




A Deceptive Clarity

Aaron Elkins

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In Berlin to help mount an exhibit of priceless paintings, once thought lost, museum curator and Renaissance art expert Chris Norgren must turn detective when his boss is murdered soon after voicing concern over the paintings' authenticity.

A Deceptive Clarity Details

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Author : Aaron Elkins

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From Reader Review A Deceptive Clarity for online ebook

Vera Mottino says

Clearly a good story

Am I ever so glad to have discovered this author. He writes cleanly at a fast pace but without skipping essential details. He does not use "filler prose" either - an unfortunate habit of writers in this genre - where details of no value to the storyline are inserted - maybe because the author thinks that more words make a better book. Elkins' spare writing nevertheless draws credible characters and the plot flows easily. This is my second book by Aaron Elkins. Five stars for both. Now to see if he keeps it up as I read more from his pen...

Judy says

Too much art history

Chris Norgren has been hired to help oversee an important exhibit of a private collectors' paintings. Added to the collection has been four pieces recently discovered that had been confiscated by the Nazis and thought to be lost forever. His friend and mentor discloses that he has discovered a probable forgery amongst the famous paintings and challenges Chris to see if he can spot the fake. The friend leaves the next day for a quick trip and is murdered before he can return and tell Chris which painting is the forgery.

While Chris searches through the collection he (and the author) takes the opportunity to show off his expertise in art. Way too much information about techniques, use of color, layers, materials used and how he can determine if the piece is really an original work.

After a few attempts on his life, he solves the puzzle, wins the girl, satisfying ending. A fun read and a nice diversion on a rainy day.

Kristal says

I liked this mystery/thriller, but I think if I were more of an art buff that it would've been better for me. At times the story really bogged down for me trying to keep up with all of the artists and paintings and still try to keep the story straight.

Lynn says

Decent mystery. Lots of info about art and forgery. Will continue with the series.

Cat. says

It is interesting reading an author's earliest works, especially in genre fiction. You can watch as he (or she) develops as an author, fleshing out cardboard characters as he goes, making rounded edges of abrupt plot

changes.

This is especially true in this book, in which Elkins introduced a new character, an art historian named Chris Norgren. I didn't read the blurb, so I jumped into Chapter 1 expecting my friend "The Skeleton Doctor" and couldn't figure out why we were in an art museum with a bunch of unknowns. In a mystery, that usually means the reader is getting some inside information about the bad guys. But wait: it also shows a certain level of sophistication I hadn't expected of Elkins at this point. So I caved in and read the blurb.

Having just read the first "Skeleton" mystery recently, I could see some extremely obvious similarities in the two books: Europe, Army base, shlubby detective with a great sense of humor, a hero with fighting skills that are outrageously unexpected. The plots are similar too.

But it's a good plot, even if those corners are very rounded yet, and the characters tend to be cardboard figures placed hither and yon for decor. There's a lot of info about art and art history here, and that kept my attention. I didn't know anything about Vermeer or El Greco beyond being able to tell them apart (!); I still don't know much, but the details showed that Elkins has promise...which is proven out by the knowledge of his later novels.

Reynolds Darke says

A good art-based mystery thriller.

ASoner says

If you know art, you might like this book. For me, it was interesting to find out about the paintings etc, but it was not more than a fast and easy read, not much to think of. Also, first person narrative is not my favorite narrative. It becomes tiresome, like someone is nagging at your ear and you can't hear anyone else but them.

Lidia says

If I had liked more Chris I would put four stars to this review, but I think like Annie , other character of this book when she meets Chris . Above this I truly appreciated this story, I love art and I learned more things reading this book...and I'm Italian so is was nice reading in the setting environment by this series the references to Italian city and works of art . Like mystery story, still I have appreciated the clear and clever plot, the frankly speech of investigation , and the character of Harry above all.

Jonathan says

A decent read, though, there were quite a few problems outside the art being described (which seemed accurate, and worked well in the story perspective.) The typos threw me off, whether they were meant as a joke (possibility), or were just due to a lack of editing (EG: Gently being spelled gentiy gets irritating after a bit, a few other words like this); and the overall story relying on a few movie tropes (admittedly), didn't help. The characters, over (Especially detective Harry), are relatable/amicable, which helps the story some, but

gives it more "character" than depth. Despite numerous flaws, it was a decent read; but nothing that was anything above average.

Janebooks says

The art may be fake, but the murder is genuine..., February 23, 2010

A review of A Deceptive Clarity (Mass Market Paperback) by Aaron J. Elkins

A US Army soldier finds three masterpiece paintings in an old salt mine near Salzburg, Germany. A Titian, a Rubens, and a Vermeer. These treasures had been stolen from an Italian collector's palazzo in Florence in August 1944 by fleeing Nazis.

Enter Army Colonel Mark Robey. Let's have an art exhibition for the newly-found art, persuade Claudio Bolzano to loan other works, and provide some favorable press in Berlin for the U. S. Forces. And so Treasures of Four Centuries: The Plundered Past Recovered is launched.

Enter Chris Norgren. Chris is a curator at the San Francisco museum that has been awarded the oversight of The Plundered Past exhibition by the U. S. Defense Department. He's young, bored, and has a less-than-stellar degree in art history from San Jose State.

When the chief curator (and Chris' immediate supervisor), Peter Van Cortlandt, calls from Berlin requesting help with irregularities, Chris accepts assignment as deputy director of the exhibition and flies to Berlin. After a brief discussion with Chris regarding a suspicious painting without naming the work in question, Van Cortlandt flies to Frankfurt to acquire an El Greco belonging to Bolzano for the Berlin exhibition. He is found murdered near a Frankfurt brothel.

As Chris tries to solve the mystery with the help of a grungy OSI Major, the reader is deluged with some fascinating facts and glimpses of the art world: such as the difficult procedures of mounting an exhibition and the steps of investigating a suspected forgery.

We follow Chris into the golden world of Florentine Cinquecento, discover methods of verification and authenticity of art, learn the vernacular--craquelure, pointelle, etc.

And we marvel at the architecture of Germany and Italy, have lunch at the Berlin Zoo and gourmet breakfast at a small hotel in Florence.

Elkins is the Edgar award-winning author of the Gideon Oliver novels. A DECEPTIVE CLARITY is the first of a trilogy of Chris Norgren art history mysteries. Published in 1987, it may have been before its time with the combination of mystery and art, but a current reading is highly recommended.

4 out of 5 stars

Marcia Ditter says

This is the first book of three in the series. It is a book about stolen art, arts stolen by the Nazis. Some years later it is decided by the US military to have an art exhibition. Are all of these paintings legitimate or is there a forgery? Read and find out.

Margaret says

Clever, readable, humorous, and worth having read a second time.

Maureen says

Chris norgren, art curator, on the hunt for a forgery before the show opens...liked this character, like the art world...got a little to technical in some spots, but I would read the next book in the series..

Bachyboy says

Like a lot of books I have been reading lately, this promised much at the beginning. A museum curator is charged with mounting an exhibition of twenty masterpieces plundered by the Nazis. I enjoyed the Berlin setting but the storyline got overly complicated and some of the expert's dialogue was overly pedantic. I plodded on though, through all the extra characters and the resolution was satisfying.

Sallie says

I've read some of Elkins Gideon Oliver mysteries, long ago, and enjoyed them, so I picked up this book a few years ago and #2 in the series, and I'm just now reading them.
