



Rogues' Gallery: A History of Art and its Dealers

Philip Hook

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Philip Hook takes the lid off the world of art dealing to reveal the brilliance, cunning, greed and daring of its practitioners. In a richly anecdotal narrative he describes the rise and occasional fall of the extraordinary men and women who over the centuries have made it their business to sell art to kings, merchants, nobles, entrepreneurs and museums.

From its beginnings in Antwerp, where paintings were sometimes sold by weight, to the rich hauteur of the contemporary gallery in London, Paris and New York, art dealing has been about identifying what is intangible but infinitely desirable, and then finding clients for whom it is irresistible. Those who have purveyed art for a living range from tailors, spies and the occasional anarchist to scholars, aristocrats, merchants and connoisseurs, each variously motivated by greed, belief in their own vision of art and its history, or simply the will to win.

The cast of characters includes Paul Durand-Ruel, the Impressionists' champion; Herwath Walden, who first brought Modernism into the limelight; Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, high priest of Cubism; Leo Castelli, dealer-midwife to Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art; and Peter Wilson, the charismatic Sotheby's chairman who made the auction room theatre.

Philip Hook's history is one of human folly, greed and duplicity, interspersed with ingenuity, inspiration and acts of heroism. *Rogues' Gallery* is learned, witty and irresistibly readable.

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