

Art investigator Harold J. Smith, known for his trademark bowler and disarming wit, photographed in New York City on April 22, 2004.



VANITY FAIR NOMINATES HAROLD J. SMITH

BECAUSE this Columbo of the international art scene has outsmarted the world's most sophisticated criminals for half a century, working with Scotland Yard, the F.B.I., and special police units to recover millions in stolen art and antiques. BECAUSE when the power went out at the Bellagio in Las Vegas last Easter, underwriters for Boston's Museum of Fine Arts put him on the next plane, just to make sure the museum's estimated \$188 million in Monets, on loan to the hotel, were safe. BECAUSE he has uncovered fake Michelangelos and Picassos, cracked one of the biggest gold-robbery cases of our time (an \$11 million North Miami caper that turned out to be an inside job), and

recently found a Salvador Dali masterpiece, missing since 1974, having met the suspect 25 years before—at Dali's home. BECAUSE in her documentary *Stolen*, which hits film festivals this winter, director Rebecca Dreyfus captures the sleuth's 14-year obsession with what is believed to be the largest art heist in U.S. history—a still-unsolved \$300 million mystery that began in 1990 at Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum—and offers a glimpse at the humble mastery he brings to his work. BECAUSE the former merchant marine from the Bronx has accomplished this much despite a seven-decade battle with degenerative skin cancer, requiring hundreds of operations. BECAUSE, at 78, he shows no signs of letting up. —ADAM LAUKHUF