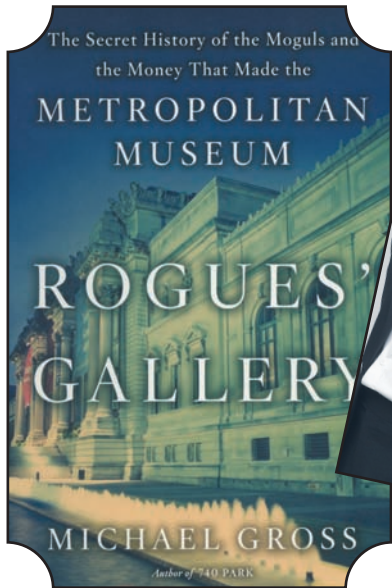




# GEORGE CHRISTY



Lindsay McCrum

Rogues' Gallery author Michael Gross

"Behind every great fortune is a great crime," assessed French novelist Honore de Balzac during the 19th century, and author **Michael Gross** revises the quote. "Behind almost every painting is a fortune, and behind that a sin or a crime," is Michael's perception, after completing his eye-opening *Rogues' Gallery*, *The Secret History of Moguls and the Money That Made the Metropolitan Museum*. Boldly pursuing his facts and findings, Michael's written a pageturner that unravels like an elite whodunit, and is reaping encomiums from advance readers. Destined to be the talk of art circles in the U.S. and abroad, Michael says the book took three years in the making.

"A doozy, the author clearly relishes dishing the dirt, but he offers a supremely detailed history of the museum," says the *Kirkus Reviews*. "Sharp and well-constructed, the readers will marvel at how the institution transcended the bickering and back-handed power plays to become one of the largest and most prestigious museums in the world. A deft rendering of the down-and-dirty politics of the art world."

From the *Publishers Weekly*: "For more than a century, the coupling of art with commerce has made the New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art the world's most glamorous where ... an intriguing look at the symbiosis of culture and cash."

Published next week by Broadway/Random House, *Rogues' Gallery* shocked ten-year-term Met museum director **Tom Hoving**, "My God! The backstabbing and Machiavellian conspiracies! I had no idea. Riveting and accurate ... I learned a lot!" Meanwhile, a French Website declares it will "provoque un scandale."

Michael, a Vassar graduate, explores the museum's 138-year history, with its two million art works covering five thousand

years, and attracting five million visitors annually. Exposing the Byzantine egos of the maneuvering benefactors and of string-pulling puppeteer John R. Rockefeller Jr., he doesn't spare the curators or the collectors. Among the players are Charles Engelhard, considered the inspiration for the James Bond villain, Goldfinger, wife Jane Engelhard and daughter **Annette Mannheimer Reed de la Renta**; Beverly Hills party girl **Jayne Larkin** who married oil mogul Charles Wrightsman; Brooke Astor; **Henry Kravis**; **Henry Kissinger**; *Vogue* editors Diana Vreeland and **Anna Wintour** whose May 4th Costume Institute Ball is benefiting the museum, themed this year around The Model as Muse.

Not only by art connoisseurs but by culturati hungry for a captivating, tattle-tale yarn, *Rogues' Gallery* will spark a furor, as did Michael's previous bestseller, *740 Park*, which was banned by the Met's book shop. Considered Manhattan's "richest, most prestigious cooperative apartment building" (built by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis' grandfather), *740 Park* was described by *Fortune* magazine as "jaw-dropping apartment porn."

In and out of Los Angeles to research his next book, agented by **Dan Stone** of Trident Media with a mid-six figure deal from Broadway Books, Michael is investigating what he describes as the Platinum Triangle, the real estate community of Beverly Hills, Holmbury Hills and Bel-Air. "I've interviewed descendants of the founders and those earliest homeowners. I'm thrilled at how eager people are to help, and how proud they are of their neighborhoods and their homes. I've met or lunched with realtors **Jerry Jolton**, **Jeff Hyland**, **Shirley Wells**, **Mike Silverman**, **Ron de Salvo**, **Said Nourmand**, **Jade Mills**, **Rose Borne**, **Valerie Fitzgerald**, **Jonathan Sands**, **Marjorie Oswald**, and

**Russ Filice**. Also, I'm touring the movie star homes with real estate aficionados.

"After enduring three years of hostility from the powers-that-be at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who made it abundantly clear how much they despised writers they 'didn't control' (their words), it's a pleasure beyond measure to discover Californians are far, far more hospitable, and accept my book as a pleasant opportunity rather than as a cross to bear."

Michael fearlessly unearths secrets, regardless of what the Met's **Philippe de Montebello** tells Michael that he was "laboring under a misconception ... the museum has no secrets." Well, it has. Plenty of them with the famous power players and the *arrivistes*, and who knows what mysteries Michael will unveil about landowners hereabouts.

"You won't need a face lift, when **Mila Moursi** is your facialist," mused **Sherry Lansing**, a devoted fan of Mila's. "I never pass on my weekly appointments. When I'm out of town, and miss her gentle massaging fingers energizing my face, I always follow her instructions about what to do on my own." Sherry, of the flawless complexion, was honored with the third annual Patron of the Arts Award from the Screen Actors Guild Foundation during a garden luncheon, underwritten by Integrated Wealth Management's **Jim Casey**, at the Beverly Hills estate of philanthropist **Kate Edelman Johnson**. Previous honorees were **Sydney Pollack** and **Jerry Weintraub**.

In their youth, Sherry and **Linda Gray** would meet during their modeling "go sees," and became pals. Which made sense last week for Linda to motor from Santa Clarita to Beverly Hills for a heart-to-heart discussion with Sherry, after our meal catered by New Leaf Catering of Palm Springs. A cum laude graduate of Northwestern University, Chicago-born Sherry taught high school English and math for four years. While driving to Los Angeles, she fostered dreams of being an actress, but soon realized that she preferred the behind-the-scenes action of producing, marketing and distribution. After a stint as a story editor, she was appointed in 1984 as president of 20th Century Fox, creating such hits as *Fatal Attraction*, *School Ties*, *Indecent Proposal*, *The Accused*. Eight years later, she was named chairman of Paramount Pictures, and during her tenure of 12 years, the studio embraced immense success with *Titanic* (1997), *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Braveheart* (1995).

"I left Paramount at the ripe young age of 60," she noted. "A generation ago, that would have been a retirement

age. But my generation has more energy, drive, a greater life expectancy, and we're anxious to do something with this third act of our lives. Which is why I created the Sherry Lansing Foundation, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to researching cures for cancer, which took my mother's life, and raising the bar for education, art and culture, and political activism." She's happily wed these 19 years to producer-director **Billy Friedkin**, who, she beams, has lost 40 pounds! Billy's helmed such classics as *The Exorcist* and *The French Connection*, and stages operas with our L.A. Opera, as well as around the world.

**JoBeth Williams**, who presides over the Screen Actors Guild Foundation Board, reminded the crowd of the "give back" philosophy the Foundation is proud of. When **Hilary Swank** was in need and living out of her car, the Foundation arranged housing and board for her, as it did for other now-notable SAG members. "Our mission's to assist, educate and inspire actors," offered JoBeth. "Besides the financial assistance, scholarships are available, as are industry seminars, short term grants for health insurance." She added that the Foundation has offices available where actors may prepare videos and other necessities for their auditions.

Having lost her husband, the distinguished attorney Deane Johnson, to Alzheimer's, **Kate Edelman Johnson** is a huge supporter of Alzheimer's research. In addition to her philanthropic work, fashionable Kate's been hosting **Princess Theodora** of Greece, who's relocated to Beverly Hills to pursue her acting ambition. "I fell in love with acting in high school," says the youngest daughter of **King Constantine II** of Greece and **Queen Anne-Marie**. Having received her BA from Brown University in 2006, she's studying at the Beverly Hills Playhouse, and will film *The Lightkeepers* in Cape Cod with director **Daniel Adams**. Her

theatrical name is **Theodora Greece**.

In the crowd were SAG's **Marcia Smith**, Foundation members **Elliott Gould** and **Valerie Harper**, also **Stefanie Powers**, **Lorna Luft**, **James Caan**, **Mario Rivelli**, **Alana and Michael Jackson**, **Edita Brychta**, and PR dynamo **Jeffrey Lane**. We sat with **Patricia Kelly**, who was off for a weekend in Fort Collins, Colorado with mom **Barbara** and professor dad **Richard**, and we caught up with our other seat-mate, that worldly-wise PR vet-



Maxine Picard

Kate Edelman Johnson with Princess Theodora of Greece at Kate's garden party for the Screen Actors Guild Foundation

eran **Dale Olson**, who knows more about what's under the rock in Tinsel Town than all of us.

"He is a godsend," Dale Olson informed about **Bill Austin**, the founder of Starkey Hearing Aids. "When I couldn't hear a word in a conference room, he upgraded my hearing devices so that they'll blot out the ambient sound, and it's no secret that he's done this for half of Hollywood. Top talent gathers every year in Minneapolis for the annual Starkey gala that raises money for Bill to travel the world to provide hearing aids for children in underprivileged countries. Early Starkey devotees included Gene Autry and Rod Steiger ... I'm sensitive about mentioning those who are living, and there are many. Bill's noble quest remains: 'So the world may hear.'"

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Jeremy Piven



Celebrity Photo/Scott Downie

Roma Downey and husband Mark Burnett attended opening of Malibu Lumber Yard with its high-end boutiques.

Mena Suvari