

The art of steal



The Art of the Steal The film The Art of the Steal talks about one of the art world's latest cheat. Perhaps it tries to answer the question of ownership of the art-the public, or the museum. More interestingly is the question from whom should we protect the art. The film is a fascinating, and maddening documentary that tries to address these issues with a blend of clarity. The movie is never less than entertaining.

The subject of " The Art of the Steal" is the Barnes Foundation, which was an educational art institution based in Philadelphia. It was believed to have housed some of the greatest paintings on earth. Some of the collections were works of artists like Renoirs; 181, Cézannes; 69, Matisses; 59, Monets and Picassos. The story begins with the institution's guardian Albert Barnes allowing generous donation to dwindle to a point that the arts collection became a target for the rest of the art institutions, some of them having coveted the paintings since the demise of Barnes in the year 1951.

These institutions stepped in a claim to ' save' the Barnes Foundation, with the assist of its former president. It was scheduled to be moved this year (2012) from Barnes mansion, which was in Merion, to a new museum building in Philadelphia. However, this relocation was breaking the provision of trust, established in the will of Albert Barnes to keep his collections intact. The film director, Don Argott, could not photograph the inside of the mansion or the spectacular arboretum, the documentary, therefore, depends on the archival materials if not some brilliant visual effects; for instance, redlining. Barnes, a medical doctor, made his wealth from drugs that treated gonorrhoea, and he subsequently gathered impressionists' canvases just like other men who collected champagne corks or tin soldiers.

The film has few living heroes. Every person in this movie was attracted to

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the power and the money attached to these paintings; to be precise, they all want some. The legal issue is, however, simple; Barnes trust had been wrongfully dismantled when his wishes were ignored. The cultural issue seems more complex, why had the funds that were used to build a new Barnes, not been used in the renovation of the old one? What is the matter with keeping an Eden for art, which requires a pilgrimage to the environs? Anybody who visited the Barnes collection while still in Merion, and preferred the creaky staircases with the insufficiently lit interiors, or less ambitious but lovingly organized portrays of cats and cat lovers, the white wall warehouse, savors the memory of the quiet and unhurried time spent with the wonderful art. The film uses politically progressive sensibilities, what might seem to be distaste for wealth and power. To support this reactionary idea endangers the work of art, Barnes stipulated that his work should never be loaned, sold or removed from the building. The movie has both good and bad scenes, which comprehend the dynamics of the situation.

Works cited

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