

# KIRKUS REVIEWS

## TITLE INFORMATION

### **GHOSTS OF THE PAST**

Mark Downer

Old Stone Press (332 pp.)

\$16.95 paperback

ISBN: 978-1-938462-50-4

February 2, 2021

## BOOK REVIEW

A young American tries to find a cache of valuable art in Switzerland looted by the Nazis, a treasure hunt that endangers his life, in this novel.

In 1945, Maj. Max Hignite, a talented pilot in the German Luftwaffe, is given a special assignment: transport a remarkable collection of art, the private stash of Hermann Göring, to Switzerland, making his plane “the largest flying museum in history.” Max crashes in the Swiss Alps but survives and immigrates to the United States, never forgetting the location of the downed plane. When he dies in 2001, he leaves a series of clues for his nephew, Matt Ferguson, to track down the plane, including a list of the artworks it contains and a map roughly indicating its location. Unfortunately, Matt can’t read German and knows little about art, so he teams up with Courtney Lewis, an assistant curator at the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Kentucky, and a former model with “an incredible pair of slender legs.” A potboiler needs intriguing villains—and Downer generously furnishes two. Guillermo Rocca, an extravagantly wealthy Ecuadorian obsessed with art, will stop at nothing to find the plane. And Erwin Leiter, a wealthy industrialist and former Nazi, is similarly motivated and unscrupulous. The pace of the tale never lags, and the story delivers plenty of tense moments and frenetic action. But the plot is quickly recognizable as a tired cinematic formula, and the prose somehow manages to be both breathless and banal. Here Courtney expresses her enthusiasm to Matt: “I’m not sure you can comprehend the significance of what we have. It’s incredible stuff. It’s very exciting to be responsible for discovering something of this magnitude. It’s an unbelievable story!”

An action-packed but formulaic thriller.

## EXCERPTING POLICIES

Please review Kirkus Media’s excerpting policies before publishing any portion of this review online or in print for any use. To learn about proper attribution and to ensure your use is in compliance with our guidelines, we invite you to visit <http://www.kirkusreviews.com/indieexcerpts>.