



March to May REVIEWS

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- ★★★★★ an exceptional book of the very highest quality, regardless of genre
- ★★★★☆ an excellent book
- ★★★☆☆ good book, within its genre
- ★★☆☆☆ a passable example of the genre
- ★☆☆☆☆ caution advised

Each issue, **BOOKSELLER+PUBLISHER** asks booksellers and writers to review books due to be published in the following month or thereafter. All books reviewed originate in Australia or New Zealand.

Betty Churcher's Notebooks (Betty Churcher, MUP, \$44.95 pb, ISBN 9780522858426, April) ★★☆☆

As director of the National Gallery of Australia in the 1990s, Betty Churcher was well known for her blockbuster exhibitions, attracting famous international artworks to Australian shores. Her passion for great art and her ability to communicate its qualities without pretention is one of the biggest strengths of this book. *Betty Churcher's Notebooks* is a tour of Churcher's favourite artworks, divided into a number of galleries in London, Paris, Madrid and Rome. When Churcher discovered her eyesight was failing, these were the paintings she sought out one last time. The analysis is wide-ranging and also deeply personal—Churcher talks about how she felt when she first saw these paintings, and the book includes some of her sketches,

reproduced alongside the originals. It's a fascinating but often too brief insight into some very famous paintings, as Churcher covers too many artists to do each justice. The exceptions are Rembrandt and Velazquez—clearly two particular favourites—and her analysis of these painters' talent is much more detailed and satisfying. This is a beautiful coffee table book that will appeal to lovers of art, history and travel, and likely the many people who flocked to recent blockbuster exhibitions at the National Gallery.

Andrea Hanke is editor of BOOKSELLER+PUBLISHER



Author: Betty Churcher