

A Note on the Reporting

In "A Note on the Reporting" from **The Art Thief**, the author recounts their journey to learn about Stéphane Breitwieser, a notorious art thief. The process took over a decade, starting with a letter in 2012 where the author requested an interview with Breitwieser. Back then, Breitwieser had not engaged with the press for years and had not spoken to any American journalist. A long wait ensued, culminating in a brief response from him, initiating a correspondence that gradually became more personal.

By May 2017, after an extended period of exchanges, Breitwieser agreed to meet for lunch, albeit without recording devices. The author traveled from Marseille to Strasbourg, driving to the quaint town of Saverne, where they enjoyed a meal at Taverne Katz. Although the initial interaction was cautious due to nearby diners, the atmosphere warmed up. Over traditional Alsatian stew and Coca-Cola, Breitwieser relaxed and agreed to formal interviews, preferring to discuss sensitive topics in privacy, specifically in hotel rooms.

During their time together, the author observed Breitwieser's keen eye for art, evident when he instantly recognized a print by Jean Tinguely in the hotel room. Their interviews spanned extensive conversation, and the author noted Breitwieser's deftness in theft when he demonstrated how easily he could take the author's laptop while they spoke.

Throughout their interactions—amounting to about forty hours over several meetings—deeper insights into Breitwieser's past materialized, including accompanying him to former crime scenes and even attending his trial for selling stolen art in 2023. The author highlights their experiences, noting Breitwieser's extraordinary abilities and a profound understanding of art theft complexities.

The narrative provides a glimpse behind the scenes of art crime, enriched by interviews with various people connected to Breitwieser, including family members, legal representatives, and art experts. It also highlights a distinction between thieves motivated by profit versus those, like Breitwieser, whose actions stem from a passionate aesthetic desire, linking them to a unique category of collectors, bibliomaniacs, who are driven by a similar obsession with art and books.