The IIC Book Club offers an opportunity to dive into conservation literature in a distinct, direct and diverse way. Please read on for more details.

Our chosen text is:

The Fate of the Masterpiece: How the Monuments Men Rescued the Mystic Lamb from the Nazis by Noah Charney
We are encouraging book club members to start reading the text in advance of the sessions. We will then have the opportunity to meet three times with the author and a specialist guest over the span of four months, and you can join at any time. Those who are interested in joining the Club will be encouraged to purchase or borrow the text and "read along" with their peers. The group will be regularly updated on a fortnightly basis with set-goals for chapter progression, themes to consider in relation to the reading material and reminders to attend and participate in the presentation, discussion and final author panel. Whilst it’s useful to be able to access a copy of the book, it’s not mandatory to purchase the book in order to participate in the book club programme.

Sessions and Registration links:

- 20th June 2024, 19:00 (BST/UK) - This session is now over, a recording is available to watch exclusively on the IIC Community platform.
- 18th July 2024, 19:00 (BST/UK) - This session is now over you, a recording is available to watch here and on the IIC Community platform.
- 15th August 2024, 19:00 (BST/UK) - Zoom webinar registration link: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mWeLwDWSTrigxDSpReaq-Q

Updates, reminders and recordings will also be directed to the Community Platform. Members have the opportunity to post questions on this platform or directly to with the Book Club co-ordinator, Alexandra Taylor who can be contacted via the following email address: iic@iiconservation.org

An overview of the Sessions

In June we hosted an enlightening talk by renowned author Noah Charney, who introduced his latest book "The Fate of the Masterpiece: How the Monuments Men Rescued the Mystic Lamb from the Nazis" - a recording of this session is available for IIC members to view exclusively on the IIC Community platform. In this captivating exploration, Charney uncovers the gripping tale of the Monuments Men and their heroic efforts to safeguard cultural treasures during World War II. Focusing on the iconic Mystic Lamb painting, Charney reveals the remarkable journey of this masterpiece and the individuals who risked their lives to protect it from the clutches of Nazi plunder. Gain insight into the broader context of art preservation amidst conflict and discover the profound significance of cultural heritage in times of turmoil. This talk provided a compelling journey through history, art, and the resilience of the human spirit. You can find more information about his research here.

For the July session our guest speaker was Gretchen Allen who shared insights into the vital work being done with Blue Shield International in collaboration with the Irish National Committee for the Blue Shield and the Irish Defense Forces, alongside other EU and UN peacekeeping
forces, to safeguard cultural heritage in war zones. Gretchen’s dedication to this cause highlights the significance of international cooperation and proactive measures in preserving our shared heritage. Get ready to gain a deeper understanding of the critical role cultural property protection plays in promoting peace, stability, and the preservation of human history as Gretchen shares her knowledge and expertise. If you missed this session, you can watch the recording here.

The programme will conclude on the 15th of August at 19:00 BST with a panel discussion hosted via Zoom and recorded for the IIC Community Platform in which Noah Charney and Gretchen Allen will deep-dive into the text and its broader themes. It’s not too late to register for the August session here.

About the Author

Dr. Noah Charney is the internationally best-selling author of more than a dozen books, translated into fourteen languages, including The Collector of Lives: Giorgio Vasari and the Invention of Art, which was nominated for the 2017 Pulitzer Prize in Biography, and Museum of Lost Art, which was the finalist for the 2018 Digital Book World Award. He is a professor of art history specializing in art crime, and has taught for Yale University, Brown University, American University of Rome and University of Ljubljana. He is also the founder of ARCA, the Association for Research into Crimes against Art, a ground-breaking research group (www.artcrimeresearch.org) and teaches on their annual summer-long Postgraduate Program in Art Crime and Cultural Heritage Protection. Charney writes regularly for dozens of major magazines and newspapers, including The Guardian, the Washington Post, the Observer and The Art Newspaper. His latest books on art include The Devil in the Gallery: How Scandal, Shock and Rivalry Shaped the Art World, Making It: The Artist’s Survival Guide, The 12-Hour Art Expert: Everything You Need to Know About Art in a Dozen Masterpieces, and Brushed Aside: The Untold Story of Women in Art, several of which were Amazon #1 best-sellers in their category. He also published the critically-acclaimed The Slavic Myths (Thames & Hudson) in the fall of 2023 and recently fronted an influencer campaign for Samsung, in 2022 he presented a BBC Radio 4 documentary, China’s Stolen Treasures. Charney’s TED Ed videos (some on art crime) have been viewed by millions, and he featured in a recent Amazon Prime documentary, The Picasso of Thieves. A course of his, “Lost Art,” featured this summer for The Teaching Company’s Great Courses/Wondrium, the first of several that are scheduled, and he teaches online courses for Atlas Obscura and Yale University on art theft and forgery. He lives in Slovenia with his wife, children and their hairless dog, Hubert van Eyck (believe it or not). Learn more at www.noahcharney.com.

Guest speaker: Gretchen Allen

Gretchen Allen is a book and paper conservator currently serving as Senior Conservator at the National Archives of Ireland. She is a member of the Irish National Committee for the Blue Shield and her academic work focuses on the conservator’s role in mitigating the harm done by the criminal elements of the art market. Allen has developed an interest in the darker aspects of the art market while studying and working in major colonial collections in California and the UK. Pursuant to these experiences she undertook a postgraduate certification in Antiquities Trafficking and Art Crime through the University of Glasgow. She has focused her subsequent
research on the role of the conservator in addressing and mitigating the harm done by the criminal elements of the art market and by violent conflict. As a member of the National Committee for the Blue Shield, Ireland, she has participated in training and advocacy for cultural property protection in UN Peacekeeping situations and active conflict zones.

We do hope you decide to join us for a stimulating opportunity to stretch and challenge how you think about art crime and cultural heritage protection, alongside other IIC members.

JOIN IIC's BOOK CLUB FUTURE SESSIONS

If you are interested in taking part in future book club session, please register your interest in receiving more information here. Everyone is welcome to join, IIC members receive exclusive access to recorded sessions and additional resources, if you are not already an IIC member now is an excellent time to join.