



I Was Vermeer: The Rise and Fall of the Twentieth Century's Greatest Forger

Frank Wynne

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Frank Wynne's remarkable book tells the story of Han van Meegeren, a paranoid, drug-addicted, second-rate painter whose Vermeer forgeries made him a secret superstar of the art world. During van Meegeren's heyday as a forger of Vermeers, he earned the equivalent of fifty million dollars, the acclaim of the world's press, and the satisfaction of swindling Hermann Göring himself, trading the Nazi commander one of his forgeries in exchange for the return of hundreds of looted Dutch paintings. But he was undone by his very success, thriving so noticeably during World War II that when it ended, he was arrested as a Nazi collaborator. His only defense was to admit that he himself had painted the Old Masters that had passed through his hands—a confession the public refused to believe, until, in a huge media event, the courts staged the public painting of what would be van Meegeren's last "Vermeer."

I Was Vermeer is a gripping real-life mystery that exposes the life and techniques of the consummate art forger; the fascinating work of the experts who try to track down the fakes; and the collusion and ego in the art establishment that, even today, allow forgery to thrive. Wry, amoral, and plotted like a thriller, it is the first major book in forty years on this astonishing episode in history.

Frank Wynne is a writer and award-winning literary translator. Born in Ireland, he has lived and worked in Dublin, Paris, Amsterdam, London, and Buenos Aires, and currently lives in San José, Costa Rica. He has translated more than a dozen novels, among them the works of Michel Houellebecq, Frédéric Beigbeder, Pierre Mérot, and Ahmadou Kourouma. A journalist and broadcaster, he has written for the *Sunday Times*, the *Independent*, the *Irish Times*, *Melody Maker*, and *Time Out*.

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