

The 12-Hour Art Expert: Everything You Need to Know about Art in a Dozen Masterpieces

Noah Charney

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Art historian Noah Charney describes himself as “a proponent of making art feel accessible to anyone who is willing to meet it halfway,” and *The 12-Hour Art Expert* accomplishes that mission via an anecdotal, conversational approach that explains art history and various artistic movements in an informative, fun manner.

Charney covers ample material in clever ways. One chapter covers thirty “isms” (like romanticism, impressionism, and neoclassicism) from the ancient world through to contemporary times, introducing a useful cheat sheet with representative works. Another walks through the development of sculpture, from the ancient *Venus of Willendorf* (made at least twenty-five thousand years ago) through to Egyptian and Greek examples, the Renaissance, and contemporary art. Other chapters explain art techniques, materials, iconography, and the role of symbolism in interpreting paintings. While only a small portion of the total art discussed, the images included in the text are strong examples of these aspects of art.

And the book goes beyond art history to incorporate Charney’s specific expertise in the history of art theft, with an informative overview that discusses both famous heists and the processes used to determine a work’s authenticity. There’s a fascinating discussion of how advanced technology led to better restoration techniques, including identifying portions of paintings added later, or original artists’ contributions obscured by subsequent restorations. There’s even a timely discussion of what NFTs and other trends in art might mean for the future.

Throughout, Charney allows that specific pieces or styles might not appeal to every art appreciator. Still, *The 12-Hour Art Expert* is intended to serve as an introduction for anyone who wants to learn more about art, and it covers a wealth of information in a genial, accessible way.

JEFF FLEISCHER (July / August 2022)

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