

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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149 Paintings You Really Need to See in North America (So You Can Ignore the Others).

Porter, Julian (Author) and Grant, Stephen (Author)

Sep 2017. 440 p. Dundurn, hardcover, \$37.99. (9781459739369). e-book, \$19.99. (9781459739376). 759.94.

Though too large to throw in your backpack, this is a travel guide to “the best art in public museums in North America.” Porter and Grant, lawyers by trade, make difficult art accessible through simple formal descriptions and introductory histories of artists and patrons. Both write in an inviting, casual tone. Porter recalls his wife looking at a Rembrandt and exclaiming, “Look at that wonderful peppy young self-portrait!” A Bridget Riley piece prompts Grant to ask, “Is it event art?” Their book is rich with color illustrations and brief, wall-text-style explanations that make turning the pages akin to strolling through a museum’s galleries. Canonical works by Titian, El Greco, Kandinsky, and de Kooning are all on view. Porter and Grant focus on older European art and more modern North American and European works because those, respectively, are their areas of interest. It’s a shame they don’t also look at paintings from other parts of the world because their book promises those curious but intimidated by art and museums a comfortable introduction to great works.

— *Maggie Taft*