

ART THEFT AND FORGERY INVESTIGATION

ART THEFT AND FORGERY INVESTIGATION

The Complete Field Manual

By

ROBERT E. SPIEL, JR.



Charles C Thomas
P U B L I S H E R • L T D.
SPRINGFIELD • ILLINOIS • U.S.A.

Published and Distributed Throughout the World by

CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.
2600 South First Street
Springfield, Illinois 62794-9265

This book is protected by copyright. No part of
it may be reproduced in any manner without
written permission from the publisher.

©2000 by CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.

ISBN 0-398-07039-3 (cloth)

ISBN 0-398-07040-7 (paper)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 99-053653

With THOMAS BOOKS careful attention is given to all details of manufacturing and design. It is the Publisher's desire to present books that are satisfactory as to their physical qualities and artistic possibilities and appropriate for their particular use. THOMAS BOOKS will be true to those laws of quality that assure a good name and good will.

*Printed in the United States of America
CR-R-3*

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Spiel, Robert E.

Art theft and forgery investigation : the complete field manual / by
Robert E. Spiel, Jr.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-398-07039-3 (cloth) -- ISBN 0-398-07040-7 (paper)

1. Art thefts--Investigation--Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. Art--
Forgeries--Investigation--Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Title.

N8795 .S69 2000

363.25'962--dc21

99-053653

For Gail
Confirmatio, fides, et amor.

IN MEMORIAM

Donald Louis Mason
1925-1999

PREFACE

“Boston Bandits Bag Vermeer, 3 Rembrandts.” “Manor House Burgled in Sussex.” “Picasso Snatched Off Gallery Wall.” Thirty years ago, we rarely saw headlines like these. Now they are common.

These news reports represent a crime epidemic of about three decades duration. Therefore—so I thought—there should be a book instructing professional criminal investigators about art crime. To my surprise, I could not find one, and so I wrote this manual.

Half a century ago, writing a book about art crime would have been like writing one about cattle rustling. For, of course, different reasons, neither was a serious social or economic problem at that time in history. With respect to art crime, that situation has changed.

Art and collectible theft are now at least among the top 10 in types of property stolen. This does not even consider the problem of fraud and forgery, which are more difficult to quantify but are generally considered to involve a much greater monetary value than robbery and burglary put together.

To make matters worse, over a million Boston area school children and college students have, since 1990, been required to travel a great distance if they want to see a Vermeer painting. Boston’s stolen Vermeer is in this way symbolic of a condition that has infected societies and cultural-educational environments all over the world.

If we accept the proposition that art crime has become a significant problem today, the basic question about why this manual is needed or even helpful is still not answered. In other words, can an investigator with experience with thefts and frauds investigate an art theft or art fraud just as well?

The differences between various types of thefts and fraud investigations depend on the type of victim and the type of tangible or intangible property involved. Banks, warehouses, automobiles, and negotiable instruments are all different types of victims and property. Theft or fraud involving them requires different investigative approaches for a reasonable chance of success. Criminal investigators have known this for a long time.

Then, it follows, that we criminal investigators should take some kind of different approach to art and rare collectible theft and fraud, which involves museums, art galleries, collectors, and a broad range of collectibles themselves. These are unique victim and property types about which most of us know little. This manual will, I hope, help change that and make you aware of investigative methods that will significantly improve your rate of success in the art crime field.

Almost all of the knights of modern society have been trying to slay art crime dragons of growing strength, power, and numbers with weapons unsuited to the task. I hope this book will contribute to the goal of arming criminal investigators with tools and weapons that are suitable and effective against art theft and forgery.

I have tried to put everything I have learned in over 25 years into this manual, because, due to the nature of criminal investigation, I know that it will still not be enough on many occasions. On the other hand, I believe that most of your questions about art crime will be answered. I also believe that the tips, techniques, and ideas set forth in this manual will help diminish the level of frustration experienced by criminal investigators required to handle the growing number and magnitude of art crimes.

The structure of this manual is simple: The first part both guides the reader in the use of it and describes the art world environment. The second part deals with your interaction with the victim, the third with the offender, and the fourth with specialized art crime solution techniques. A glossary and bibliography, both fiction and nonfiction, are also included.

Homicide investigators around the world have had their own professional specialty for years. A similar specialty needs to develop for art crime.

R.E.S.

WITH GRATITUDE

If this piece of work could be judged by the quality of the people listed below, instead of by my far from perfect efforts, there could be no doubt as to the superlative level of approval it would universally enjoy. To not acknowledge these special people would be an odious act of subterfuge, because you simply would not be holding this manual in your hands without their collective encouragement, support, guidance, assistance, caring, patience, incubational and direct inspiration, insight, friendship, and plain old fashioned hard work.

That is what they did. This is who they are: John Bonk, Bruce Borland, Park Brown, Margot Dennedy, Jerry Dillon, Josette Faingold, Josh Farlow, Chris Fikaris, the late Don Fisher, Sam Goodyear, Jack Heinz, Charles Hill, Butch Hubbard, Kevin Illia, the late Fred Inbau, Steve Keller, The Lake Forest Public Library Staff, Don Mason, Tom McShane, Harriet Milstein, Maurice Pickard, Chuck Richmond, Bob Rutledge, Jay Saffarzadeh, Francine Sanders, Judy Saner, Jon Sazonoff, Chuck Sennewald, Andy Spiel, Gail Spiel, Jenny Spiel, the late Marie Spiel, Mike Thomas, Jim Thompson, Bob Volpe, Jon Waltz, Tricia Worthan, Mike Wynne, and last, but very, very far from least, Camille Ziccardi.

CARTOONS AND GRAPHICS

The cartoons in this manual are provided by the imagination and skill of Sam Goodyear, and the graphic designs are a result of the talents of Chris Fikaris and Tricia Worthan.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Preface</i>vii
<i>List of Figures</i>xv

Chapter

PART I: USER'S GUIDE AND ART WORLD RECONNAISSANCE

1. USER'S GUIDE5
Experienced Investigators and Advanced Students5
For Study of For Immediate Reference5
Electronic Supplements to and Versions of this Manual5
Organization of this Manual6
How Much Should You Investigate?	7
The Influence of Donald Mason8
My Motives9
2. YOUR ART WORLD RECONNAISSANCE	10
What Is Art?	10
Art History in a Nutshell	12
Art Appraisal in a Nutshell (What Is It Worth?)	16
Today's Art World	18
The Art Theft Problem	31
The Art Forgery Problem	33

PART II: THE VICTIM INTERVIEW

3. THE VICTIM INTERVIEW: SUMMARY AND CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION (WHERE AND HOW?)	37
4. THE VICTIM INTERVIEW: WHEN AND WHY WAS THE ART STOLEN. FAKED OR ILLEGALLY HANDLED?	38
The Time Frame and Suspects Problem	38
The Statute of Limitations Problem	38
The "Why" Question	39
5. WHAT WAS STOLEN OR FAKED: GENERAL TIPS ABOUT DESCRIBING	41
What Objects to Expect from Victims	41
Incomplete Descriptions from Victims	42
The Importance of Uniqueness	42
Lay Terminology	43
Quantities and Priorities of Stolen or Fake Objects	43

6. WHAT WAS STOLEN OR FAKED: THE DESCRIPTIVE ELEMENTS OF COLLECTIBLES	44
Overview, Identifiability, and Computers	44
Descriptive Checklist Common to All Types of Collectors' Objects	46
Descriptive Checklist in Special Cases of Collectible Theft and Forgery ..	55
A Sample Completed Checklist for a Stolen Object	57
7. WHAT WAS STOLEN OR FAKED: WHAT WAS STOLEN, WHAT WAS NOT STOLEN, AND WHY?	59
Figures 7-1a and 7-1b as Investigative Tools	59
Prior Knowledge: Figures 7-1a and 7-1b: Lots 4 and 10	59
Observability and Discoverability: Figure 7-1a Column 5	62
Expertise: Column 7, Both Figures	62
Objects Disturbed: Column 9, Both Figures	64
Constructive Observability: Lot 6	64
Observable Versus Attainable: Lot 9	64
Thief's Failure to Act Logically	65
Unimportant Art: Lot 14	65
Large Group Descriptions: Lot 15	65
Figure 7-1a: Miscellaneous	65
Conclusion	66
8. WHO DID IT? (AND ALSO HOW AND WHY?) (IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING SUSPECTS)	67
Theft Investigations	67
Forgery Investigations	68
9. VICTIM ASSISTANCE IN INVESTIGATIONS	70
Theft Investigations	70
Forgery Investigations	73

PART III: THE OFFENDERS

10. OFFENDERS OVERVIEW AND VICTIM/OFFENDERS	79
11. HOW ART THIEVES STEAL	80
12. METHODS OF ART FORGERS	83
The Forger's Planning Questions	83
The Forger's Materials, Techniques, and Your Countermeasures	90
13. THE SELLING METHODS AND BEHAVIOR OF STOLEN ART FENCES AND ART FORGERY DISTRIBUTORS	96
Direct and Indirect Selling	96
The Art Criminal's Conduct After the Theft or Forgery	98

PART IV: SOLUTIONS AND RECOVERIES

Subpart IV-A: Overview and Initial Activity of Solutions and Recoveries

14. SOLUTIONS AND RECOVERIES—CHECKLISTS AND PRIORITIES	111
Checklists	111
Investigative Priorities	112
15. BASIC LEGAL WEAPONS	114
Types of Legal Weapons	114
Antitheft Weapons	114
Antiforgery Weapons	116
Intellectual Property Laws	116
16. INSURANCE AND REWARDS	117
Sources of Rewards	117
The Importance of Rewards	118
Rewards and the Law	119
Time Sensitivity of Rewards	119
The Administration of Reward Offers and Payments	120

Subpart IV-B: How to Investigate Using Your Stolen or Fake Objects

Introduction	123
New Terminology	123
Conclusion	124
17. THE USE OF EXPERTS AND CATALOGUES RAISONNES	126
Sources of Expert Advice	126
How and Expert of Authority Can Help You Achieve a Solution	127
Qualifying Questions for Expert Witnesses	129
18. UNIVERSAL AND VARIABLE CONTACT GROUP CLASSIFICATIONS	131
The Purpose of Contacts, Contact Groups, Their Classifications, and Two Types of Classifications	131
List of Universal Contact Group Classifications	135
List of Variable Contact Group Classifications	147
19. OBJECT BULLETINS: THEIR STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS	158
Theories of Bulletin Structure and Contents	158
Object Bulletin Sections and Elements	161
Sample Bulletin	168
20. TRANSMISSION OF OBJECT BULLETINS TO SPECIFIC CONTACTS	170

To Whom, Why, How, and Then What?	170
The Recipients within the Contact Group Classifications	170
Why Transmit Extensively?	178
How to Transmit	181
After Transmitting	184

Subpart IV-C: Your Suspects

21. SPECIAL SUSPECT INTERVIEWING AND INVESTIGATIVE TIPS	
BISR	195
Use of Object Bulletins for Suspects	196
Interviews of Suspects	196
22. DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF AN ART CRIMINAL PHOTO	
ALBUM	198

Subpart IV-D: Informants and undercover work

23. ART CRIME INFORMANT DEVELOPMENT	203
Why, Who, and Where?	203
General Development and Maintenance Tactics	204
Criminal and Legitimate Informants	206
24. UNDERCOVER METHODS	212
Who Should Go Undercover?	212
How Does Your Operative Go Undercover?	214
What Happens Undercover?	217

Subpart IV-E: Recovered and Found Objects

25. RECOVERY AND SEIZURE OF STOLEN OR FAKE ART	221
The Distinction Between Recovery and Collection	221
Four Methods of Recovery or Seizure in Art Crime Investigations	221
26. UNIDENTIFIED VICTIMS	225
Thefts	225
Forgeries	226
27. AFTER RECEIVING COLLECTOR'S ITEMS AS EVIDENCE	228
Object Handling	228
Examinations of the Object	232
Disposition of Recovered Objects	233
Recovered Objects—Summary and Conclusion	233
Conclusion	235
<i>Appendix 1: Proof of Annual \$1.3 Billion Worldwide Art Theft Value</i>	<i>237</i>
<i>Appendix 2: Key to Sample Police Agencies - City Chart</i>	<i>242</i>
<i>Glossary: Proper Names</i>	<i>245</i>
<i>Glossary: Terminology</i>	<i>260</i>
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>279</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>285</i>

FIGURES

- 2-1. Art History Time Chart of Selected Artists and
Art Related Phenomena, 3000 BC to 1400 AD
- 2-2. Art History Time Chart of Selected Artists and
Art Related Phenomena, 1400 - 1700
- 2-3. Art History Time Chart of Selected Artists and
Art Related Phenomena, 1700 - 2000
- 2-4. "You know you're getting old when you're the same age as
your collectibles."
- 2-5. Art World Scenes and Cast of Characters
- 2-6. First Time Offender Thefts of Art and Automobiles
(Estimated Annual Percentages)
- 2-7. "Money Spoken"
- 2-8. "We just didn't speak the same language. I talked old money,
he talked new."
- 2-9. "Mommy, I thought Madonna had a little girl."
- 4-1. Relationship of Theft Time Frame and Number of Suspects
- 4-2. Statutes of Limitations and Art Crime
- 5-1. Portability and Value of Stolen Art Objects
- 6-1. Descriptive Checklist for Collectors' Objects
- 6-2. Collectible Classifications
- 6-3. Common Collectible Subclassifications
- 6-4. A Sample Completed Descriptive Checklist for a Stolen
Collectors' Object
- 7-1a. Stolen Objects Analysis Chart (Sample)
- 7-1b. Remaining Objects Analysis Chart (Sample)
- 12-1. Value and Ease of Execution of Forged Art Objects
- 12-2. Expected Price Related to Ease of Execution of Faked Object
- 12-3. Expected Price and Execution Difficulty Related to Artistic
Medium Chosen to Fake
- 12-4. Expected Price Related to Forgery Detection Probability/
Difficulty of Sale
- 12-5. Ease of Execution Related to Forgery Detection
Probability/Difficulty of Sale
- 12-6. Fake Old and Appropriate Paper, Metal, and Wood
- 12-7. Fake Old Paint and Ink
- 12-8. Fake Old Canvas, Old Craftsmanship, and Authentic
Working Methods
- 12-9. Fake Craquelure and Old Signature
- 12-10. Fake Collectors' Marks

- 13-1. Use of Middlemen by Thieves of Art and of Other Items
- 13-2. Use of Middlemen by Forgers of Art and of Other Items
- 14-1. Art Theft and Art Forgery Solutions Checklist
- 16-1. Increased Reward Payments and Increased Information
- 16-2. Typical Quality and Volume of Information Related to Reward Offer Type
- IV-B-1. Chronological Checklist of Investigative Steps Using Your Stolen or Fake Objects
- 18-1. Universal Contact Group Classifications
- 18-2. Universal Contact Group Classification Divisions
- 18-3. Major Foreign Intelligence Agencies Worldwide
- 18-4. Variable Contact Group Classifications
- 18-5. Variable Contact Group Classification Divisions
- 19-1. Sample Photograph for Object Bulletin
- 20-1. Christie's and Sotheby's Cities Worldwide
- 20-2. Christie's and Sotheby's Countries
(Numbers in parentheses show the 1995 art auction total sales in millions of pounds, according to the Art Sales Index, Ltd. Only totals over 10 million pounds are shown.)
- 20-3. Contacts Located Only in Christie's/Sotheby's Cities
(Listed by Contact Group Classifications discussed in Chapter 18)
- 20-4. Sample Police Agencies City Chart: City Chart #____
New York City (NYC) (Numbers refer to key in Appendix 2.)
- 20-5. Contacts Which Can Be Located Anywhere (Listed by Contact Group Classifications Discussed in Chapter 18)
- 20-6. Art Dealer's Decision Flow Chart After Being Offered a Suspicious Object
- 20-7. Typical Expanding Post Theft or Post Forgery Sales Intervals
- 20-8. Sample Object Bulletins Transmission Record
- 20-9. Object Bulletin Response File Group
- 24-1. The Three Types of Art Crime Undercover Operatives (UCOs):
Advantages and Disadvantages
- 27-1. Checklist and Suggested Forms for Recovered Objects
- A1-1. Hypothetical Annual Ratios of Reported Stolen Art and Reported Stolen Automobiles

ART THEFT AND FORGERY INVESTIGATION

Part I

**USER'S GUIDE AND ART WORLD
RECONNAISSANCE**

Chapter 1

USER'S GUIDE

EXPERIENCED INVESTIGATORS AND ADVANCED STUDENTS

If you are not either an experienced investigator or an advanced student who has already covered the subject of investigation on an introductory level, please stop here and reconsider. There are parts of this book which you will find interesting and useful, but there are others which you will find confusing and misleading.

There are two reasons why I decided to write a manual for either professional investigators, public or private, or for criminology students who have already studied basic investigative techniques:

1. To attempt to discuss basic investigative subjects like crime scenes, handling informants, and conducting interrogations would not only make this manual too lengthy, but it would also be too confusing. It would be too confusing for the novice as well as for the seasoned professional constantly trying to separate what he already knows from what he needs to know. Therefore, my goal is to inform the investigator with prior practical or theoretical experience with

investigation but lacking experience in art theft or art forgery. I make reference to basic investigative techniques, such as evidence handling, only when these techniques need to be used in special ways when investigating art crime. I expect this manual to increase the solution rate of the practitioner, because it will inform him, as clearly, succinctly, and thoroughly as I am able, about important investigative bases to touch and actions to take of which he is presently unaware.

2. I intend this book to function on an intensely practical level. This means that it must be specific when it gives advice. Only an experienced investigator will be able to effectively modify this kind of specific advice to his own legal, cultural, organizational, and commercial environment. Someone starting an investigative career with no prior knowledge or experience would become confused when attempting to literally apply some of the advice in this manual.

FOR STUDY OR FOR IMMEDIATE REFERENCE

"The Mona Lisa" has just been stolen! What do you do? This manual is designed both to help you prepare for this event and to take action when it occurs. In other words, this manual is designed for both study and immediate reference. This means that this manual is for you, even if you are too busy to read it. Since this statement may appear confusing, I will explain.

If you are able to study all or parts of this manual like a college textbook, you will probably derive more benefit from it, especially in the long run. However, this manual will also help investigators who operate in a much more pressured and much less scholarly environment, from time to time or almost constantly, as we all have.

In those all too frequent situations, you can turn to the pages in this manual which deal with your immediate problem (e.g., victim interview, offenders, evidence handling) and take action as instructed, subject to your own special conditions. You will have then done a responsible job without engaging in time-consuming study. In fact, the quarter to half hour you have spent with the manual will actually make you more efficient and save you time, as well as increasing your chances for a solution.

Another way to use this manual is as a checklist. In this way it can assist the modern, busy, underbudgeted investigator, who will want to use it as quickly as he responsibly can.

ELECTRONIC SUPPLEMENTS TO AND VERSIONS OF THIS MANUAL

I will never become the Mario Andretti of computer drivers, but, since I just mentioned efficiency, I

should also state that you will find this manual to be as computer friendly as you want it to be. Even a

rear echelon soldier in the Computer Revolution, like myself, cannot fail to imagine some of the ways in which modern computers can assist the investigative profession in general. This is also true in the field of art crime investigations—and in some special ways. You will detect this as you read this manual.

Specifically, there will be places in this manual where you will see that I use the computer in my own practice to help me perform repetitive tasks much more quickly. When I investigate my next Picasso theft, I will notify almost exactly the same people about the theft as I did for the last Picasso theft. When I respond to a theft or forgery victim, I will have the same minimum list of questions every time. Also, if I can design sets of procedures to perform certain appropriate investigative activity, nonprofessional personnel can more often assist me. You will see many similar opportunities to use a computer to help you as you read this manual.

On the other hand, I realize that the unlimited use of a computer will not be possible for some readers. Therefore, you will not, I hope, see in this manual any advice for which a computer is absolutely required.

This is not to say that I do not envision the day when the investigator, inside and outside of the art crime field, will carry a notebook computer in the field. Despite my technophobic disposition, I actually welcome this, because a ten-hour investigative project will become a three-hour project. Unlike paper forms, computer models can be quickly expanded and contracted to fit a particular situation. Therefore, to cite only one benefit of a notebook computer in the field, field notes taken according to a model can often automatically become final reports, and hours will be saved. Also, investigations presently requiring most of a file drawer will be reduced to a disk, and information in it will be located much more quickly.

This is the type of approach I encourage in this manual, and I will suggest several computer models

to you in the pages that follow. If you must, at least at this time, use paper versions of these models, using the paper versions is still much more efficient than investigating without them.

Since I believe so strongly that computer technology will help you, and I can do little more than suggest applications of it at various places in this manual. I am planning software publications based on it. These publications will be similar to what I already use in my own practice. For example, I suspect that many of you would like to have, on your computer, blank form letters and other checklists which can become final reports, lists of notification contacts, and similar documents, all tailored to art crime, and all adaptable to your particular needs and style. In any particular investigation, you will be able to select the specific documents you need. Selection and use will be quicker, because the publication will be in software form.

It is my vision that this software package full of lists, forms, and checklists will be extensive. The reason for this is that I plan to anticipate, based on my roughly 25-year experience, every type of art crime situation I possibly can. My bias favoring the use of such documents is not intended to suggest that I do not also have a strong bias in favor of traditional, proven methods of investigation, such as personal contacts not involving computers. I must rely on you to select the document or traditional method for your particular situation. Since this is a manual for experienced investigators, I feel I can.

An experienced investigator will also be able to use the forms, lists, and checklists as a direct rapid learning tool. This is because he will often understand the reason for an investigative activity, once that activity is suggested to him. Not understanding the reason will sometimes lead to an inappropriate use of the document, so I would not suggest this learning method for a novice, but it may save an experienced investigator considerable time when using this manual.

D. ORGANIZATION OF THIS MANUAL

Despite the length and occasional complexity of this manual, its basic organization is simple. First, in the very next chapter, I will take you on a reconnaissance of the art world. Then, you will take the traditional first step in an art theft or forgery investigation, and respond to the victim's call for help and to the scene of the crime (Part II). Next, we will consider your quarry – the person or persons who committed

the crime (Part III). Finally, I will discuss solution methods particular to art theft and art forgery (Part IV). Yes, I will show you how to use the art world Internet in these solutions.

This then, is how this manual is organized. My description of this organizational structure provides me with an opportunity to write a few more words about learning the art world.

I have implied in the above description of this manual that I feel it is important to know something about this world. The more you know, the

more effective you will be. I think you will find the process of learning the art world ongoing and enjoyable. I know I have and still do.

If you are in the mood for gaining armchair knowledge, I recommend two sources: First, look at the selected bibliography near the back of this manual. It contains my own personal favorites, both non-fiction and fiction, including movies on videotape. Second, although not as interesting to some people, the glossary, located just before the bibliography, can be read to gain art world knowledge as well as to find a specific unknown term.

If, on the other hand, you feel like obtaining knowledge from personal contact, I want to offer some suggestions, at the risk of somewhat anticipating the next chapter about the art world. Basically, I recommend approaching the dealer member of the art world trio. Collectors tend to be reclusive and difficult to identify at first, and the part of the museum most visitors see is only the facet on public display. But, both the auction and the gallery dealers automatically show a visitor a great deal of how they do business and of the people involved in this business.

I recommend introducing yourself to the most convenient art or collectible auctioneer and arranging to attend one of his upcoming auctions. In this way, you will have developed a contact, and you will learn about an important method of art and collectible selling. You will also learn firsthand about art world inhabitants.

You will also learn about art world inhabitants by visiting traditional gallery dealers. Again, each deal-

er you meet can be a valuable contact. I recommend attending what are known as dealers' openings, from time to time. They usually occur on Friday night after work, whenever one or more dealers in the community are "opening" a new exhibition, often featuring a single artist. The gallery will leave the exhibition in place for a few weeks or even months, depending on how well the objects sell, and will then have another opening. On some evenings, several galleries in a particular neighborhood may have openings at the same time, giving you an opportunity to make numerous contacts during one evening.

Openings differ from visits to dealers during regular business hours to either introduce yourself or to advise him or her to be on the lookout for an art criminal or an object. Dealers will assume you have no interest in art or the art business during visits such as these and that you are only doing your duty. If, on the other hand you have at least a slight interest in art or collectibles, a visit to an opening after hours will do much to demonstrate this interest, and, therefore, your relationship with the dealer will be enhanced. Also, you should feel free to briefly discuss business with the dealer at an opening. In fact, this will show that you, like members of the art world, prefer to discuss business surrounded by exciting, newly exhibited art, as well as by interesting, educated people, if possible.

At this point, you might understandably be wondering how I expect you to find time to absorb this manual, do extra reading, watch movies, browse my glossary, and attend auctions and openings while still conscientiously handling art crime investigations. Read on, for my thoughts about this problem.

HOW MUCH SHOULD YOU INVESTIGATE?

The title of this manual is not literally correct. While it is reasonably "complete," it does not advise you to perform what I would consider to be a complete investigation. In theory, I do not personally believe there is any such thing as a complete unsolved investigation of any kind, because the answer has to be somewhere. The "always get their man" motto of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police states this more eloquently than I. In practice, however, I do know that there must be "complete" unsolved investigations, due primarily to local case-load and the degree of aggravation of the offense under investigation.

Even though this manual assumes that you are investigating the theft of "The Mona Lisa" rather than an antique silver tea service (which accounts for the length and complexity of this book), I would only consider the manual to be literally complete if it advised you to do things which I am not advising in these pages. For example, in the interest of practicality, I am not advising you to contact the police force of every large city in the world, although I am advising this in 107 selected cities, which I list and explain in Chapter 20. In theory, even a "complete" approach, of which contacting police in the larger group of cities would be only a part, would not guar-

antee success unless repeated and extended until the investigation was solved.

To investigate the theft of the silver tea service, I do not actually advise even this lower 107 city level of investigative activity, unless you have an extraordinarily low caseload. This, in turn, leads me to provide another reason why I wrote this manual for only the experienced investigator. He or she is equipped to much more easily make a judgment as to what less than maximum investigative activity is warranted in each case. Sometimes this involves putting aside one's frustration with doing a less than perfect and thorough job. Also, there may be pressure from the victim to investigate more than is justified, and this must be firmly but tactfully resisted. Sometimes the approximate and the comprehensive, rather than the precise, thorough, or complete, must be enough.

When I thought it would be especially helpful, I prioritized investigative activity for you, in case your circumstances did not permit you to do the maximum I recommended. However, space did not permit me to do this throughout this manual, and so I must rely on the experienced investigator to make his own priority decisions.

THE INFLUENCE OF DONALD MASON

In the 1960s, Donald L. Mason was one of the first in a line of FBI agents to address the art crime problem. At that time, he was the only such agent, and operated in the FBI's New York office. He was the first serious student of this problem, and his theories, ideas, and writings command our attention today.

Mason combined a reliance on informants, a utilization of knowledgeable art community sources, and undercover work. The latter two activities were pursued by him to an unprecedented degree at that time. These three major ingredients of his efforts met with unbelievable success for many years. His exploits were spectacular in terms of recovery values, arrests, and positive publicity for the FBI, and I suspect that this successful run remains unsurpassed to this day.

Later, in the very early 1970s, toward the end of his career, Mason saw that computers could be used to recover stolen art the same way that the

National Crime Information Center (NCIC) computer was just recently being used to recover stolen cars. He suggested that NCIC be expanded, or a modified version of it be created, to handle stolen art, but the suggestion was rejected. He suggested this again and was again rejected.

In other words, this book is written for "The Mona Lisa," but I know that you will reduce the level of thoroughness I suggest to fit the silver tea service and your own particular situation. I plan to do this myself, and, in fact, I already have in work I have done in the past. Since you are an experienced investigator, I do not, for the most part, need to tell you how to go about reducing this level of thoroughness.

To return, for a moment, to the statement with which I opened this section, I consider this manual to be "complete" in a reasonable and practical sense, but not in a literal one. At the same time, I realize that the investigative approach I suggest is extremely thorough and will result in many "complete" investigations in the sense that they will be solved, and, as you know, solutions can even occur from sloppy, but lucky, investigations.

My suggestions in this manual are as thorough as they are, because I want to equip you for the most aggravated art crimes in situations where you do have the time to keep after them. I hope that this approach mixed with your seasoned judgment will be a successful combination.

Today, the computer is a common tool in the fight against stolen art. I suggest its use many times in the pages which follow. Sadly, Mason has yet to receive credit for his significant role in bringing this about.

To generate the greatest possible recovery values and conviction rates in art crime investigations, Mason also knew that he needed to overcome an ongoing internal obstacle. Most law enforcement managers, except in countries where the art is closely tied to tourism and the national economy, tacitly or overtly share the view that they should not permit murderers and dope peddlers to go free while they chase the baubles of the irresponsibly rich and famous. I have heard this view expressed even by a United States district judge during a sentencing proceeding for art fraud.

Mason believed, as I do, that more than a few decorative objects of the wealthy are at stake. The more successful art criminals are, the less school children will be able to see the work of the masters.

But Mason was a pragmatic investigator. He knew that most "sentimental" arguments of this type were not likely to make much of an impression on most hard-boiled law enforcement professionals. However, he also knew that government agencies

around the world live and die by statistical performance indicators. Therefore, as a result of hard work and innovative approaches, he kept these indicators high, and thereby silenced most arguments against the need for art crime investigations.

This manual owes a great deal to Mason's theories

and work. In the chapters that follow, you will see a strong emphasis on informants, art community sources, and undercover work, because I have seen what Mason did with them and what they can do for you.

MY MOTIVES

You will find, as I did, that there are a disproportionate number of vulnerable objects and vulnerable victims in the art world. Many objects will be stolen from these victims in the years to come, and more of them need to be recovered. I hope that this manual will contribute to this cause.

Also, perhaps the techniques recommended in this manual will add to a level of deterrence which is currently too low. More informed and more intensive investigation, over time, will create an environment which is less attractive to art thieves and forgers.

I must also confess that my motives were not entirely altruistic. After about 20 years investigating art crime, I simply needed to get organized. I had, by then, a sizeable collection of checklists, contacts, and written procedures I had used in investigation after investigation. I needed to get them in better order. Somehow, in the process of trying to create this order, I found myself writing this manual.

Another useful thing happened at the same time. Not only did my material need to be organized, but it needed to be reconsidered, tested, and synthesized. Some of the ideas I had formed over 20 years found their way into this manual, more or less intact. Others were modified or rejected altogether. In other words, I myself learned at least as much, by writing this manual, as I impart in the pages which follow. For this experience, I am grateful.

Such is the long process of accumulating ideas, and then organizing and refining them in book or manual form. Since I was not able to find a book or manual on the subject of art crime investigations in existence, I felt I might be able to save some people some time. Since I so deeply value the limited time

of the professional investigator, I will feel a great sense of satisfaction if I can.

Chapter 2

YOUR ART WORLD RECONNAISSANCE

In this chapter, we will take a tour of your chosen or assigned battlefield and see who and what awaits you there. You will learn how to answer the question that has daunted philosophers for thousands of years, namely, "What is art?" You will also learn all about art history. Moreover, you will be able to tell what any art object is worth. You will also learn the complex and sophisticated operations of the art market. This chapter will also tell you all about the various inhabitants of the art world and what they do.

Finally, I will describe the current state of the art theft problem and the art forgery problem.

Do you literally believe the extravagant claims set forth in the preceding paragraph? I hope not. But, I do promise you this in all seriousness and with complete sincerity: Unless you are already an experienced art crime investigator, you will know significantly more about all the topics enumerated above when you finish this chapter than you do at the present moment.

WHAT IS ART?

Thirty-one Collectible Classifications

The short and arbitrary answer is that art consists of 31 different types of objects, which I call Collectible Classifications. These are the objects I list in Figure 6 - 2 in Chapter 6. I list them there, because, for several reasons, classifying art objects is an important part of taking their descriptions.

If you briefly turn to Figure 6 - 2, you will see that I feel that it will be most useful to broaden the term "art" beyond its conventional meaning for the purpose of this manual. Basically, I include all rare collectibles, but I exclude jewelry, furs, and other contemporary wearing apparel. Therefore, when you see the term "art" throughout this book, I am really writing about all rare collectibles, except when specifically noted.

Having just neatly classified all our collectibles, I should warn you that the members of the art world, especially artists, are hostile to classification. Artists are always experimenting with new and mixed types of art and form new movements with, seemingly, the sole purpose of frustrating art historians. The art world seems to tolerate someone who likes to classify objects in it, but only if they are flexible. However, keep in mind that many collectors are at the opposite end of the spectrum from the artists. Sometimes the passion to organize and classify is almost as strong as the passion for collecting.

You may be thinking that my 31 categories of "art" shown in Figure 6 - 2 are too many categories. If you

are, consider this: *Maloney's Antiques & Collectibles Resource Directory* lists over 2600 different categories of art and other collectibles in about 500 pages. This list of 2600 includes "wooden money," "belt buckles," and "firebacks." Each of these three examples can claim its own specialized collectors, specialized publications, and specialized associations devoted to it.

Another example of how specialized "art" can get is the fact that there are generally considered to be at least 20 different types of prints within the print family, and new types are being developed from time to time. An expert can actually tell the difference by looking at one.

In this manual, I have attempted to strike a balance between the 2600 or more recognized special types of art and collectibles and your own working efficiency. My answer, based not only on the most popular types of art and collectibles but also on what, in my experience, gets stolen and faked with the greatest frequency, is my list of 31. I feel confident that almost all of the 2600 categories will fit somewhere within my list of 31. The worst consequence of this simplification will be that sometimes I will notify a fireback collector about the theft of a rare antique lamp.

The thirty-one categories of what I consider to be "art" in this manual can all be addressed by the investigator in practically the same way. Other types of property will require different investigative approaches, which I leave to other commentators.