

Preface

This book is the provisional culmination of a research interest that started roughly a decade ago. After starting to suspect that there might exist an intersection between art and law that I could make my own during the Art Law course taught by professor Bert Demarsin which I took as a part of my Master of Law studies at the KU Leuven, I commenced the Master in Art Business degree at Sotheby's Institute of Art in London, seeking to identify more precisely what that intersection could be. That I identified this intersection to be art crime and its policing is due to Charley Hill, whose lecture at the Institute solidified my interest and whose supervision of my master thesis was instrumental in shaping me as an art crime researcher. That thesis was a precursor to this book, which is based on the doctoral research I conducted at Queen Mary University under the greatly appreciated supervision of professors Saskia Hufnagel and Peter Alldridge.

The topic of that doctoral thesis, and this book, is the ways in which the police and private actors do or do not work together in combatting the myriad forms of art crime. In what follows the way in which art crime policing is done in Belgium, France, and the United Kingdom is described and analysed, in an attempt to identify whether and how specialised art crime police units interact with private actors in their efforts to combat art crime. This book incorporates elements from various academic fields including criminology, law, art business, and the study of art crime, finding itself "*between, across, and beyond*" these disciplines.²⁴ By combining and integrating ideas and approaches and linking them to empirical research this book contributes, I hope, to each of these literatures and art crime policing in practice.

The book is timely. Involving private actors is increasingly frequently considered as a way to shore up art crime policing capacity. When writing my master's thesis on art crime policing at Sotheby's Institute, Belgium, my home country, no longer employed a fully-fledged art crime police

unit. Today a unit has been reinstated and interest in art, from policy-makers, police organisations, art market participants, and the broader public appears to be increasing. Nonetheless, the means allocated to art crime policing remain constrained, even as art crime does not appear to be abating. In providing a clearer picture of what does and does not facilitate policing co-production and how it could support more effective (art crime) policing, I hope this book proves a useful or at least engaging read.

Sadly, Charley Hill passed during the writing of my doctoral thesis. Without him this book would not exist, and as I dedicate this book to him, I hope it honours him and his legacy.