

# The Forger's Spell: A True Story of Vermeer, Nazis, and the Greatest Art Hoax of the Twentieth Century

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As riveting as a World War II thriller, *The Forger's Spell* is the true story of Johannes Vermeer and the small-time Dutch painter who dared to impersonate him centuries later. The con man's mark was Hermann Goering, one of the most reviled leaders of Nazi Germany and a fanatic collector of art.

It was an almost perfect crime. For seven years a no-account painter named Han van Meegeren managed to pass off his paintings as those of one of the most beloved and admired artists who ever lived. But, as Edward Dolnick reveals, the reason for the forger's success was not his artistic skill. Van Meegeren was a mediocre artist. His true genius lay in psychological manipulation, and he came within inches of fooling both the Nazis and the world. Instead, he landed in an Amsterdam court on trial for his life.

ARTnews called Dolnick's previous book, the Edgar Award-winning *The Rescue Artist*, "the best book ever written on art crime." In *The Forger's Spell*, the stage is bigger, the stakes are higher, and the villains are blacker.

Edward Dolnick is the author of *Down the Great Unknown*, *The Forger's Spell*, and the Edgar Award-winning *The Rescue Artist*. A former chief science writer at the *Boston Globe*, he lives with his wife near Washington, D.C.

"When it comes to forgery and its ability to fascinate . . . Edward Dolnick has hit the mother lode. . . . Dolnick more than does it justice, drawing on his knowledge of a wide range of subjects." (*Los Angeles Times*)

"Dolnick brilliantly re-creates the circumstances that made possible one of the most audacious frauds of the 20th century. And in doing so Dolnick plumbs the nature of fraud itself . . . an incomparable page turner." (*Boston Globe*)

"Riveting new art thriller. . . . Likely to captivate not just readers moved by war, art, and the art of deception, but anyone interested in human vanity and our sometimes baffling ability to see only what we want to see." (*Christian Science Monitor*)

"*The Forger's Spell* is an excellent read, a swift and astute narrative written from many complex perspectives to great effect." (*Chicago Sun-Times*)

"Dolnick...tells his story engagingly and with a light touch. He has a novelist's talent for characterization, and he raises fascinating questions." (*New York Times Book Review*)

"An engaging and highly amusing account of a clever craftsman. . . . On all those levels this is a delightful foray into art history and psychology" (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*)

"Gripping historical narrative. . . . Dolnick, a veteran science writer, knows his way around a canvas. . . . *The Forger's Spell* has raised provocative questions about the nature of art and the psychology of deception." (*Washington Post Book World*)

"This is the first book on art forgery that really gets to the bottom of the Han van Meegeren tale of chicanery and double dealing. A spirited and provocative read." (Thomas Hoving)

"Edward Dolnick's *Forger's Spell* gives us a well-researched and highly readable account of the underworld of forgers, corrupt dealers, and collectors in Nazi occupied Europe. . . . Wonderful theater, full of fascinating stories, this is a great cautionary tale for all in the art world." (Lynn Nicholas)

Who can resist the story of a great scam--especially when the mark is art-greedy Hermann Goering and the author is an Edgar winner? (Publishers Weekly (Staff Picks))

#### Other Books

*A Forger's Tale*. In 2007, Bolton Crown Court in the United Kingdom sentenced Shaun Greenhalgh to four years and eight months in prison for the crime of producing artistic forgeries. Working out of a shed in his parents' garden, Greenhalgh had successfully fooled some of the world's greatest museums. During the court case, the breadth of his forgeries shocked the art world and tantalised the media. What no one realised was how much more of the story there was to tell. Written in prison, *A Forger's Tale* details Shaun's notorious career and the extraordinary circumstances that led to it. From Leonardo drawings to L.S. Lowry paintings, from busts of American presidents to Anglo-Saxon brooches, from cutting-edge Modernism to the ancient art of the Stone Age, Greenhalgh could--and did--copy it all. Told with great wit and charm, this is the definitive account of Britain's most successful and infamous forger, a man whose love for art saturates every page of this extraordinary memoir.

⚠ ⚠ ⚠ ⚠ ⚠ . Some will read these accounts and mistake them for a forger's guide, an instruction manual on how to make copies. I prefer to see them as the expression of an ecstatic interest in art, bulging with knowledge and expertise."