



Association of Art Museum Directors

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August is vacation time. As I write this, I'm getting ready to take some time off and hope many of you are doing the same. With this in mind, my message this month features a few suggestions for fun summer reading—books I've enjoyed or am taking with me on my trip. Whether fiction or nonfiction, the following books explore various aspects of the visual arts and art museums. Some are lighter than others, but in all cases, I guarantee that deaccessioning and strategic plans are *not* their major themes.

The Hound in the Left-hand Corner: A Novel, Giles Waterfield

This is a comedy of manners about "BRIT: The Museum of British History," an imaginary but recognizable museum about to open its biggest exhibition ever. The author, a former director of the Dulwich Picture Gallery, captures one insider's look at the museum world and offers great fictionalized portraits of museum directors, boards, staff, and patrons.

My Name is Red, Orhan Pamuk

Set in 16th-century Istanbul, this novel tells the story of a master miniaturist who is commissioned to illustrate a book celebrating the sultan. When two men are murdered, the tale becomes equal parts mystery, love story, and a debate about art and representation.

Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings, James Elkins

James Elkins, a professor of art history, theory, and criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, makes the case for subjective responses to paintings. Relying on over 400 responses to ads he placed asking people to contact him if they ever cried in front of a painting, he explores why such responses are more infrequent today than in the past and argues for creating conditions that allow for visceral responses to works of art.

Museum Legs: Fatigue and Hope in the Face of Art, Amy Whitaker

The title of this book comes from research on "museum fatigue." Whitaker, armed with an MFA, MBA, and art museum experience, asks the question why visiting museums (which she loves) can sometimes end up being more enervating than inspiring. In thought provoking, irreverent essays, she explores everything from class politics to economic forces while pondering the essential nature of art museums. Here's what our own Gail Andrews says on the back cover:

"Whitaker's thoughtful and intriguing essays are a reminder of the gifts of moments of reflection, insight, and pleasure that museums can offer to society, and the missed opportunities if we aren't ever mindful of what museums can accomplish."

If you have a book to recommend, please share your suggestions by commenting on AAMD's new Facebook page or by tweeting @MuseumDirectors with the hash tag #artbooks
And best to all for a restful and reenergizing vacation!

Janet Landay
Executive Director