

Author Larry Witham
(Editor, Journalist & Artist)

Julian Peale Art Crime Mystery Series.
Award 5 Stars By Editor At
Book Marketing Global Network.

Gallery Pieces (Book 1).
The Silk Road Affair (Book 2).
Incident At Devil's Finger (Book 3).
The Haunted Artist (Book 4).

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Author Larry Witham!
(Editor, Journalist & Artist)

The Art Crime Series:
Former navy intel sleuth Julian Peale turns art-crime investigator.
He left the battlefield for the artworld and found a different kind of war.

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The Haunted Artist by Larry Witham.

2025-Release: Julian Peale Art-Crime Mystery, No. 4.

The death of Sam Mason, a young painter, shakes a small New England town. Police say suicide. But his sister can't believe he would do such a thing. She enlists the help of Castelli and Associates, which specializes in art crime, and Julian Peale is on the case. With Sam gone, his paintings--seemingly lost, hidden, or even a mirage--now stir a race to find out what happened, if not to cash in on his legacy. Art dealers see Sam as a "late, great artist" in the making. They're all after whatever of Sam's mysterious works they can find. Delving into the artist's past, Peale traces the threads of Sam's life across middle America, from Pittsburgh and Savannah to St. Louis and Atlanta. As a struggling artist, it seems Sam had fallen into bad company, beginning with a shady art dealer and then a small-time duo of Albanian crooks. Sam had also been dabbling in the dark arts. Peale's investigation takes him to art schools, urban scenes, the high-end art market, and a migrant community trying to do good--except for a few gone bad. The missing paintings remain a puzzle until the end, a time when bigger mysteries--and darker forces--unfold when least expected.



Awarded 5 Stars by Editor at Book Marketing Global Network: This is the fourth book in the Julian Peale Art Crime Mystery Series by Larry Witham. This author's work is new to me, but I can say with certainty that his mystery series will become as sought after as his character Sam Mason's artwork has impacted the art world. I give 5 Stars for this book and entire mystery series.

The book opens unexpectedly as Colleen Mason is looking down into the open casket at an old Methodist Church in Lynn, MA (just north of Boston). She is now the sole survivor of the Mason family and is responsible for the funeral, memorial and burial of her older brother Samuel (Sam). In recent years, as an aspiring artist, Sam had little time for the family. Colleen had her head in another world as well. She was finishing her college degree at the very demanding Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston.

Questions started swirling in Collen's mind at Pine Grove Cemetery where she expected a small gathering of local people. Complete strangers to Collen arrived to pay respect and offer condolences. First, there was a man with the Boston Art gallery, a woman named Monica Smithton and others. Their sentiments were similar in nature "we've lost a rising new star in the art world. Sam was a rare talent" What puzzled her more, they wanted to know if she had any of Sam's painting.

Collen knows absolutely nothing about the art world and even less about the rushed police investigation that concluded that Sam's death was ruled a suicide. She knew that Sam would never kill himself and this begins the first of many mysteries that will be revealed as you read 'The Haunted Artist'.

It is at MIT; Collen gets the ear of twenty-two-year-old Nathan Peale. Nathan is also finishing his degree in computer science. Collen had heard that Nathan's father was a former (now retired) navy intelligence officer that had worked for Castelli and Associates in Washington, DC. They are well known for their investigations into art crimes, like theft or smuggling or forgery.

The threads of Sam's life will take many unexpected turns across middle America, from Pittsburgh and Savannah to St. Louis and Atlanta. With so many people looking for Sam's artwork, had Sam fallen into bad company or did he get sucked up into dark under belly of the art world.

I invite you to follow Julian Peale's crime investigation as he searches for the missing paintings, unravels deeper mysteries and is haunted by darker forces. I encourage you to read all of Julian Peale Art Crime Mystery Novels. Larry Witham is the author of nineteen books, an award-winning journalist and by avocation, a fine art painter. He lives in the Maryland suburbs of Washington D.C.

Editorial Review and Endorsement by Book Marketing Global Network.



Kirkus Reviews: "An exceedingly intelligent private-eye tale that offers a peek into the darker corners of art-world commerce."

BookLife/Publishers Weekly Review: "Smart, swift mystery of an art-world where painters are more profitable dead."

BestThrillers.com Review: ". . . a taut, refreshing and fascinating work of detective fiction."

SPR Review: "A captivating combination of art world intrigue, familial devotion, and the sinister price tag of fame."

Review by Nikitabooktiquehub: 5.0 out of 5 Stars. Highly recommended. Reviewed in India on July 4, 2025. Verified Purchase. The Haunted Artist is a gripping blend of mystery, art, and the shadows that linger behind creative genius. When young painter Sam Mason is found dead and quickly ruled a suicide, his sister refuses to accept the narrative. With the help of Julian Peale and Castelli and Associates, the truth begins to unravel—one brushstroke at a time. The suspense builds as the question lingers: Was Sam haunted... by something more than his art?

The story takes us across middle America—through Pittsburgh, Savannah, St. Louis, and Atlanta—revealing the complicated life Sam led. As Peale uncovers the trail of Sam's elusive paintings, he also steps into a tangled world of shady dealers, urban decay, and Eastern European criminals. The way Larry Witham paints these gritty scenes with words is as atmospheric as the art world he's exposing.

Witham doesn't just serve a crime mystery—he explores the spiritual and even supernatural, suggesting Sam may have been toying with dark forces in his quest for meaning and fame. Each twist in the plot adds texture, leading readers deeper into a world where nothing is quite what it seems, and where art can either save—or destroy—you.

The final chapters pack a powerful punch, answering questions while still leaving a haunting impression. This book isn't just a mystery—it's a portrait of obsession, ambition, and how beauty and darkness often walk hand-in-hand. A must-read for fans of art noir, psychological thrillers, and twisty detective fiction.

Review by Nerdybibliophile: 5.0 out of 5 Stars. Loved it. Reviewed in the United Kingdom on April 22, 2025. Verified Purchase. In the dark underbelly of the art world, a young painter's suspicious death sets off a chain of events that exposes a web of beauty, tragedy, and greed, and it's up to art crime investigator Julian Peale to unravel the truth.

With a masterful blend of mystery, art, and noir, Larry Witham crafts a captivating narrative that follows Peale on a thrilling cross-country journey. As Peale delves into the dark world of corrupt art dealers and Sam's troubled past, the story unfolds with a cinematic flair, rich in detail and suspense, making it impossible to put down.

What makes this novel particularly compelling is its exploration of the thin line between artistic brilliance and personal suffering, as evidenced by Sam's life, which was marked by secrets, dubious alliances, and occult dabblings, raising powerful questions about legacy, exploitation, and the art world's tendency to mythologize the dead.

Witham skillfully weaves a tight plot, maintaining a steady suspense and a strong emotional undercurrent. The Haunted Artist is a thought-provoking thriller that not only entertains but also comments on how tragedy can be exploited and how truth, like great art, often lies beneath the surface. If you enjoy intelligent thrillers with a unique twist, this book is a must-have.

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Mysteries (Crime)

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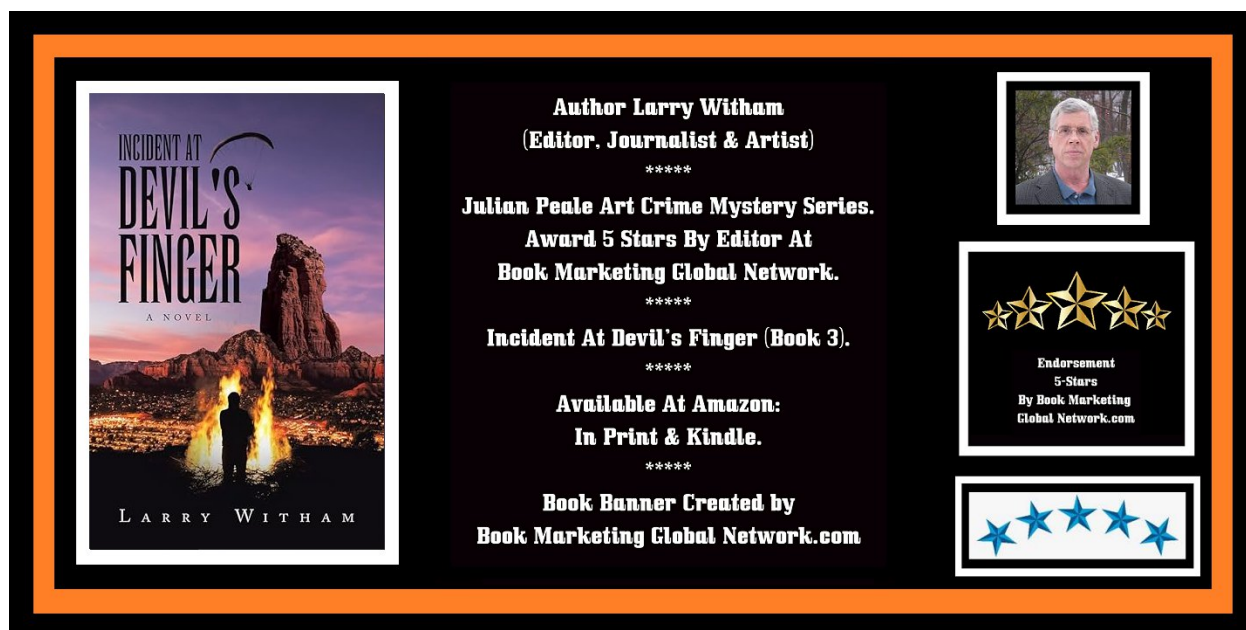
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Incident At Devil's Finger by Larry Witham.

Julian Peale Art-Crime Mystery, No. 3.

On a beautiful June day, the famous performance artist Magnifica is set to jump from a helicopter and parachute down through the Red Rock Pinnacle monuments of Sedona, Arizona. What the large and excited crowd sees instead is the massive explosion and collapse of Devil's Finger, a thousand-foot Red Rock pinnacle.

Art sleuth Julian Peale is on the case, looking where the authorities are not into the mysterious artworld ties to Magnifica. There's a New York art patron, the Wall Street gambler, a cyberpunk hack, a Russian art dealer with mob ties, two rival tech millionaires, and a wealthy hippy still living in the Age of Aquarius. The artist Magnifica-Mary Saville by birth has retreated into the shadows, with her copter pilot with plans to bolster her fame. She may be heir to a fortune gathered up by her ailing mother, the once-famous artist Sophia Saville.

In search for answers, Peale moves through the LA art scene, the tech world of San Francisco, the gamers conventions in Las Vegas, the underworld of art betting and Russian organized crime, and finally to the famed counter-cultural festival in the desert of Nevada, the Oracle of Fire-where Magnifica has audacious plans to crash the party. As the dust settles in a Chicago courtroom, all the motives in this art world menagerie are revealed-especially, who blew up Devil's Finger?



5 Star Review: BookLife/Publishers Weekly. The prolific Witham's gripping follow-up to the international art-world thriller *The Silk Road Affair* finds private investigator Julian Peale now navigating an explosive performance art project in the expansive American Southwest. Peale, tasked by his partner Joe Castelli, delves into just what the title promises, the incident at a monumental red rock near Sedona where the "flying artist" Magnifica, formerly known as Mary Saville, must abort her much-hyped performance, a parachute leap from helicopter through storied rock pinnacles near Sedona, when the colossal Devil's Finger explodes before her eyes. Horrified and suspecting the involvement of the Russian mob, Katherine Grant, heiress and art collector from the east coast art establishment, hires Castelli to probe into the realm of Sophia Saville, the ailing-with-dementia artist mother of Magnifica, who is reported to have a substantial private trust.

The mystery that follows finds Witham weaving lively art-world insight with military expertise, hacker espionage, tech king rivalry, and more surprises. Castelli entrusts Peale to investigate who would inherit Sophia's trust if Magnifica were to die, kicking off an investigation into numerous contenders including Sophia's former flames, Shawn Byrne and Ethan Ratliff—self-made tech millionaires engaged in a long-standing feud playing out at events like the Oracle of Fire (reminiscent of Burning Man). Their battle over futurism and fantasy, druids versus space cadets, extends across games, festivals, art, and philosophies, building to a wild climax, while Magnifica, driven to surpass her mother's artistic fame, orchestrates her most audacious stunt yet. The cast is further enriched by underworld figures Cyclops and Cyberpunk, adding layers of intrigue

Peale's support networks with his wife Priscilla, her son Nathan, FBI agent Jerry Snow, and Las Vegas detective William Jackson—collaborate to uncover the dark underside of art in this twisting, of-its-moment thriller. Witham tells the tale with exquisite language allowing readers to visualize the captivating panoramas of the Southwest, plus persuasive, entertaining glimpses of these extravagant lives.

Greed and betrayal power this gripping Southwest art-world mystery.

5 Star Review: Pacific Book Review. Peale's quest for answers takes the reader through a myriad of suspenseful landscapes and exciting situations ... flawlessly blends different storylines to tie up a singular narrative. As the plot reveals, several characters are involved in the incident, starting with the people associated with Magnifica. The author strategically delves into each of their characters, from the cyberpunk hacker to the tech millionaire to the Russian art dealer, showcasing their integration into Magnifica's life or their intersections with her. Throughout the narrative, the story vividly exposes the complex landscape of the art world, leading readers into obscure corners of art and performance revealing the intricate political dynamics at play. Packed with unexpected plot twists, exhilarating climaxes, engaging characters and a neat plotline, this novel is a delightful treat for mystery lovers.

5 Star Review: Kirkus Reviews. An art cop investigates a possible murder attempt in Witham's crime novel, the second in a series. Performance artist Magnifica—real name Mary Saville—has forged a reputation by parachuting into dramatic landscapes. The audience that gathers in Sedona, Arizona in June expects to see just that: the artist in her swoop parachute, landing at the base of the Devil's Finger, one of the region's dramatic red rock pinnacles. Instead, they witness an explosion that destroys the Devil's Finger just before Magnifica leaps from the helicopter. Among the audience members is Julian Peale, who happens to be vacationing in Arizona with his wife, Priscilla. The former United States Navy man has made a second career as an "art cop," employed at a tiny security firm that specializes in solving the myriad crimes of the art world. . . . Peale will have to negotiate the hotel casinos of Las Vegas, the avant-garde art

scene of Los Angeles, and the sharp-elbowed tech world of San Francisco. The trail leads to the Oracle of Fire, a Burning Man-like counterculture festival in the Nevada desert, where Magnifica plans to emerge from hiding to perform her greatest—and perhaps final—spectacle of all. Witham's muscular prose reads like a series of raps on a locked door. . . . The characters are a bit too thin to sustain the webs of intrigue surrounding them, but Witham knows how to keep his story rolling through ever more arresting territory.

A gripping mystery set at the intersection of art, money, and power.

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The Silk Road Affair by Larry Witham.

Julian Peale Art-Crime Mystery, No. 2.

More than thirty years after a famed Boston art collection is stolen, Washington learns that it has turned up in the People's Republic of China—just as Sino-American relations are at a tipping point. To retrieve the artifacts, a covert mission is handed to retired military sleuths Julian Peale and Chinese American Grace Ho, both art specialists. From Washington to China's great western desert, and from Boston's lofty art museums to modernist Shanghai, the search is on. Beijing has meanwhile launched an audacious plan to recover lost Chinese art stolen by the West a century earlier. Not only do Peale and Ho have to iron out their own cultural differences and approaches to espionage, but the highest circle of the Beijing government is also caught in a web of intrigue between the top leader and two powerful women vying for control of China's cultural policy. From the annals of art history to China's world ambitions through "soft power," *The Silk Road Affair* travels a historic legacy up to the present, from the Han Dynasty to the Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen Square—and on to China Inc. Recovery of the stolen art, its return to the United States, and the political direction of the world's largest country hang in the balance as Peale and Ho wind their way through the puzzle that is modern China.



5 Star Review: KIRKUS REVIEWS. A political thriller as engrossing as it is thoughtful. Two American agents are sent to China to investigate a major art theft in Witham's international thriller.

When a Vermeer painting that was pilfered from the Gardner Museum in Boston 30 years ago suddenly resurfaces in China, the entire alphabet soup of American agencies takes notice. However, given the enormous stress the situation places on diplomatic detente, any attempt to recover the art must be conducted with great stealth and delicacy, a complex predicament lucidly portrayed by the author in this scrupulously researched novel. The CIA sends two agents, Julian Peale and Grace Ho; the former is a military veteran who served in Afghanistan, the latter a first-generation Chinese American (she prefers American Chinese) who was trained by the Marines. Both have a deep knowledge of art history. Julian and Grace must manage the "interagency wrangle" they step into—the competitive jostling of various intelligence groups, American and otherwise—as well as the complexity of China's own internecine disputes. Witham's comprehension of Chinese culture and all of its entangled nuances is extraordinary—if nothing else, this novel is an impressive feat of scholarship. He demonstrates a similarly powerful command of art history, which is absolutely essential to the plot. The complexity of the characters is welcome—the author develops his principal players into fully realized human beings driven by multiple motivations. Art dealer Quang Daiyu, who runs the Silk Road Company, is marvelously dynamic—she is often moved by the simple pursuit of wealth, the means by which one can "buy freedom and privilege" in a China as godless as she is.

However, she also sees herself as belonging to a royal line that stretches back to the days of China's cultural dominance, a position she desperately wants to restore. This is an intellectually subtle but highly readable thriller, one that entertains without resorting to cheap formula or authorial condescension.

A political thriller as engrossing as it is thoughtful.

5 Star Review: BOOKLIFE/PUBLISHERS WEEKLY. Witham's international thriller (after Gallery Pieces) pits Chinese and American teams against each other as they vie for dominance in the art world. When a piece from a missing American art collection is discovered en route to China, Washington assigns U.S. agents Grace Ho and Julian Peale the task of recovery. Meanwhile, in China, Quang Daiyu, an entrepreneur and niece of the general secretary, Ren Jinhua, schemes for power; she has her own art ambitions, alongside her deadly rival, Soong Wei, an equally politically connected adversary. The parties—and their high stakes missions—maneuver from Shanghai to sparsely populated regions near the old Silk Road in their efforts to secure valuable artifacts.

Witham does a masterful job covering the dirty dealing in artwork through the eyes of Quang and Soong, and even better is his deft portrayal of modern China. He navigates readers through a China still reflecting on its imperial era, even after communism and recent forays into capitalism, where soldiers can sing Bee Gees songs, but to Quang, the last imperial ruler, Empress Cixi, is "still present." Even the Cultural Revolution seemingly didn't erase all vestiges of the royal family, at least in spirit, and Witham's lovingly penned descriptions of the country hold attention, even when the plot meanders.

Though the focus is mostly on China itself, Witham capably develops agents Ho and Peale as well; they're an engaging pair, and their sleuthing in China is buoyed by their comfortable rapport. For action fans, there's plenty of martial arts fighting and a particularly well-staged army helicopter extraction scene, and Witham deserves full marks for the offbeat but exciting wind-up. The novel delves into the concept of cultural property, a background against which Witham weaves a plausible and gripping denouement centered on artwork, museum building contractors, and a mysterious drink called Gold Tea. This lands well for fans of impassioned political thrillers.

5 Star Review: PACIFIC BOOK REVIEW. An impressive job unfolding an utterly convincing scenario of international relations and domination of the art world . . . the intelligence game of cat and mouse and a complex tug of war play out brilliantly even as the book wraps up to a satisfying close. Witham is a sobering read which defies quick solutions and one that fans of political thrillers will enjoy poring over.

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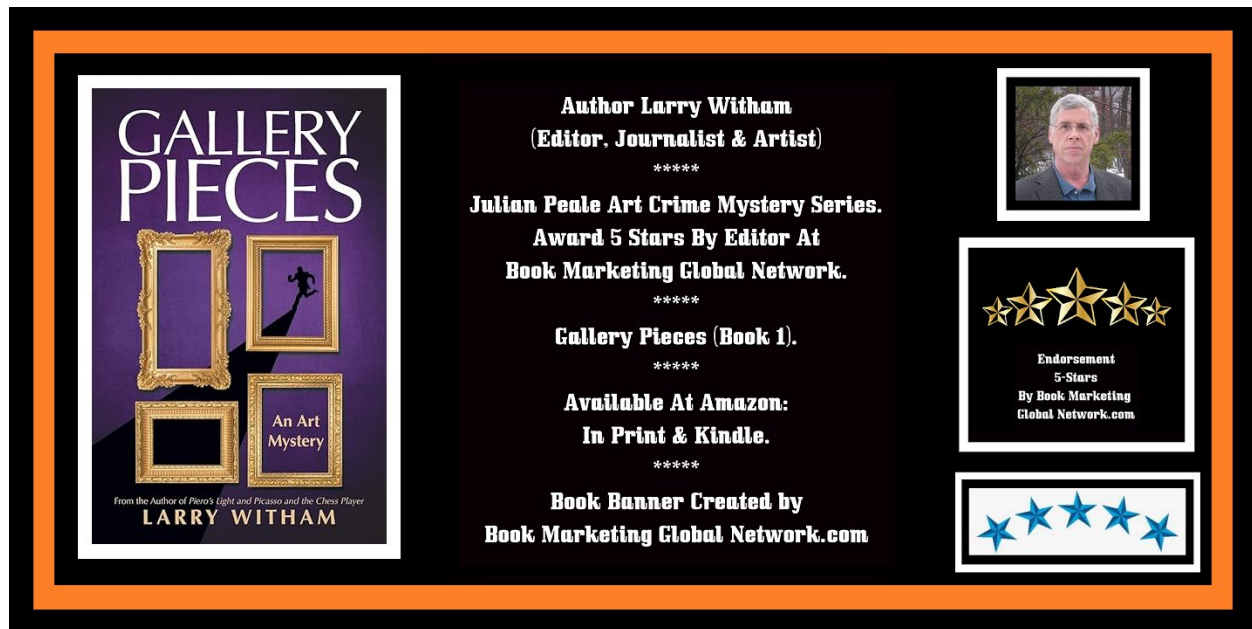
https://www.amazon.com/Silk-Road-Affair-Novel/dp/1665749067/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&sr=

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Gallery Pieces by Larry Witham.

Julian Peale Art-Crime Mystery, No. 1.

Former Navy intelligence man Julian Peale enters the art world for the love of painting but finds its underbelly of crime just as fascinating--and decidedly dangerous. In his forties, Julian Peale is getting a fresh start. Formerly in the Navy intelligence, he's cast his lot in the New York art world. He's landed a job with the venerable Medici Studios, which also contracts with the NYPD and FBI. On a winter morning, they've run a sting operation to track Russian art smugglers. The caper goes awry, but an odd bit of evidence remains: four art catalogs with graffiti markings.

So begins *Gallery Pieces*, a story that will keep readers guessing until the end. Peale follows the clues where they lead. He meets a heavy at the Miami Art Fair, chases a mystery bidder at Merriweather's auction in Manhattan, and crosses paths with a Brooklyn performance artist whose pranks are dangerously entangled in the Russian intrigues. Step by step, Peale enters an art world permeated not only by the avant-garde, but by the Russian mob, hackers, forgers, hipsters, and the history of art looting in Europe during WWII.

When Peale least expects it, the catalogs lead him on another trail. He is drawn into a long-forgotten mystery surrounding his grandfather, Maxwell Peale, who had been a "monuments man," a soldier who helped reclaim art looted by the Nazis. Peale is on his way to discovering paintings stolen in postwar Europe. Finding the culprits, however, brings him closer to home than he'd imagined.

Reviews:

..."A deftly crafted masterpiece of mystery and suspense from first page to last . . . Very highly recommended for community library collections [and] personal reading lists of all mystery buffs." Midwest Book Review

..."A fast-paced mystery that's bolstered by excellent characterizations, a deft back story, and insider knowledge . . . A thoughtful, well-written, and well-developed novel about the art world that's an exuberant, satisfying read." Kirkus Reviews

..."A thoroughly absorbing and masterfully crafted mystery about stolen art, family and greed. . . a master class in pacing and style with prose that is both vivid and mesmerizing." Best Thrillers Book Reviews

..."Vivid, atmospheric, and completely believable. . . . Intelligent and unpredictable." Indie Book Reviews

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https://www.amazon.com/Gallery-Pieces-Mystery-Larry-Witham-ebook/dp/B0794QLD2K/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&dib_tag=AUTHOR&dib=eyJ2IjojMSJ9.zkKPW0ISk1EbIT5LrZpsYqnJXbYv-n7a7QunEXrIKr9CgD3QiVmdW64NgvlqNrWc_iY12B_QnTdZlfdw3Dh2KYBfQn2LoCH-IPEX2obEIJRy1O0rAU2LlcFtg-5SztLedzHrQRUuSAI40iubhBDk3WL7h7pJFGDliGFPb3j3Bs6z_NEBX2kNDzeuuW24buhSgGHHfPV1e2iO87bgx1swHWXhBZUBjg6yVyKhbjYXU4c.ZW1E6W3gT2_PJbMUSTj0-CO9UVKV4C5ACoqbEVEgQ8g&sr=

Customer Reviews:

https://www.amazon.com/product-reviews/B0794QLD2K/ref=acr_dp_hist_5?ie=UTF8&filterByStar=five_star&reviewerType=all_reviews



About The Author: Larry Witham is the author of nineteen books, an award-winning journalist and by avocation a fine art painter. He lives with his wife in the Maryland suburbs of Washington D.C.

- Julian Peale Art-Crime Mystery Series Book 4 Released in 2025: The Haunted Artist.
- Julian Peale Art-Crime Mystery Series Book 3 Released In 2023: Incident at Devil's Finger.
- Julian Peale Art-Crime Mystery Series Book 2 Release In 2023: The Silk Road Affair.
- Julian Peale Art-Crime Mystery Series Book 1 Release 2015: Gallery Pieces.

Larry Witham is an author, editor, journalist, and artist. His fourth novel, *The Silk Road Affair* was released (Sept. 2023) by Archway Publishing. Witham has written seventeen books, mainly nonfiction. He was a finalist in the 2015 Pen Literary Awards for biography. He began his writing career as a daily newspaper reporter in Washington D.C., a job he held for twenty-one years. He went on to write and edit books full-time. Witham has received several national awards for his newspaper work and books and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for a series he co-wrote on the clergy in America. He was Project Editor for the ten-volume Templeton Press science-and-religion series and was editor of *Science and Spirit* magazine in 2007. A painter by avocation, Witham, is currently exploring new art and writing projects. He has a bachelor's degree in painting from San Jose State University (1974).

Amazon Author's Page:

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