay and glaze, a statue just stone or wood, a painting just pigment on hemp canvas or wooden panel. The fact that artworks possess a primary value that is non-intrinsic (as opposed to, say, a gold coin or silverware, for which the value of the raw materials is not far off from the value of the finished object) is important, because an external value system is thus placed on them.

ART AS A HOSTAGE OF WAR

Art has been stolen for as long as it has had value. Early prominent thefts include the Roman Republican army's sacking of the Greek city of Syracuse (modern Siracusa) on Sicily in 212 BC. The loot brought back to Rome was prized for its beauty and pedigree: the fact that it was Greek, and that some of it was old, added to its value. Erudite Romans began collecting all they could find, with Cicero and Marcus Agrippa (Augustus' general) among the most famous early art collectors.

It is hard to imagine a war in which art has not been seized, as booty or for resale. The Crusades brought all manner of art and religious relics to Europe from the Holy Land. The Napoleonic wars were the first in which an army had a dedicated art removal unit, tasked with packing up and shipping to Paris artworks forfeited as part of armistice terms. The Second World War saw the movement of cultural goods on an unprecedented scale, certainly in the millions. A modernized version of Napoleon's art theft unit, the ERR (Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg), acquired tens of thousands of artworks gathered in the path of Nazi conquest; some 7,000 of these were destined to feature in the Führermuseum planned for Hitler's hometown of Linz, Austria. Even today, terrorist groups help to fund their activities by looting antiquities from the earth or pillaging them from collections to sell to the West.

FROM STEALTH THEFT TO ORGANIZED CRIME

Until the 1960s, art theft was carried out by armies during times of war and individuals during times of peace. Stealth and ingenuity were the attributes of early art crimes, in the days when human guards and locked doors were the only defence mechanisms, and human vigilance was of utmost importance – and was all too easily circumvented. Stealth thefts, like that of the Gainsborough, in which criminals try to avoid detection, may be distinguished from blitz thefts, a trend current since the advent of quality alarm systems in the mid-twentieth century, in which thieves burst into galleries when they are open to the public and are therefore less secure. Favouring the blitz technique, organized crime syndicates became involved around 1960, drawn by the astronomical prices for which art was selling at auction. Art crime shifted from a relatively innocuous, often ideological crime into a major international plague. The United States Department of Justice ranks art crime as the third-highest grossing criminal trade, behind only the drugs and arms trades.³ There are tens of thousands of artworks reported stolen each year, though the general public is only attentive to the handful of big-name museum heists that make international headlines. In Italy alone there are 20–30,000 artworks reported stolen annually, and many more go undocumented.⁴

When organized crime became involved it brought its traditional working methods to art crime, including violence. A spate of thefts along the French Riviera occurred in 1961, particularly of Picasso and Cézanne paintings and drawings, perpetrated by the Corsican mafia. The single largest peacetime art theft in history took place in 1976, when 118 Picassos were stolen from the Papal Palace in Avignon. In that instance, guards were bound, gagged, beaten and threatened with death. Art crime, once elegant and dexterous, saw the birth of its violent offspring.

As alarm systems have improved, and with the computerized defences in museums today, stealth thefts are difficult, so art thieves have turned to the criminal blitz – attack when the museum or gallery is open to the public. Theft range from the absurdly simple (such as the 1994 theft of Munch's *The*

Scream (1893), when a man placed a ladder against the wall of the National Art Museum in Oslo, in broad daylight and under video surveillance, then climbed into the first floor window and climbed out with the painting under his arm) to a frighteningly sudden fist of a crime (the 2004 theft of another version of *The Scream* and Munch's *The Madonna* from Oslo's Munch Museum, in which masked gunmen burst into the museum, threatened to open fire and ripped paintings from their frames, damaging them).

Alarm systems only function to alert police. In the 2004 Munch thefts, police responded in about three minutes, but the thieves were gone in under two. During the 1970s, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) stole a great deal of art from Irish country homes, once by backing a truck through the living room wall, filling it with paintings and driving away. Police response time, even with the best of intentions, allows plenty of time for thieves to make a get-away, especially in rural areas.

National Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden

One example of a blitz theft, of particular cinematic verve, took place in Stockholm on 22 December 2000.⁵ The sky was crisp, clear and cold as people headed off to work or for some last minute Christmas shopping. Suddenly the air was shattered with explosions. Two car bombs were detonated at different points in the city, and the police, thinking it was a terrorist attack, rushed to the bombsites. As they did so, a car drove up the only road leading to Sweden's National Museum, built on a peninsula jutting into the bay. The occupants scattered tyre spikes on the road behind them, to burst the tyres of any pursuing vehicles. The car pulled up in front of the museum, and men wearing balaclavas and carrying sub-machine guns rushed into the building. Shouting and threatening, they forced the visitors to the floor, grabbed paintings, including two Renoirs and a Rembrandt, and escaped on a speedboat that had pulled up in the bay behind the museum. In 2001, Renoir's *Conversation with the Gardener* was found during a police drug raid.⁶ After a delicate sting operation in which an American FBI officer, working with Danish police, posed as a collector willing to buy the stolen art at a meeting arranged in Copenhagen,

the stolen Rembrandt *Self-Portrait* was recovered in 2005; the second Renoir, *Young Parisian*, was also recovered through FBI intervention. Unusually, all those believed to have been involved in the heist were caught within a month of the theft, with ten arrests made. Unfortunately, the paintings had already been passed forward, hence the delay in their recovery. Sadly, it is unusual in the history of art theft for stolen art to be recovered and perpetrators arrested. In as few as 1.5 per cent of reported art thefts are objects recovered *and* criminals brought to trial.⁷



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait*, 1630, oil on canvas, 15.5 x 12.2 cm (6 x 4³/₄ in), Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

Russborough House, Ireland

A 1986 case illustrates what can happen to stolen art that is neither sold to a dubious buyer nor ransomed back to the victim. That year saw a burglary at Russborough House, a country house in Ireland that has the unusual distinction of having been robbed of its art on four separate occasions, twice by the IRA. This time it was Martin Cahill, an Irish gangster so infamous that films have been made about him. He and thirteen accomplices stole eighteen works from Russborough House, including a Vermeer, a Goya and a Gabriël Metsu. Cahill figured that he would retire on the proceeds, but he could not find the sort of criminal art collector he expected from books and films. Unable to find a buyer who did not look like a policeman in disguise, he hatched another plan. He smuggled the Vermeer and the Goya to Antwerp, where he used them as collateral for a loan of a million pounds sterling from a diamond merchant who had bought stolen gems from him in the past. The idea was that the loan would be used to buy drugs that would be sold on the street. With the profits, Cahill would pay back the loan and retrieve the paintings, employing them again as collateral in future such deals.

That was what was supposed to happen, but the diamond merchant decided to sell the paintings himself, and he did — to a Scotland Yard undercover agent, who promptly arrested him. Another work stolen by Cahill, the Metsu, was recovered when police in Istanbul raided a deal between two organized crime groups, in which the Metsu was being traded for a shipment of drugs. In total, sixteen of the eighteen stolen works were eventually recovered. A pair of small paintings by Francesco Guardi (both showing views of Venice) remain missing; according to one report, they are 'buried in the mountains', and those who knew their location have died.⁸

In the Cahill case, stolen art was used as collateral and in a barter system between criminal groups, illustrating the interconnections among drugs, arms and art. Art theft might be fun and sexy to read about and to see dramatized on screen, but its connections to the drug and arms trade, and even terrorism, are serious.



Caravaggio, *Nativity with Saint Francis and Saint Lawrence*, 1609, oil on canvas, 268 × 197 cm (8 ft 11½ in × 6 ft 5½ in), stolen from the Church of San Lorenzo, Palermo, Sicily