



# The Art of Making Money: The Story of a Master Counterfeiter

By Jason Kersten

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**The Art of Making Money: The Story of a Master Counterfeiter** By Jason Kersten

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**The true story of a brilliant counterfeiter who "made" millions, outwitted the Secret Service, and was finally undone when he went in search of the one thing his forged money couldn't buy him: family.**

Art Williams spent his boyhood in a comfortable middle-class existence in 1970s Chicago, but his idyll was shattered when, in short order, his father abandoned the family, his bipolar mother lost her wits, and Williams found himself living in one of Chicago's worst housing projects. He took to crime almost immediately, starting with petty theft before graduating to robbing drug dealers. Eventually a man nicknamed "DaVinci" taught him the centuries-old art of counterfeiting. After a stint in jail, Williams emerged to discover that the Treasury Department had issued the most secure hundred-dollar bill ever created: the 1996 New Note. Williams spent months trying to defeat various security features before arriving at a bill so perfect that even law enforcement had difficulty distinguishing it from the real thing. Williams went on to print millions in counterfeit bills, selling them to criminal organizations and using them to fund cross-country spending sprees. Still unsatisfied, he went off in search of his long-lost father, setting in motion a chain of betrayals that would be his undoing.

In *The Art of Making Money*, journalist Jason Kersten details how Williams painstakingly defeated the anti-forging features of the New Note, how Williams and his partner-in-crime wife converted fake bills into legitimate tender at shopping malls all over America, and how they stayed one step ahead of the Secret Service until trusting the wrong person brought them all down. A compulsively readable story of how having it all is never enough, *The Art of Making Money* is a stirring portrait of the rise and inevitable fall of a modern-day criminal mastermind.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. A young smalltime crook with a meticulous eye for artistic detail and an addiction to the thrill of crime crafts millions in high-quality phony bills in Kersten's account of counterfeiter Art Williams Jr. Born in 1972 and abandoned by his father to poverty, the gritty gangs of Chicago and a mentally ill mother, Williams slid into an underworld of theft and violence before a bohemian money crafter introduced him to counterfeiting. With swagger, ingenuity and a devoted wife, Williams produced millions of dollars' worth of uncannily accurate bills for 14 years, till the Secret Service caught up with him. As Kersten narrates this story, he ably weaves the minuscule details of currency security with colorful portraits of underworld characters like a Chinese mob leader known as the Horse and tales of giddy shopping sprees fueled by sex, fake bills, even mischievous masquerades as priests. Illustrating Williams not only as a delinquent genius but a sensitive young man seeking paternal love and aesthetic validation, Kersten (who first told Williams's story in *Rolling Stone*) configures a rollicking and captivating look into a compelling criminal mind. (June 11)

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### Review

Jason Kersten delves into the arcane world of a master counterfeiter with a fine eye for detail and novelist's grasp of character. A story about fathers and sons, filled with crime-fueled aslammainga trips, drug pirates, and obsessive desire, I couldn't put it down. After reading this true tale of money and crime, I'll never be able to look at a C- note the same way again.aaJulia Flynn Siler, author of the New York Times bestseller, *The House of Mondavi: The Rise and Fall of an American Wine Dynasty*

### About the Author

Jason Kersten writes for *Rolling Stone* and *Men's Journal*. Also author of *The Journal of the Dead: A Story of Friendship and Murder in the New Mexico Desert*, he lives in New York.

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**Quentin Ryan:**

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