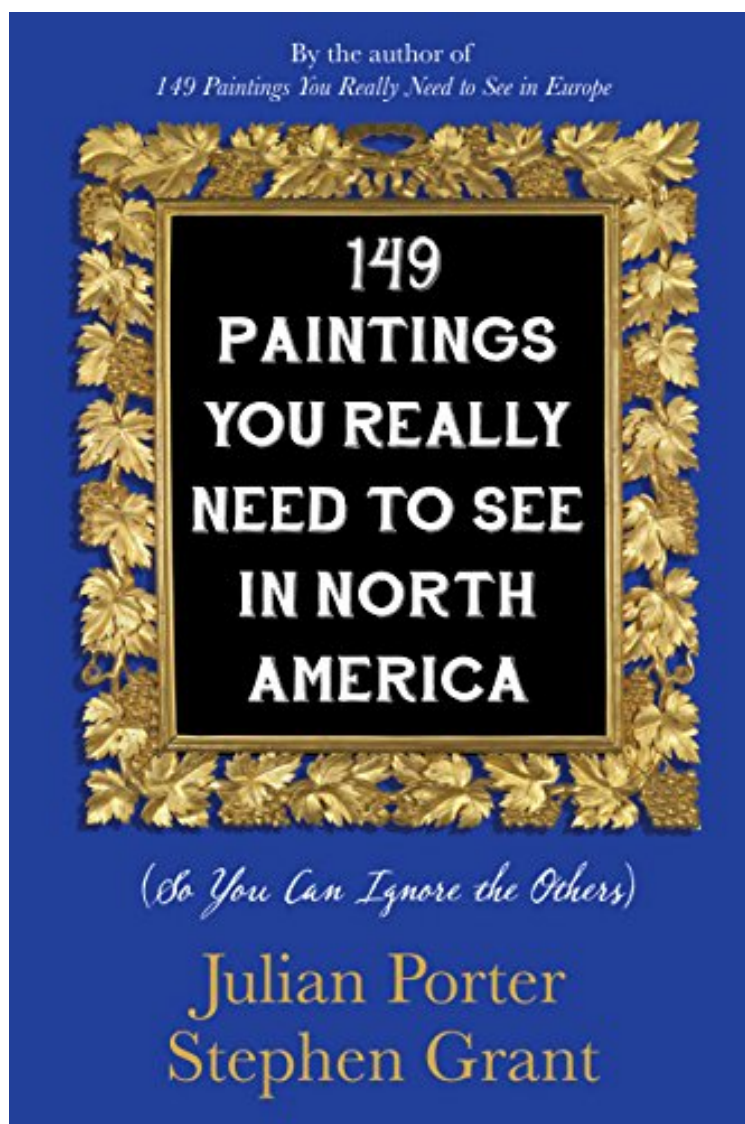


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149 Paintings You Really Need to See in North America: (So You Can Ignore the Others)

Julian Porter, Stephen Grant

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Julian Porter, Stephen Grant : 149 Paintings You Really Need to See in North America: (So You Can Ignore the Others) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 149 Paintings You Really Need to See in North America: (So You Can Ignore the Others):

A guide to the best art in North American galleries, written and expertly curated by a pair of irreverent and

knowledgeable guides to inform and entertain you — and save you from aching feet!

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. 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. (Booklist) About the Author Julian Porter is a litigation lawyer whose other passion in life is art. He's had a lot of fun looking at art and wants to share his enthusiasm with others. He has lectured in galleries from Madrid to St. Petersburg. He lives in Toronto. Stephen Grant is a Toronto lawyer and life-long art lover, especially of the twentieth-century modernists. He lives in Toronto. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter 1 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Isabella Gardner was a fascinating character. When she was exposed to the art and architecture in Venice, Paris, and the rest of Europe, she fell in love with it. She had a refreshing ability to study all cultures. She had energy with a capital "E." Her husband was wealthy and so she could buy many of the great works she loved. Bernard Berenson, the great artistic guru and acquirer, scouted Europe for her. Once she had acquired a substantial collection, she decided that a museum was needed to house it. She herself supervised the building of the Gardner Museum, following it brick by brick. She stood over the stonemasons, plasterers, and carpenters. She came up with the idea of an internal courtyard touched with Tiepolo pink. She bought all the arches, pillars, railings, columns, and sculptures, and applied them to the walls and filled the courtyard. It was all her own scheme. The result is a building with a Venetian courtyard suffused with plants, framed by Venetian windows, arches, balustrades, and loggias. On the grounds, there are Roman statuary, sarcophagi, and a cloister walk with Romanesque figures and leafy capitols on top of the cloister columns. This is an eccentric collection, but how lucky Boston is to have it. 1. The Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple (c. 1320) Giotto (Giotto di Bondone) (1267–1337) How rare to be able to sit in a chair right next to a small Giotto, done in about 1320. I've never been able to do this except in the eccentric Gardner mansion's elegant curio setting. There it is, 18 in x 12 in, all gold backdrop on a small side table. It's fun to be so snug with the beginning of the Renaissance. Giotto propelled Western art beyond the gold stylized figures that were more ornaments than people. With Giotto, the human figure developed a solidity and a personality. Here it is, all at once, a little squiggly Christ pulling Simeon's beard (see Luke 2:27–38, a devout man yearning for a saviour of Israel), yet straining with a child's telltale reach for his mother. Anna sits like a prophetess on the right, old, haggard, grey of face, accentuated by a green-yellow gown — the pain of age. Behind the Virgin Mother is Joseph, eyeing it all with intensity and focus, the carpenter's eye. In the middle of the altar, a hanging vestment, all white, a patterned abstract, taking up a large space. This is the most modern abstract painting possible — lines, tiny squares, and white. Not far from this to Rothko. This would have been part of a larger altar piece. Giotto created wonderful art but he himself was not a pretty man. Neither, it seems, were any of his eight children attractive. When Dante first saw the children's faces, he said, "My friend, you make such handsome figures for others — why do you make such plain ones for yourself?" Giotto responded, "I paint by day but I procreate at night in the dark." JP 2. El Jaleo (The Ruckus) (1882) John Singer Sargent (1856–1925) Isabella Gardner coveted Sargent's El Jaleo. Painted in 1882, shortly after the premiere of Bizet's Carmen of 1875, which tells the story of a proud gypsy woman torn between an army officer and a Toreador. The painting shows a gypsy dancer by herself in front of a musical band. It was first exhibited with the title Dance of the Gypsies.