



The Last Painting of Sara de Vos: A Novel

By Dominic Smith

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"Written in prose so clear that we absorb its images as if by mind meld, "The Last Painting" is gorgeous storytelling: wry, playful, and utterly alive, with an almost tactile awareness of the emotional contours of the human heart. Vividly detailed, acutely sensitive to stratifications of gender and class, it's fiction that keeps you up at night ? first because you're barreling through the book, then because you've slowed your pace to a crawl, savoring the suspense." ?*Boston Globe*

- *A New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice*
- *A New York Times Bestseller*

A RARE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PAINTING LINKS THREE LIVES, ON THREE CONTINENTS, OVER THREE CENTURIES IN *THE LAST PAINTING OF SARA DE VOS*, AN EXHILARATING NEW NOVEL FROM DOMINIC SMITH.

Amsterdam, 1631: Sara de Vos becomes the first woman to be admitted as a master painter to the city's Guild of St. Luke. Though women do not paint landscapes (they are generally restricted to indoor subjects), a wintry outdoor scene haunts Sara: She cannot shake the image of a young girl from a nearby village, standing alone beside a silver birch at dusk, staring out at a group of skaters on the frozen river below. Defying the expectations of her time, she decides to paint it.

New York City, 1957: The only known surviving work of Sara de Vos, *At the Edge of a Wood*, hangs in the bedroom of a wealthy Manhattan lawyer, Marty de Groot, a descendant of the original owner. It is a beautiful but comfortless landscape. The lawyer's marriage is prominent but comfortless, too. When a struggling art history grad student, Ellie Shipley, agrees to forge the painting for a dubious art dealer, she finds herself entangled with its owner in ways no one could predict.

Sydney, 2000: Now a celebrated art historian and curator, Ellie Shipley is mounting an exhibition in her field of specialization: female painters of the Dutch Golden Age. When it becomes apparent that both the original *At the Edge of a Wood* and her forgery are en route to her museum, the life she has carefully

constructed threatens to unravel entirely and irrevocably.

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The Last Painting of Sara de Vos: A Novel By Dominic Smith Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of April 2016: Across three continents and four hundred years, Dominic Smith has spun a stunning tale of forgeries and deaths, deception and love to reveal the lasting legacy of a fateful brush stroke. Akin to the page-turning greats like *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and *The Goldfinch*, *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos* is held together by the gravitas of a single painting to tell the story of two women—their mistakes and love affairs, their devotion to art and their struggles to thrive in a male dominated profession. When Ellie Shipley, a young art student, agrees to copy the seventeenth century painting, “At the Edge of a Wood,” her future becomes irrevocably entangled with Sara de Vos, the artist whose work she forged. Weaving together the past and present lives of Sara and Ellie and their two paintings, Smith brilliantly transports readers from 1950s New York - the mahogany walls of Upper West side apartments and the grit of Brooklyn, to the moody Dutch countryside of the 1600s to Sydney Australia’s sun-soaked harbor in 2000. A vivid, enthralling novel that is as timeless and luminous as the painting itself. --*Al Woodworth*

From Kirkus Reviews

Kirkus Reviews, starred review

"Smith's latest novel is a rich and detailed story that connects a 17th-century Dutch painting to its 20th-century American owner and the lonely but fervent art student who makes the life-changing decision to forge it. This is a beautiful, patient, and timeless book, one that builds upon centuries and shows how the smallest choices—like the chosen mix for yellow paint—can be the definitive markings of an entire life."

Review

"As this story of art, beauty, deception, and the harshest kinds of loss ranged over continents and centuries, I was completely transfixed by the sense of unfolding revelation. *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos* is, quite simply, one of the best novels I have ever read, and as close to perfect as any book I'm likely to encounter in my reading life. One of those rare books I'll return to again and again in the coming years." --Ben Fountain, bestselling author of *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, a National Book Finalist

"The Last Painting of Sara de Vos is a story told in layers of light. From afar, this novel is so beautiful, the prose so clear and vivid, that it seems effortless; on close examination, one sees the rich thematic palette Dominic Smith has used. This is a novel of love and longing, of authenticity and ethical shadows, and, most importantly, of art as alchemy, the way that it can turn grief into profound beauty." --Lauren Groff, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Fates and Furies*

"Gliding gracefully from grungy 1950s Brooklyn to the lucent interiors of Golden Age Holland and the sun-splashed streets of contemporary Sydney, the novel links the lives of two troubled, enigmatic, and hugely talented young women, one of them an artist, the other, her forger. A page-turning book with much to say about the pain and exhilaration of art and life." Geraldine Brooks, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *March* and *The Year of Wonders*

"In *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos*, Dominic Smith moves effortlessly between his 17th century artist and those who fall under the spell of her work more than 300 years later. Smith is a writer of huge gifts and his descriptions of the painting and of those who fall in love with it, (and with each other) are rendered with wondrous intelligence and keen wit. The result is a novel of surprising beauty and piercing suspense. I couldn't stop turning the pages even while the last thing I wanted was to reach the end." Margot Livesey, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Flight of Gemma Hardy*

"Highly evocative of time and place, this stunning novel explores a triumvirate of fate, choice, and consequence and is worthy of comparison to Tracy Chevalier's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch*. Just as a painter may utilize thousands of fine brushstrokes, Smith slowly creates a masterly, multi-layered story that will dazzle readers of fine historical fiction." *Library Journal*

"An elegant page-turner that carries its erudition effortlessly on an energetic plot . . . His narratives may be complex, but that quality only enhances their suspense . . . Apart from the story's firm historical grounding, the narrative has a supple omniscience that glides, Möbius-like, among the centuries without a snag . . . Smith's 1637 is as convincing a realization as his 1957 or 2000, Amsterdam in its Golden Age no less vivid than millennial Manhattan . . . *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos* may begin as a mystery about a crime, but by the end the reader sees far beneath that surface: All along it was a mystery of the heart." ?Kathryn Harrison, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Riveting . . . His descriptions are beautifully precise . . . The genius of Smith's book is not just the caper plot but also the interweaving of three alternating timelines and locations to tell a wider, suspenseful story of one painting's rippling impact on three people over multiple centuries and locations . . . Smith's book absorbs you from the start." --*Washington Post*

"Lustrous . . . Fans of epoch-hopping fictions such as Cunningham's and David Mitchell's will enjoy tracing understated commonalities between the various plot lines and period-specific settings, which Smith nimbly depicts . . . Both melancholy and defiant, Smith's novel leaves us with the sense that the truths we make are no less valuable for being inexact." --*Chicago Tribune*

"Written in prose so clear that we absorb its images as if by mind meld, "The Last Painting" is gorgeous storytelling: wry, playful, and utterly alive, with an almost tactile awareness of the emotional contours of the human heart. Vividly detailed, acutely sensitive to stratifications of gender and class, it's fiction that keeps you up at night ? first because you're barreling through the book, then because you've slowed your pace to a crawl, savoring the suspense." ?*Boston Globe*

"Rapturous . . . Smith's writing is incandescent from the first sentence . . . With a virtuoso sense of place, [Smith] pulls you into very different worlds . . . In this extraordinary narrative, lives, like paintings, can be great works of art, dependent on the minutest of decisions and happenstance. So, too, can novels, and in this sublime work about longing, creativity, love and loss, Smith explores what is authentic and what is hidden, on both the canvas and in the human heart." ?*San Francisco Chronicle*

"This beautiful meditation on love, loss and art is as luminous as a Vermeer." ?*People*

"Equal parts suspense tale and exploration of beauty and loss, this vivid novel charts the journey of one 17th-century Dutch painting as it passes through time, nations, and the lives of all who touch it." ?*O, The Oprah Magazine*

"*The Last Painting of Sara de Vos* does what the best books can do: sweep the reader into unfamiliar worlds filled with intriguing characters . . . [a] true pleasure to read." ?*Bookpage*

"Audacious . . . Absolutely transporting" ?Maureen Corrigan, *NPR*

"Art fans and historical fiction fans, this one's for you . . . Get ready to be blown away." ?*Bustle*

"In the company of recent art world novels such as Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch* and Peter Heller's *The Painter*, along comes Dominic Smith's *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos*, a sublime tale of one woman's lost

art, another woman's tragic mistake, and a privileged man's link between the two . . . Smith excels at offering insight into his reserved characters' psyches through subtle details and masterfully juggles time and place, as well as the various machinations, with dexterity and a lyrical touch for description. There's a lovely, genteel beauty here. As with Vermeer's still lifes, the novel has a serene quality that belies its tension and intrigue." *?Dallas Morning News*

"Lovely, quietly resonant . . . Smith [has a] singular gift for conjuring distant histories. In his hands, the damp cobblestones and canals of 1600s Holland and the shabby gentility of Eisenhower-era New York feel as real and tactile and tinged with magic as de Vos' indelible brushstrokes." *?Entertainment Weekly*

"[I]n his new novel, *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos*, Australian-American writer Dominic Smith removes the barriers between the artist, the work and the viewer in a moving exploration of the way art impacts us . . . Laced with subtle tension and emotion, *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos* is exquisitely human, highlighting characters who are endearing even at their worst. Smith's novel illustrates why art remains a powerful force, both for those who create it and those who view it." *?Paste Magazine*

"A beautiful, patient, and timeless book, one that builds upon centuries and shows how the smallest choices?like the chosen mix for yellow paint?can be the definitive markings of an entire life." *?Kirkus* (starred review)

"Highly evocative of time and place, this stunning novel explores a triumvirate of fate, choice, and consequence and is worthy of comparison to Tracy Chevalier's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch* . . . Just as a painter may utilize thousands of fine brushstrokes, Smith slowly creates a masterly, multilayered story that will dazzle readers of fine historical fiction." *?Library Journal* (starred review)

"In this wonderfully engaging novel, centered on the paintings of fictional seventeenth-century Dutch artist Sara de Vos, Smith immerses the reader in three vibrant time periods . . . Rich in historical detail, the novel explores the immense challenges faced by women in the arts (past and present), provides a glimpse into the seedy underbelly of the art world across the centuries, and illustrates the transformative power and influence of great art. An outstanding achievement, filled with flawed and fascinating characters. *?Booklist* (starred review)

"A mesmerizing and magically faux historical novel . . . *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos* is a splendid thing: a riveting mystery set in the rarified world of art collection about a stolen masterpiece and a gorgeous, haunting novel rooted in history, an incandescent achievement of literary imagination." *?Jeanette Zwart, Shelf Awareness*

"As in *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, the technical process and ineffable aspects of creating a masterpiece enrich this novel, but Smith had to invent his masterpieces because no works survive by the real-life Sarah van Baalbergen, who was the first woman admitted to the Guild of St. Luke. Smith's paintings, like his settings, come alive through detail: the Gowanus Expressway, ruins of an old Dutch village, two women from different times and places both able to capture on canvas simultaneous beauty and sadness." *?Publishers Weekly*

"Gliding gracefully from grungy 1950s Brooklyn to the lucent interiors of Golden Age Holland and the sun-splashed streets of contemporary Sydney, the novel links the lives of two troubled, enigmatic, and hugely talented young women, one of them an artist, the other, her forger. A page-turning book with much to say about the pain and exhilaration of art and life." *?Geraldine Brooks, author of *The Secret Chord**

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prose so clear and vivid, that it seems effortless; on closer examination, one sees the rich thematic palette Dominic Smith has used. This is a novel of love and longing, of authenticity and ethical shadows, and, most compelling, of art as alchemy, the way that it can turn grief to profound beauty.”?Lauren Groff, author of *Fates and Furies* and the *New York Times*-bestselling *Arcadia*

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"*The Last Painting of Sara de Vos* is a deeply researched, beautifully written, intellectually absorbing novel that also has the qualities of a page-turner . . . I doubt you will be disappointed: *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos* is a tremendous story of art, deception, love, ambition and the place of women in the world, and in history. From the opening pages you know you are in the hands of a writer at the top of his game." ?*The Australian*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Maria Asbury:

In this 21st one hundred year, people become competitive in every way. By being competitive today, people have do something to make these people survives, being in the middle of often the crowded place and notice through surrounding. One thing that at times many people have underestimated the idea for a while is reading. That's why, by reading a e-book your ability to survive enhance then having chance to stay than other is high. For yourself who want to start reading some sort of book, we give you that *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos: A Novel* book as beginner and daily reading book. Why, because this book is more than just a book.

Sondra Spencer:

Do you one of people who can't read satisfying if the sentence chained inside the straightway, hold on guys that aren't like that. This *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos: A Novel* book is readable simply by you who hate the perfect word style. You will find the data here are arrange for enjoyable reading experience without leaving also decrease the knowledge that want to give to you. The writer connected with *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos: A Novel* content conveys thinking easily to understand by many people. The printed and e-book are not different in the written content but it just different in the form of it. So , do you even now thinking *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos: A Novel* is not loveable to be your top checklist reading book?

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Carla Heyward:

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