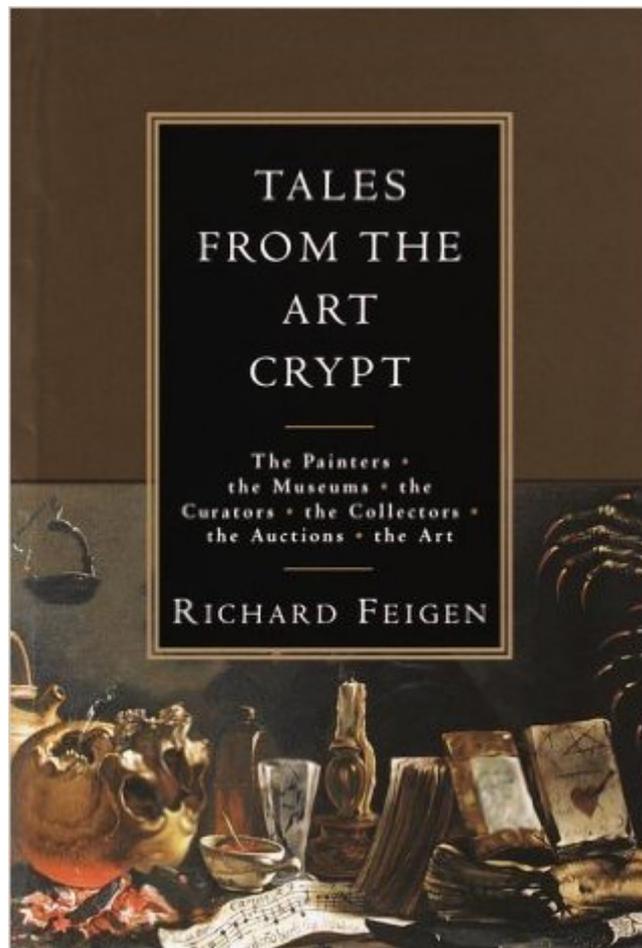


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Tales From The Art Crypt: The Painters, The Museums, The Curators, The Collectors, The Auctions, The Art



Synopsis

From one of today's most influential art collectors and dealers: a lively, revealing, sometimes blasphemous, always knowing look into the world of art. Richard Feigen's fifty years in the art world have given him a unique perspective on its inhabitants and habits. He writes about the painters he has known and represented (among them James Rosenquist, Jasper Johns, Jean Dubuffet, and Joseph Cornell), and about others whose work he has collected. He writes about his galleries in Chicago and New York City, and about his fellow dealers, including Julien Levy and Leo Castelli. He talks about the "eye" that allows a dealer to recognize a fine painting. He discusses the great art-owning families, art historians, scholars, and conservators. He recounts the story of the debacle at the Barnes Foundation that resulted in the undoing of Albert Barnes's vision for his museum, and reveals the fate of the artworks that belonged to Gertrude Stein. He dissects the art boom of the 1980s and its effects, and takes on the commercialism plaguing American museums today: blockbuster exhibitions and the replacement of great directors with "professional administrators." Feigen has given us an intimate, engrossing portrait of the great art game as it has been played in the twentieth century.

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Customer Reviews

I found Richard Feigen's book to be a mostly worthy criticism of the current art world. I am the son of Sam Salz who is mentioned in a short passage in the book as a legendary art dealer. I think Mr. Feigen's description of his method of dealing is accurate even though my father's german-jewish

accent is slightly overdone. My father may have been a shrewd and sometimes ruthless negotiator but he always sought a good home for "his pictures" and could judge a great one from a "postage stamp". The rest of the book deals very well with the gradual takeover of large corporate interests in the museums. Sometimes Mr. Feigen has a tendency to portray himself as the sole savior in a corrupt system but more than a few of his shots are right on target.

Though interesting, this book might well have been titled "Why I'm Right and Everyone Else is Wrong". This is an author with a definite purpose, and any enlightenment one gets is secondary to the book's overall tone of self-justification. Though Feigen shows an intense dislike for ex-Met director Thomas Hoving, Hoving's books consistently deliver more solid information and fewer sour grapes and give a more balanced view of the art world.

Right on the money. The tension between current administration and curatorial museum work could not have been better demonstrated. Frank anecdotal experiences told in a lucid well crafted manner leaves you wanting more! The level of knowledge of museum boards at our best museums is sobering. The photo of the banner in front of the Metropolitan says it all--Haute couture at the Metropolitan-- Indeed! Thanks Mr. Feigen.

Feigen does a wonderful job of tooting his own horn and bashing the hard-earned reputations of others. The subtitle of the book: "The Painters, the Museums, the Curators, the Collectors, the Auctions, the Art" should have read "ME, ME, ME, ME, ME, ME". There are a few useful or interesting tidbits of information buried in the book, but the challenge is staying awake long enough to unearth them.

Mr. Feign is a well known art dealer who has written a disjointed series of stories related in that they all involve him and some noble act or great art find by him. In many of the stories Mr. Feign is critical of collectors, dealers, and administrators of art museums who are now dead and unable to defend themselves. Richard the Great emerges as the only noble and knowledgeable person who always does the right thing and always barely misses the gold ring of finding and acquiring a lost art treasure. If you are interested in an egomaniac's view of his life and the shortcomings of others, written in the guise of stories about art this is the book for you. The editor should be fired for not catching the number of duplications of facts and typographical errors.

Richard Feigen has written a super piece of insider information about the art world, admittedly his own and centered around Chicago and New York. Superlatively illustrated, written in a personal style with a gossipy machine-gun ring to it. For anyone part of that world this book is a must and for the rest of us it is a rare wide-open window, not unlike reading a Suzy column in W magazine but with a few Art History doctorates added on.

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