



Reading between the Lions

The Art Institute's Book Club

www.artic.edu/bookclub

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Lost Painting by Jonathan Harr

1. What was each person's relationship to Caravaggio's *Taking of Christ*? What was he or she seeking to learn or gain?
2. How was the research in the book different from research you have done? How were the resources different from those you're used to?
3. What, if anything, was surprising about what art historians do? What about the conservators?
4. Is conservation a science or an art? What about connoisseurship?
5. What constitutes proof and validation in the world of art history?
6. What is the value of scholarly opinion? How would the story be different if Sir Denis had not given the painting his seal of approval?
7. Why is it so important for art to be authenticated? Aside from monetary, what value is added by authentication?
8. Who do you think may have been left out of the book? Whose voices were absent?
9. What do you think about Francesca and Laura's decision to publish? What rights did they have to their own research? What did they owe others? Were you surprised by their decisions?
10. Who truly owns the painting? Who deserves to own it?
11. What did you think about how they went about (not) revealing the origins of the painting? Do you agree with what ultimately happened to the painting?
12. What do you think about the politics of museum culture? Were you surprised by how *The Supper at Emmaus* loan was handled? How is each country's museum tradition portrayed? Which tradition aligns most closely with your own beliefs?
13. What did you find unbelievable about the story? Do you think the research was as easy as it was laid out in the book?
14. Were you rooting for any of the characters? With whom did you most identify?
15. For those of you who saw *The Supper at Emmaus* while it was at the Art Institute—what makes Caravaggio so special? Why do you think he is so popular today? Have you caught Caravaggio fever?

Additional Reading

M: *The Man Who Became Caravaggio* by Peter Robb