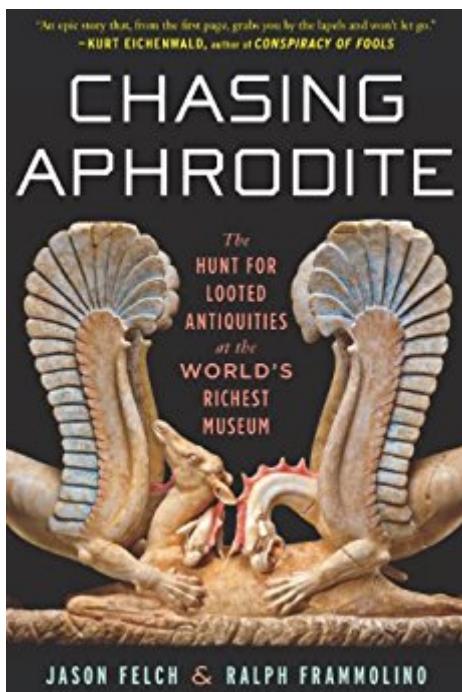


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# Chasing Aphrodite: The Hunt For Looted Antiquities At The World's Richest Museum



## Synopsis

In recent years, several of America's leading art museums have voluntarily given up their finest pieces of classical art to the governments of Italy and Greece. The monetary value is estimated at over half a billion dollars. Why would they be moved to such unheard-of generosity? The answer lies at the Getty, one of the world's richest and most troubled museums, and scandalous revelations that it had been buying looted antiquities for decades. Drawing on a trove of confidential museum records and frank interviews, Felch and Frammolino give us a fly-on-the-wall account of the inner workings of a world-class museum and tell the story of the Getty's dealings in the illegal antiquities trade. The outlandish characters and bad behavior could come straight from the pages of a thriller—the wealthy recluse founder, the cagey Italian art investigator, the playboy curator, the narcissist CEO—but their chilling effects on the rest of the art world have been all too real, as the authors show in novelistic detail. Fast-paced and compelling, *Chasing Aphrodite* exposes the layer of dirt beneath the polished façade of the museum business.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For hundreds of years collectors and museums have been buying pieces of ancient art looted from

tombs and other archaeological sites in Greece, and Italy. The Getty Museum was no exception. With their almost unlimited acquisitions budget, the curators tried to grab the best pieces that came on the market whether they had provenance or not. Provenance is the chain of ownership that determines whether piece of art is legitimate, or the product of looting and smuggling. The book was well written, fast paced, and hard to put down. The authors, reporters for the LA Times who led the investigation into the Getty Museum's misdeeds, present an almost incredible picture of greed, egotism and ambition. The Getty was blessed, or cursed, with an enormous amount of money to buy masterpieces. This led the curators into the murky underworld of illegal trade in antiquities. From the book, it's clear that the museum officials knew they were wrong to deal with the criminal underworld, but there was an issue that allowed them to save face. They believed they were saving the art from destruction. Ultimately, all they were doing was increasing the criminal activity of the looters. I found the book completely fascinating. It gave me a glimpse of the underbelly of the art world I didn't realize existed. I literally couldn't put it down. I highly recommend the book to anyone who loves a good detective story. The authors present a shocking picture of what ambition can do to a supposedly ethical organization. Well worth the read. I reviewed this book as part of the Vine Program.

I base my review on the text itself but the Kindle edition is a disgrace. This was a fascinating look into the issue surrounding the return of looted classical art work purchased by the Getty over the years. It is well written and develops a good chronological timeline as well as insight into the personalities involved that was not readily apparent if you read only the newspaper accounts. I would agree with most of the four- and five-star reviews here on . For Kindle customers I have this to add: this digital edition is a disgrace; I have notified . There are numerous editing errors, none of the photos are included, and there was no indication until I got to the end of the text that there were interesting and informative notes. In the "Notes" section there were two types of indicators for the notes, some linked back to the text and some did not. Some notes were preceded with this symbol "[>]" in front of the note, which links back to the text; others merely had what appears to be a page number in front of the note but the number did not link back to the text nor did the digital edition provide page numbers! Truly a disappointment.

This book examines museum acquisitions, and how ancient artifacts acquire value and are looted and trafficked. As far as the Getty and the Italian prosecutions, much has been written, but this book has a fascinating insight into the corporate board mentality that gives a sense of entitlement to

wealthy individuals and institutions. Particularly fascinating were the authors access to inside documents and notes. The reader can have no doubt about the complicit nature of the Getty, and its board members and staff.

I have to say, I absolutely loved this book. What isn't there to like? The rich and the famous's dirty secrets revealed, scandalous sex, endless money, and fabulous art... this book traces the at best questionable and often flat out illegal fashion in which the Getty Museum (and other prominent museums) gathered some of the museum treasures. You'll learn about endless financial scandals and flat out tax fraud, a trail of non stop affairs by the museum executives, the board that ignored the problems, and much more at America's wealthiest museum. And all of this corruption because of, or in spite of, being extremely well endowed. The book is very well written, essentially as investigative journalism. It is thoroughly researched, well written, and will plunge you into the lives of the museum workers who were actively performing misdeeds and the detectives (mostly Italian) trying to stop them. It is part mystery, part history, and 100% fun. If you enjoy museums, or live in LA, or just want a great story, read this book. It is one of my favorite books from this year so far.

I NEVER knew museums were into such skulduggery ! I always assumed that with their cultured airs they were cultured people of cultured tastes and impeccable standards. This book was an amazing education on how museums come by their valuable collections. This book centers on a particular scandal however, it is hard to imagine that this does not continue to some degree today. The looting of antiquities to fill the worlds' leading museums and the originating countries' fights to get the items back is a riveting read. Most museums required "incontrovertible " absolute proof of an item's being looted and sold through the black market before they would give it back to the requesting country. It was noted that this is tougher proof than is required for a murder trial ! Acquiring the treasured item....not so much proof needed. Giving it back.....more proof needed than to convict a murderer ! Amazing. It's a great read. Highly recommend it even if you're not a museum buff and familiar with all the antiquities being discussed.

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