



# FRIENDS OF THE PALM SPRINGS LIBRARY

BOOK CLUB

FOPSL Book Club: December 20, 2019

Book: ***Caveat Emptor***:

*The Secret Life of an American Forger*

Author: Ken Perenyi

Discussion leader: David Kelly

What fun to lead a discussion and coordinate the book club meeting at the same time! Sorry I didn't get to pose with the book for our usual snapshot. Even more surprising was the discussion about Ken Perenyi's memoir, *Caveat Emptor*.

The meeting started with a ten-minute CBS Sunday Morning video interview with the author courtesy of YouTube. In it we saw examples of the artist's technique and methods to make a recent work of art look hundreds of years old. The video set the stage for what was largely a discussion of ethics.

Never charged with a crime primarily because the statute of limitations had run, Perenyi still paints reproductions of famous works. One of our club members visited his gallery in Miami Beach and made a purchase. The reproductions are labeled as such.

But what about the works he sent to auction houses pretending not to know their provenance? The experts were fooled. Should he have profited? Criminals who seek to profit from authoring books often find the proceeds going to the victims. But in Perenyi's case, no crime was established.

Who is the victim? The ego of a buyer who trusted appraisals, the reputations of auction houses, and the authenticity of art world-wide?

Perhaps *Caveat Emptor* is the ideal lead-in to next month's selection *It Can't Happen Here* by Sinclair Lewis. In a time when we are confronted with the truth and "alternate facts" we should question the value of authentic masterpieces and their reproductions.

David Kelly

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Friends of the Palm Springs Library Book Club meets online

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