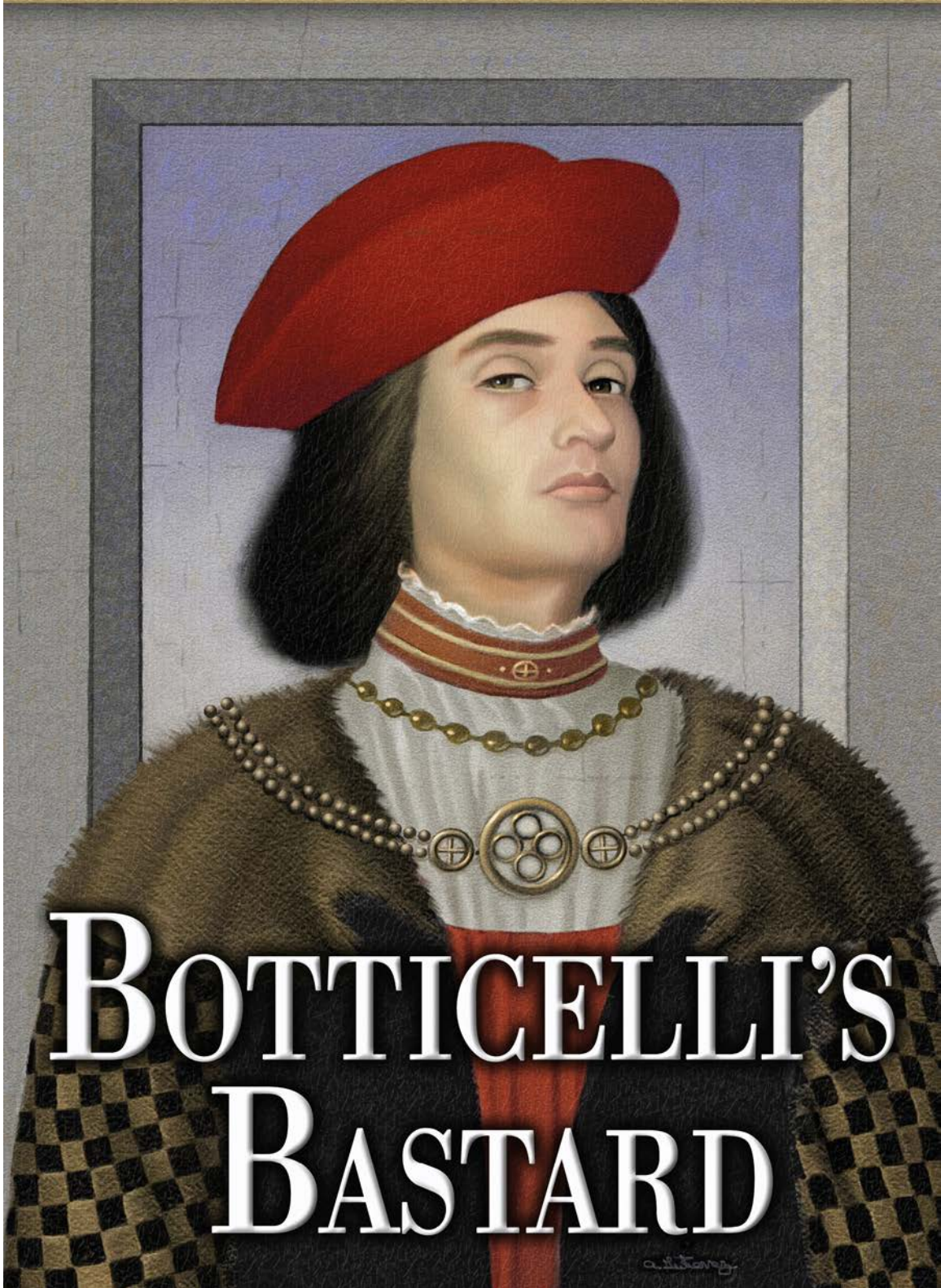


STEPHEN MAITLAND-LEWIS



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Stephen Maitland-Lewis' new novel, *Botticelli's Bastard*, blends magical realism and Nazi plundering of European art**

Ridge Literary Inc. is pleased to announce the August 11, 2014 publication of award-winning author Stephen Maitland-Lewis' new novel, *Botticelli's Bastard*.

The story follows Giovanni Fabrizzi, world-renowned art restorer based in London where he operates the family business handed down by his late father. When he investigates a shipment of crates sent from their Florence studio, where his father had stored the items, Giovanni is fascinated by an unsigned portrait of an Italian nobleman, but not for reasons his friends and family would easily believe—the portrait has a voice, and the long-dead subject of the painting begins to converse with Giovanni, relating the history of its various owners. Then the portrait makes a claim that Giovanni finds hard to believe—that the portrait is the work of the great Botticelli.

Giovanni dismisses the possibility but remains fascinated by the painting's history, which leads to Nazi-occupied Paris in 1940. As part of a major collection confiscated by the Nazis, the portrait should have joined the rest, but unsigned, it takes another course that the subject of the painting can't explain, including how it came into the possession of Giovanni's father.

Determined to know the truth, Giovanni embarks on a quest to discover if indeed the painting was in Paris during the war, who owned it, and determine if Botticelli could be the artist as the portrait claims.

Stephen Maitland-Lewis is the author of *Hero on Three Continents*, *Emeralds Never Fade* (2012 Benjamin Franklin Award winner for Historical Fiction and 2012 Written Arts Award winner for Best Fiction), and *Ambition* (2013 USA Best Book Awards finalist and 2013 Rebecca's Reads Choice Awards winner for General Fiction).

"The theft of any property is always abhorrent," Maitland-Lewis said, "but a state organized plundering from innocent victims, with no right of recourse, is disgusting. The fact that this took place in the 20th century in a European country known for its culture, sophistication and education, remains an inexplicable mystery to me."

Probed about blending historical fiction with magical realism, Maitland-Lewis said, "A portrait hanging on a wall throughout the centuries, if it had eyes and ears, would have a front row seat to history. *If walls had ears* is an adage that gave me the inspiration to write the book."

**For further information, visit the author and publisher web sites:**

[www.maitland-lewis.com](http://www.maitland-lewis.com)  
[www.ridgeliterary.com/bb](http://www.ridgeliterary.com/bb)

**For author inquiries contact:**

Richard Hoffman  
Richard Hoffman Public Relations  
(310) 248-3647  
[richard@richardhoffmanpr.com](mailto:richard@richardhoffmanpr.com)

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## *Ridge Literary Inc. presents for review*

**Title:** Botticelli's Bastard

**Author:** Stephen Maitland-Lewis

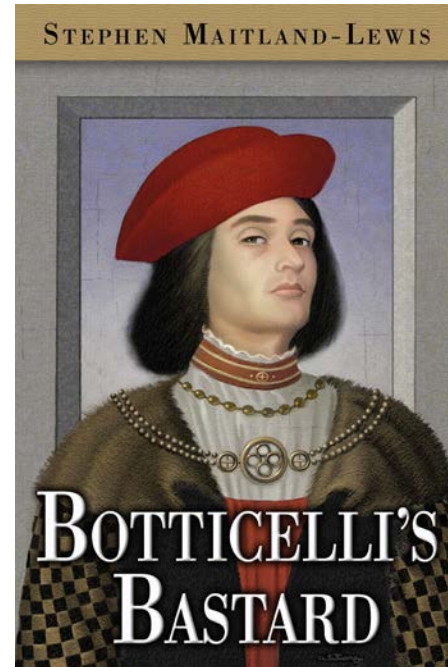
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### **Description:**

Art restorer Giovanni Fabrizzi is haunted by an unsigned renaissance portrait. Obsessed to learn the truth of its origin, he becomes increasingly convinced the painting could be the work of one of history's greatest artists, which if true, would catapult its value to the stratosphere. But in learning of the painting's past, he is faced with a dilemma. He believes the portrait was stolen during the greatest art heist in history—the Nazi plunder of European artwork. If true and a surviving relative of the painting's rightful owner were still alive, Giovanni, in all good conscience, would have to give up the potential masterpiece. His obsession with the portrait puts a strain on his new marriage, and his son thinks his father has lost his mind for believing an unremarkable, unsigned painting could be worth anyone's attention. Regardless, Giovanni persists in his quest of discovery and exposes far more truth than he ever wanted to know.

**Cover image and other materials available at**

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**A copy of your review would be appreciated.**

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## ***Synopsis: Botticelli's Bastard***

Giovanni Fabrizzi is a world-renowned art restorer whose international clientele includes major museums, European royal families, and legendary collectors. His firm, which was handed down by Giovanni's late father, has two locations, London and Florence. Giovanni manages the London branch, and his son operates the Florence studio.

Though recently wed to a much younger woman, Giovanni is still mourning his first wife, taken by cancer two years earlier. His episodes of grief disrupts his new marriage and distracts him from completing the restoration of a fine Breughel painting.

Safe in one of his strong rooms are a number of crates that had belonged to his father, which came to London from the Florence studio where his father had stored them. Prompted by a client's inquiry to buy a painting, Giovanni considers the cache from his father and begins opening the crates in the strong room. Among a few unremarkable canvases he discovers an unsigned renaissance panel, which he can't fathom why his father would have bothered to keep. Then a letter falls out of the crate, to his father, from his uncle, who Giovanni had never met. Giovanni learns the painting was a gift hoping to mend a sour relationship between his father and uncle.

But more surprising, Giovanni hears a voice. He panics and leaves the building, having serious doubts about his sanity. But when he returns, the voice persists and it is real, coming from the unsigned portrait, the subject of which identifies himself as Count Marco Lorenzo Pietro de Medici, who had lived over five hundred years ago. Equally unbelievable, the Count claims that his portrait was painted by the great Botticelli.

The relationship between the Count and Giovanni is challenged when the Count tells Giovanni that his new wife is having an affair with a diplomat at the French Embassy. Giovanni doesn't believe a word of it, but then he confronts his wife and she confesses. As a result, they separate, and Giovanni is plunged into deeper depression, but he is also angry with the Count for having told him of his wife's exploits. He would rather not have known.

Giovanni is fascinated by the portrait and spends days listening to the Count, who has existed many of his years in the darkness of a crate and is eager to converse, telling of his years in Venice and Florence, life in Versailles, and venturing to the northern reaches of America to a remote outpost of the Hudson Bay Company in the seventeenth century.

Giovanni is captivated by the Count's life story but is exasperated by his arrogance. The Count presses on regardless with an account of his time in Russia before and

after the Russian Revolution and then his escape to Paris with a shiftless owner who eventually sells the painting to a French banker whose family resides in an elegant home on Avenue Foch.

Then, in 1940, Paris falls to Nazi Germany.

Obsessed to verify the painting's history, Giovanni embarks on a quest of discovery, which only leads him to a disturbing revelation—his uncle, decades earlier, had assisted the Nazis and was involved in the theft of the Count's portrait, among others, from which his uncle had profited handsomely.

As pieces of the historical puzzle fit into place, Giovanni becomes increasingly convinced that all the Count had told could be true, including that Botticelli is the artist. But if true, it would render the work priceless, leading to a new dilemma—what if a member of the family had escaped Nazi oppression and were still living? Giovanni would have to return the painting to its rightful owner.

Before having the painting authenticated as a genuine work of Botticelli, Giovanni decides to discuss the situation with his estranged wife and son, at which time he is forced to expose his odd relationship with the Count. His wife and son agree—Giovanni has lost his mind, thinking he can talk to inanimate objects. But when Giovanni reveals the painting's potential value, were it indeed a Botticelli, his family concedes, reluctantly, to tolerate his eccentricity.

Giovanni travels to France, Germany, and Switzerland in pursuit of the truth and confronts his uncle in Zurich, with whom he has a bitter altercation. Then he learns that there is a survivor of the French family that had owned the painting, a frail woman living in Hell's Kitchen, New York.

He flies to New York to meet her but she is uneasy and becomes hostile, refusing to have any involvement with either Giovanni or the painting. She has her own reasons, namely her shame at what she had done to survive the concentration camp while the rest of her family perished. She assigns the painting, without any strings, to Giovanni.

Giovanni declines the many generous offers for the painting and instead donates it to the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, for it to hang in the Botticelli Room, which the Count had repeatedly insisted during their many conversations. The press gathers for the unveiling of a previously undiscovered work of Botticelli, and just before the gala event, Giovanni asks the museum director for permission to spend a few moments alone in the gallery with the painting, where he wonders if the Count will still speak, or if the strange experience was limited to his studio in London.



***Bronze Award in Best Regional Fiction (Europe), 2015 Independent Publisher Book Awards***



***2014 USA Best Book Awards finalist in three categories***

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Giovanni's quest is a thrilling one, particularly for readers familiar with the art world, and it's filled with interesting historical tidbits.

***KIRKUS REVIEWS***

Smoothly written, the story revolves around art theft and art provenance... the book is very well-crafted. Recommended.

***THE HISTORICAL NOVELS REVIEW***

Botticelli's Bastard is a delightful story, a fantasy revealing the extremes of human nature as well as the depths of emotion possession of a work of art may evoke. Stephen Maitland-Lewis is an award-winning author, and this novel supports those accolades.

***NEW YORK JOURNAL OF BOOKS***

The book is a combination of character and the suspense of a murder mystery.

***CONNIE MARTINSON TALKS BOOKS***

Readers who love history and art will enjoy this offering by Maitland-Lewis.

***FRESH FICTION***

## ***Praise for Botticelli's Bastard***

“Stephen Maitland-Lewis’ latest book, *Botticelli's Bastard*, is beautifully written and, to its further credit, impossible to categorize. Part thriller, part intriguing mystery, this book is compulsive reading. Above all, it is a first class novel.”

***Sir Ronald Harwood, Playwright and Oscar® winning and Oscar® nominated writer of THE PIANIST, THE DRESSER, and THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY. Former President of PEN International and current President of The Royal Literary Fund***

“*Botticelli's Bastard* is a fascinating, complex and completely compelling novel. It has everything I love, history, art, suspense, intelligence and creativity. I was captivated!”

***M. J. Rose, International Bestselling Author***

“Art restorers bring life to paintings, Giovanni Fabrizzi, the hero of *Botticelli's Bastard* brings paintings to life — literally. What ensues is a dazzling tale set in today’s art world where a painting reveals its history, from its origin in Florence to its fate during WWII and beyond. Determined to do the painting and its rightful owner justice, Fabrizzi risks his reputation, his sanity and more importantly his relationship with his wife to establish the truth. Part thriller, part psychological novel, Maitland-Lewis’ new book takes the reader through the back alleys of the art world, where greed, passion, and connoisseurship are masterfully set against the tragic background of history.”

***J. Patrice Marandel, The Robert H. Ahmanson Chief Curator of European Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art***

“If Edgar Allan Poe and Oscar Wilde collaborated on an uplifting novel it would have been *Botticelli's Bastard*. Maitland-Lewis beat them to the punch. A marvelous, soulful tale.”

***Stephen Jay Schwartz, L.A. Times Bestselling Author of BOULEVARD and BEAT***

“My interest in collecting important art came together with my love of thrillers. Stephen Maitland-Lewis’ *Botticelli's Bastard* is a great read.”

***Arnold Kopelson, Oscar® and Golden Globe® acclaimed producer of PLATOON and numerous award-winning films including THE FUGITIVE***

## ***Praise for Botticelli's Bastard***

“Who has not, when confronted by an interesting or unknown object, frustratingly wondered, ‘if only it could speak’? In the history of art, with often so little known about a work’s authorship, original commission or subsequent provenance, the imploration is even more acute and, alas, the silence more palpable. Maitland-Lewis’s fantasy, *Botticelli’s Bastard*, takes this concept to its heart. From its astonishing beginning to its appropriate conclusion, the author takes the reader on an emotional journey from the baseness of humanity to its generosity, from deception to forgiveness, from desperation to redemption. In addition, we join the central character on whirlwind trips from London to Italy and elsewhere on the continent to New York and back. *Botticelli’s Bastard* is of the moment — dealing as it does with art and its desirability, its various owners and, ultimately, its just place in the world.”

***Scott Schaefer, Curator emeritus, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles***

“In this riveting work of historical fiction, Stephen Maitland-Lewis brings a remarkable portrait to life. The centuries of history culminate in a vivid, moving, and highly accurate account of Nazi art plundering and postwar restitution efforts, replete with ethical implications. This story shows how a single painting can intersect with the lives of so many people, and also provides fascinating insight into the contemporary art world.”

***Jonathan Petropoulos, Professor of European History, Claremont McKenna College; author (The Faustian Bargain) and former Research Director for Art and Cultural Property on the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States***

“Maitland-Lewis has surprised us once again with a thoroughly engrossing tale of a mysterious five hundred year-old painting, the bizarre and colorful characters that owned it through the ages and its profoundly romantic ‘restoration’ — in every sense of the word. A terrific read for lovers of art and lovers of life.”

***Michael Findlay, author of THE VALUE OF ART***

“In this art world mystery story, a cosmopolitan painting’s conservator has a better relationship with a rediscovered Renaissance masterpiece than he does with his beautiful wife, his son and friends. As Giovanni Fabrizzi pursues the picture’s pedigree in London and on the Continent, he learns a great deal about collectors, his family secrets, and himself. An enjoyable and enthralling read!”

***Walter Liedtke, Curator of European Paintings, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York***

## ***Praise for Botticelli's Bastard***

“*Botticelli's Bastard* is a terrific read! Like all great fiction, this book introduces the reader to people, places and unique circumstances, unknown and hard to believe at first, but we are taken in and swept away by this extraordinary story. Along the way we learn about art, art history, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, the power of persistence and belief, and finally, the Nazi theft of art during the Second World War. Ambitious ground to cover for sure, but the author does so with passion and panache. With the summer reading season upon us, this is the book you should take with you on vacation. An ancillary benefit to the book is that the reader will never look at a portrait – any portrait – in the same way again!”

***James A. Cobb, Jr., author of FLOOD OF LIES, Adjunct Professor of Law,  
Tulane University***

“Unputdownable, fascinating, I devoured *Botticelli's Bastard* in a single sitting and only wish it could have lasted longer. This incredible (quite literally!) story delivers on every level... full of riveting historical color, the plot has as many twists and turns as a corkscrew and I can't wait to see the movie.”

***Gully Wells, author of THE HOUSE IN FRANCE***

“*Botticelli's Bastard* is a wonderful story. A portrait leads an art restorer on a journey to unmask the truth of a stolen painting and restore honor and love to those involved. A read for all seasons. An entertaining, educational book with an inspirational ending. Loved it. And — If you like this book there is *Ambition*, *Emeralds Never Fade* and *Hero On Three Continents* to enjoy.”

***James A. Misko, author of FOR WHAT HE COULD BECOME***

“In this one book, Stephen Maitland-Lewis has intrigued me with an original mystery, entertained me with good humor and educated me in the world of art, all while taking me on a tour of Great Britain, France and Italy with a side trip to New York. Most appealing is the lead character who is the most moral of men living with a most unusual secret.”

***Saul Turteltaub, television writer and producer***

“One man's longing for distraction becomes a life-changing journey to find redemption for many, as he struggles to strike a balance between integrity and desire. Well-played and imaginative, *Botticelli's Bastard* is the story of learning to trust in the heart of truth in order to liberate oneself from the prison of the past.



## ***Praise for Botticelli's Bastard***

“Not often do we see a historical fiction that navigates us through themes of thirsted-for resolve, the complexities of exhuming shameful secrets, and coping with the guilt, strain, and doubt that accompany tragedy, while remaining strangely charming from its first page until its satisfying dénouement. An out-of-the-ordinary novel that is a pleasure to read, Stephen Maitland-Lewis has achieved a reader’s delight; simply open the book and he will take over from there.”

***Jack Deadmen, author of  
NOBODY SPECIAL: THE DEATH OF JOHNNY SALINGER***

“When I was introduced to the protagonist in Stephen Maitland-Lewis’s novel, *Botticelli’s Bastard*, I realized that destiny is not necessarily carved in stone. With every journey, we can either lose ourselves completely or return with a greater knowledge and awareness. Page after page, I was immersed in the mystery of the Botticelli painting but also I was simultaneously drawn into a world of emotion and drama through the moral dilemma of the painting’s restorer. *Botticelli’s Bastard* — Pure Elegance!”

***Mario Canali, Major Italian contemporary artist and pioneer in Digital Art.***

“Maitland-Lewis has crafted a canvas of his own as he masterfully weaves an intriguing story about an heirloom. It’s an enjoyable, informative, and an entertaining read from beginning to end. And, after having read it, you will never look at a painting of a portrait the same way again.”

***Rabbi Jerry Ram Cutler, Movie critic, Beverly Hills Courier***

“Maitland-Lewis’ *Botticelli’s Bastard* is an exciting novel that will likely make most collectors pay more attention to an item’s provenance. This is a MUST read for anyone who has ever collected anything... especially fine art.”

***David Niven Jr., Former Vice President of both Paramount Pictures and Columbia Pictures and an art collector***

“Mr Maitland-Lewis imbues his newest novel with a strong sense of place and fascinating characters... The pages carry pigeons and old stone and the scent of linseed oil. Gripping and delightful.”

***James C. Mulligan, Disney Artist***

## About the Author



Photograph by Nathan Sternfeld

Stephen Maitland-Lewis is an award-winning author, a British attorney, and a former international investment banker. He has held senior executive positions in London, Kuwait and on Wall Street prior to moving to California in 1991. He has owned a luxury hotel and a world-renowned restaurant and was also Director of Marketing of a Los Angeles daily newspaper. Maitland-Lewis is a jazz aficionado and a Board Trustee of the Louis Armstrong House Museum in New York. In 2014, he received the Museum's prestigious Louie Award. A member of PEN and the Author's Guild, Maitland-Lewis is also on the Executive Committee of the International Mystery Writers Festival. His novel *Hero on Three Continents* has received numerous accolades, and *Emeralds Never Fade* won the 2012 Benjamin Franklin Award for Historical Fiction and the 2012 Written Arts Award for Best Fiction. His novel *Ambition* was a 2013 USA Best Book Awards finalist and won first place for General Fiction in the 2013 Rebecca's Reads Choice Awards. His novel *Botticelli's Bastard* was a 2014 USA Best Book Awards finalist in three categories and won the Bronze Award in Best Regional Fiction (Europe) at the 2015 Independent Publisher Book Awards. In January of 2016, Maitland-Lewis was sworn in as a Freeman of the City of London and admitted as a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of City Solicitors. In April of 2016, he became a Fellow of The Royal Geographical Society (FRGS). Maitland-Lewis and his wife, Joni Berry, divide their time between their homes in Beverly Hills and New Orleans.

[www.maitland-lewis.com](http://www.maitland-lewis.com)

For author inquiries please contact:  
Richard Hoffman  
Richard Hoffman Public Relations  
(310) 248-3647  
[richard@richardhoffmanpr.com](mailto:richard@richardhoffmanpr.com)