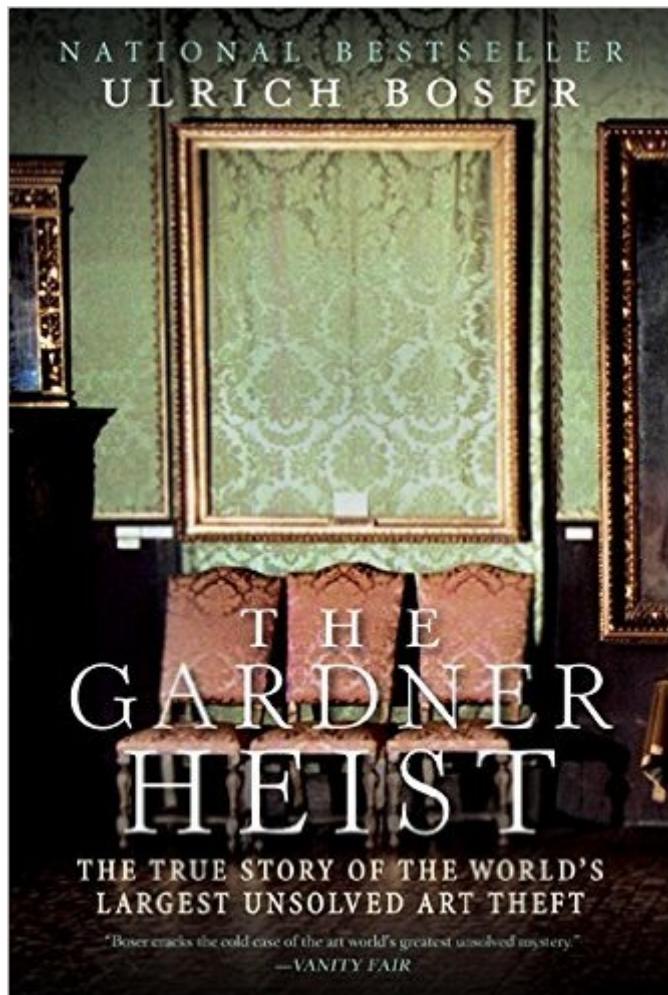


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# The Gardner Heist: The True Story Of The World's Largest Unsolved Art Theft



## Synopsis

Shortly after midnight on March 18, 1990, two men broke into the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston and committed the largest art heist in history. They stole a dozen masterpieces, including one Vermeer, three Rembrandts, and five Degas. But after thousands of leads and a \$5 million reward, none of the paintings have been recovered. Worth as much as \$500 million, the missing masterpieces have become one of the nation's most extraordinary unsolved mysteries. After the death of famed art detective Harold Smith, reporter Ulrich Boser decided to take up the case. Exploring Smith's unfinished leads, Boser travels deep into the art underworld and comes across a remarkable cast of characters, including a brilliant rock 'n' roll thief, a gangster who professes his innocence in rhyming verse, and the enigmatic late Boston heiress Isabella Stewart Gardner herself. Boser becomes increasingly obsessed with the case and eventually uncovers startling new evidence about the identities of the thieves. A tale of art and greed, of obsession and loss, *The Gardner Heist* is as compelling as the stolen masterpieces themselves.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Let me begin by being upfront and saying that I've been a private investigator in Boston for over twenty years and that I did work, albeit briefly, on the Gardner Museum theft back in the early 90's. I also know many other individuals involved in one way or another in the theft, some of whom are mentioned in this book. So when I saw this work I was very eager to read it, halfway through it I was struggling just to finish it. To begin with, the book is very poorly written, the authors narrative often

wanders off track, or goes in circles, or just drops one thing to move on to another without explanation. There's no ryme or reason to where he's taking the reader. And he spends more time waxing poetic about what the missing paintings mean to him, how enthralled he's become with them, then relaying any kind of useful information to the reader. His chapter concerning his imagined conversation with the thief should he ever find him was absurd. Mr. Boser has apparently been deeply effected by the loss of these paintings, that's great, he's a sensitive guy, but I really don't care. I didn't buy the book to hear about his yearning to see a lost Rembrandt, or his fantasy conversations with an imaginary thief. Additionally, some of the things he writes not only aren't informative at all, they simply don't make sense. In talking about Ms. Gardner's concern over her collection and it's safety he writes on page 54 of the paperback edition; "It makes it easy to see why some observers suggest that if she (Gardner) had lived another few decades after her death in July 1924, she might have prevented the heist of her beloved masterpieces---or at least have recovered them by now" What? I'm no math wiz but by my caclulation if Ms.

Ulrich Boser's *The Gardner Heist: The True Story of the World's Largest Unsolved Art Theft* combines several fascinating stories. It re-tells, virtually minute by minute, what is known of how this infamous 1990 art theft was staged. It relates a brief history of the museum's namesake, founder and benefactor, Isabella Gardner. It discusses the paintings that were ripped from the walls and their frames, including Vermeer's *The Concert*, Rembrandt's *The Storm on the Sea of Galilee*, and Manet's *Chez Tortoni* (the photo section provides pictures of them). It examines the security in the museum then and now. It introduces us, through interviews with Boser, to Harold Smith, the most successful art detective of his day. It kicks around the leads and theories that the FBI, police, and private investigators have followed up in the years since the heist. It looks into the lives of some of the men who've been suspected of and investigated for the actual robbery and others who might have the paintings now. The suspects include several vicious members of the underworld, one of whom is currently serving forty years in prison for an unrelated crime, and another who has blotted the FBI's Most Wanted list for years. The author explains how, after Smith's death (due to illness, not foul play), he, Boser, got caught up in trying to solve the mystery of the paintings and how they might be recovered. Smith had been devoting huge amounts of time to the case; his was a mission bordering on obsession. And he wasn't alone in the hunt. A five million dollar reward lured some, but for others the love of art kept them searching.

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