

The Painter of Time

Matthew O'Connell

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This is an enchanting mystery, full of intrigue, romance, and time travel.

What starts out as the enchanting story of a young art restorer's attraction to a handsome colleague turns into a tale of intrigue and time travel in Matthew O'Connell's *The Painter of Time*.

Recently hired by the Cloisters in New York, Mackenzie Ferrara uncovers striking evidence that some of the paintings she has been working on might be forgeries, and that the person responsible might just be the mysterious, gifted Italian art restorer with whom she is falling in love.

O'Connell deftly weaves art history, colorful descriptions of the painter's and restorer's crafts, and the day-to-day lives of the characters into a multilayered story that satisfies on many levels. His gift for smooth, natural dialogue and ability to create sympathetic, attractive characters are coupled with comfortable, appropriate pacing that makes reading a pleasure. The plot's tension occurs on many levels: Mackenzie's insecurities over being so new to her job, her growing attraction to her more experienced colleague, and her disturbing discoveries as she researches the paintings being restored; the fierce love and protectiveness demonstrated by her retired detective father as he works to help his daughter solve the mystery despite the fact that resolution might end up breaking her heart; and Anthony's agony over his need to keep his secret even as his growing attraction to Mackenzie calls him to share it.

O'Connell uses simple, yet often sensual, means to develop the relationships between his characters—the cooking and serving of food, the comfort a pet cat can bring, the tentative reaching out to each other that is so characteristic of the beginning stages of a new relationship—all are handled with tenderness and insight. The author's descriptions of people, places, and artwork are richly colored and his flashbacks to the lives of the Renaissance painters whose works feature in the story are lively, intimate, and informative.

The book's layout and design are simple, uncluttered, and attractive, and the cover art adds to the overall elegance of the package. The inclusion of brief biographical sketches of important painters and other personages featured in the story enhance the historical depth of this delightful fictional work. The addition of a brief biography and photo of the author might lend a greater sense of completeness to the reader's experience.

Those who enjoy historical fiction and a good mystery with a touch of romance, especially if they are artists or lovers of art, will find much to enjoy in O'Connell's well-crafted book.

KRISTINE MORRIS (December 1, 2015)

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