Triton Museum Book Club: The Stories of Art

First Wednesday of each month.
Doors open for coffee and donuts at 9:00 a.m., Lecture from 9:30-10:30 a.m.

We invite you to read selected novels about art or famous artists before we meet, and then join us on the first Wednesday morning of each month, for an art history presentation about that month’s novel, the portrayed artist, and related art, as presented by Triton Museum Executive Director, Preston Metcalf and Triton Curator, Vanessa Callanta. Learn how the novel does — or doesn’t — comport to the actual history of its subject and hear more about the artwork and the artists’ times in which they were created.

Admission to the monthly book club art history lectures is free for Triton Museum of Art Members ($5 donation requested for non-members), and all are welcome, whether you have actually read the book or not. Coffee and pastries will be served.

Following is the full list of novels for the year (January – December 2023), and the dates of the art history lectures for each book:

**January 4, 2023**
*The Last Painting of Sara de Vos, by Dominic Smith*

In 1631, Sara de Vos is admitted as a master painter to the Guild of St. Luke's in Holland, the first woman to be so recognized. Three hundred years later, only one work attributed to de Vos is known to remain—a haunting winter scene, *At the Edge of a Wood*, which hangs over the bed of a wealthy descendant of the original owner. An Australian grad student, Ellie Shipley, struggling to stay afloat in New York, agrees to paint a forgery of the landscape, a decision that will haunt her. Because now, half a century later, she’s curating an exhibit of female Dutch painters, and both versions threaten to arrive. As the three threads intersect, *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos* mesmerizes while it grapples with the demands of the artistic life, showing how the deceits of the past can forge the present.

While Sara de Vos is a fictional character, her story reflects the rising role of women artists in the golden aged of Dutch painting. Please join Executive Director Preston Metcalf as he explores the contributions and significance of these pioneering women artists.
February 1, 2023

*Rodin’s Lover*, by Heather Webb

As a woman, aspiring sculptor Camille Claudel has plenty of critics, especially her ultra-traditional mother. But when Auguste Rodin makes Camille his apprentice—and his muse—their passion inspires groundbreaking works. Yet, Camille’s success is overshadowed by her lover’s rising star, and her obsessions cross the line into madness. *Rodin’s Lover* brings to life the volatile love affair between one of the era’s greatest artists and a woman entwined in a tragic dilemma she cannot escape.

In this month’s Book Club lecture/presentation, Executive Director Preston Metcalf will explore the art of Camille Claudel and Auguste Rodin.
March 1, 2023

Georgia: A Novel of Georgia O’Keeffe, by Dawn Tripp

In 1916, Georgia O’Keeffe is a young, unknown art teacher when she travels to New York to meet Stieglitz, the famed photographer and art dealer, who has discovered O’Keeffe’s work and exhibits it in his gallery. Their connection is instantaneous. Yet as her own creative force develops, Georgia begins to push back against what critics and others are saying about her and her art and soon she must make difficult choices to live a life she believes in.

In this month’s Book Club lecture/presentation, Triton Curator Vanessa Callanta will explore the art of the remarkable Georgia O’Keeffe, and the stage she set for women artists — and all artists— in the 20th and 21st centuries.
April 5, 2023
The Flanders Panel, by Arturo Pérez-Reverte

A fifteenth-century painting by a Flemish master is about to be auctioned when Julia, a young art restorer, discovers a peculiar inscription hidden in a corner: Who killed the knight? In the painting, the Duke of Flanders and his knight are locked in a game of chess, and a dark lady lurks mysteriously in the background. Julia is determined to solve the five-hundred-year-old murder, but as she begins to look for clues, several of her friends in the art world are brutally murdered in quick succession. Messages left with the bodies suggest a crucial connection between the chess game in the painting, the knight's murder, the sordid underside of the contemporary art world, and the latest deaths. Just when all of the players in the mystery seem to be pawns themselves, events race toward a shocking conclusion. A thriller like no other, The Flanders Panel presents a tantalizing puzzle for any connoisseur of mystery, chess, art, and history.

In an interesting side journey through art history, Executive Director Preston Metcalf will look at the curious ways in which the game of chess has been portrayed in art, and the symbolism it contains.
May 3, 2023

*Painter to the King*, by Amy Sackville

This is a portrait of Diego Velazquez, from his arrival at the court of King Philip IV of Spain, to his death 38 years and scores of paintings later. It is a portrait of a relationship that is not quite a friendship, between an artist and his subject. It is a portrait of a ruler, always on duty, and increasingly burdened by a life of public expectation and repeated private grief. And it is a portrait of a court collapsing under the weight of its own excess. Unfolding through series of masterly set-pieces and glancing sketches, this is a novel of brilliance, imagination, and sheer style -- about what is shown and what is seen, about art and life.

In this month’s Book Club lecture/presentation, Executive Director Preston Metcalf will look at the life and art of the remarkable Spanish painter, Diego Velasquez.
Buckinghamshire, 1942: in a gothic villa deep in the woods near Bletchley Park, artist Vivienne Thayer paints "Black" propaganda to demoralize the enemy. Despite government restrictions, she enjoys her work—and finds time for a lover as well as her indulgent husband—but where do acts of subterfuge end? Meanwhile, in London, three women painters—Laura Knight, Faith Farr, and Cecily Browne—record wartime life. Instructed by the men in power, even Churchill himself, they must conjure up the bulldog spirit. But as the war's course turns and the lives of these artists collide, each must ask herself what truths and what lies they are prepared to tell, even to those closest to them.

A little-known corner of art history is inhabited by several remarkable women artists, who employed their skills to help win a war. Please join Triton Curator Vanessa Callanta as she explores the women who fought a war, with art as their weapon.
The year is 1517. Dismas is a relic hunter who procures “authentic” religious relics for wealthy and influential clients. When his patron's demands for grander relics increase, Dismas and his artist friend Dürer fabricate a shroud to sell to the unsuspecting noble. Unfortunately, Dürer's reckless pride exposes the trickery, so Albrecht puts Dismas and Dürer in the custody of four mercenaries and sends them all to steal Christ's burial cloth (the Shroud of Chambéry), Europe's most celebrated artifact. On their journey to Savoy where the Shroud will be displayed, they battle a lustful count and are joined by a beautiful female apothecary. It is only when they reach their destination, they realize they are not alone in their intentions to acquire a relic of dubious legitimacy.

Please join Executive Director Preston Metcalf for a look at the curious role of relics in the Medieval era, and how fanaticism, devotion, greed, treachery, theft, and belief all combine to give us some truly remarkable art and artifacts.
August 2, 2023

*Girl Reading*, by Katie Ward

A young orphan poses for a Renaissance maestro in medieval Siena. A servant girl in seventeenth-century Amsterdam snatches a moment away from her work to lose herself in tales of knights and battles. An eighteenth-century female painter completes a portrait of a deceased poetess for her lover. A Victorian medium poses with a book in one of the first photographic studios. A girl suffering her first heartbreak witnesses intellectual and sexual awakening during the Great War. A young woman reading in a bar catches the eye of a young man who takes her picture. And in the not-so-distant future a woman navigates a cyber-reality that has radically altered the way people experience art and life. Each chapter of Katie Ward’s novel immerses readers into the intimate tales behind the creation of seven portraits by artists, ranging from Simone Martini to Pieter Janssens Elinga to a Flickr photographer.

In this month’s Book Club lecture/presentation, Executive Director Preston Metcalf guides us through the amazing and rich interplay of art and the act of reading, as portrayed by some of history’s greatest artists.
September 6, 2023

*I Am Madame X*, by Gioia Diliberto

When John Singer Sargent unveiled *Madame X* -- his famous portrait of American beauty Virginie Gautreau -- at the 1884 Paris Salon, its subject's bold pose and provocative dress shocked the public and the critics, smashing Sargent's dreams of a Paris career. In this remarkable novel, Gioia Diliberto tells Virginie's story, drawing on the sketchy historical facts to re-create Virginie's tempestuous personality and the captivating milieu of nineteenth-century Paris. Born in New Orleans and raised on a lush plantation, Virginie fled to France during the Civil War, where she was absorbed into the fascinating and wealthy world of grand ballrooms, dressmakers' salons, and artists' ateliers. Even before Sargent painted her portrait, Virginie's reputation for promiscuity and showy self-display made her the subject of vicious Paris gossip.

Immersing the reader in Belle Epoque Paris, *I Am Madame X* is a compulsively readable and richly imagined novel illuminating the struggle between Virginie and Sargent over the outcome of a painting that changed their lives and affected the course of art history.

Please join Triton Curator Vanessa Callanta as she looks at the history of the remarkable painting, *Madame X*, and how it was, in many ways, the catalyst for the age of celebrity in which we now reside.
August 1911: The Mona Lisa is stolen by Vincent Peruggia. Exactly what happens in the two years before its recovery is a mystery. Many replicas of the Mona Lisa exist, and more than one historian has wondered if the painting now returned to the Louvre is a fake, switched in 1911.

Present day: Art professor Luke Perrone digs for the truth behind his most famous ancestor: Peruggia. His search attracts an Interpol detective with something to prove and an unfamiliar but curiously helpful woman. Soon, Luke tumbles deep into the world of art and forgery, a land of obsession and danger.

The history of the Mona Lisa — arguably the most famous painting in the world — is rich and loaded with twists and turns. Join us as Executive Director Preston Metcalf takes us along as he travels the history of one incredible work.
In this ambitious debut novel, fact and fiction blend together brilliantly. While scholars have largely relegated Mamah to a footnote in the life of America's greatest architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, author Nancy Horan gives full weight to their dramatic love story and illuminates Cheney's profound influence on Wright. Horan weaves little-known facts into a compelling narrative, vividly portraying the conflicts and struggles of a woman forced to choose between the roles of mother, wife, lover, and intellectual. Horan’s Mamah is a woman seeking to find her own place, her own creative calling in the world. Mamah’s is an unforgettable journey marked by choices that reshape her notions of love and responsibility, leading inexorably to this novel’s stunning conclusion.

The art and architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright in many ways defines the role of architecture in the 20th Century. This month Executive Director Preston Metcalf will look at the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright and how they continue to influence us today.
Paris 1927: One day in July, a young American named Rafaela Fano gets into the car of a coolly dazzling stranger, the Art Deco painter Tamara de Lempicka. Struggling to support herself, Rafaela agrees to model for the artist, a dispossessed Saint Petersburg aristocrat with a murky past. The two become lovers, and Rafaela inspires Tamara's most iconic Jazz Age images, among them her most accomplished—and coveted—works of art. A season as the painter's muse teaches Rafaela some hard lessons: Tamara is a cocktail of raw hunger and glittering artifice. And all the while, their romantic idyll is threatened by history's darkening tide. A tour de force of historical imagination, *The Last Nude* is about genius and craft, love and desire, regret and, most of all, hope that can transcend time and circumstance.

Please join Triton Curator Vanessa Callanta as she guides us through the Art Deco of the Jazz Age, and the art of one remarkable and irrepressible woman, Tamara de Lempicka.