

Anderson, John  
ART HELD HOSTAGE  
The Battle over the Barnes Collection  
W. W. Norton (288 pp.)  
\$25.95  
May 2003  
ISBN 0-393-04889-6

An account of the legal contests over the administration of America's largest private art collection.

John Anderson holds a Ph.D. in American studies from Yale University and is coauthor of *Burning Down the House*, a book on race relations in America. He is currently the deputy editor of *The American Lawyer* magazine. The present volume concerns the famous Barnes Collection and the tortuous tale of the eponymous foundation charged with its preservation. By Anderson's own admission it is "a legal tale," rather than a "scholarly biography" or a "work of art history." He explains the absence of source notes by the desire of his best sources to remain anonymous. That's not surprising, considering the rancor the legal wrangling has generated, including a lawsuit over a parking lot instituted in federal court invoking the Ku Klux Klan Act. The author paints a fair picture of Dr. Albert C. Barnes who received his degree in medicine at twenty and went on to wrest control of a pharmaceutical company that owned exclusive rights to manufacture an internationally prescribed gonorrhea medicine. His amassed fortune, preserved through the Great Depression, permitted the amassing of the fabulous collection that includes 180 Renoirs and is currently valued at \$6 billion. Barnes' signature style was to hire first-rate legal counsel and pursue his litigious course until he won. Just before his death in 1951, Barnes changed the indenture that granted control of the foundation to favor the trustees of Lincoln College, the oldest black college in America, setting the stage for a long round of disputes. While the collection gained tremendously in value over the next four decades, the size of the endowment which paid for the upkeep of the "French Renaissance palace" that housed it, dwindled through mismanagement. In the 1990s, it was Richard H. Glanton, a high-profile black Philadelphia lawyer who, during his tenure as president, oversaw the galleries' renovation and undertook the expensive litigation responsible for bringing the foundation to the edge of ruin.

Anderson's clear journalistic prose makes sense of the befuddling legal entanglements of the on-going battle that has become notorious in the art world and beyond.

[16 illustrations, including color]