



The Appraisal

Anna Porter

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In the vein of Kate Atkinson's Jackson Brodie novels comes this year's smart new thriller with literary chops

When wealthy octogenarian Geza Marton hires art expert Helena Marsh to buy back his family's Titian painting, Helena flies to Budapest to close what she expects will be a reasonably simple sale. But nothing is ever simple in this beautiful, flawed city where corruption abounds. Helena discovers that there are multiple bidders for the painting, including some dangerous Slavs. Soon there are also dead bodies, and a complicated history that leads her to men Marton knew in Vorkuta, one of Stalin's notorious gulags.

As she works to unravel the truth of the painting's ownership and dodges her tail, the dogged ex-detective Attila Feher, Helena is forced to call on all her considerable skills to stay alive and out of jail. Smart, fast-paced, and wildly entertaining, *The Appraisal* is a terrific thriller set against Budapest's corruption and lost promise.

The Appraisal Details

Date : Published October 17th 2017 by ECW Press

ISBN : 9781770414105

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Format : Paperback 300 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Thriller, Mystery Thriller

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From Reader Review *The Appraisal* for online ebook

Lis says

A rather fun romp in Eastern Europe — mainly Budapest — with some interesting characters, mostly shady, contending for a possibly fake painting by Titian with suspect provenance. Helena Marsh is a talented art expert skilled in disguise and martial arts. Everyone's history comes into play, including that of Helena's family.

Maureen Carden says

Who knew the art appraisal business could call for James Bond like skills? Or that art ownership could be a very good way of washing criminal cash, or passing on funds to criminals and terrorists. Who knew that being on stolen art retrieval commissions could be so heartbreaking when you learn the stories behind the stolen paintings?

Helena Marsh was raised in the art appreciation, then appraisal business. Her father and mother both insisted she learn some very strong survival skills. They evidently foresaw the time when appraisals, sales and retrievals would no longer be accomplished over a glass of sherry in a paneled library.

Helena is sent to Budapest to buy a Titian for a old Hungarian man now living in Canada. He claims he was forced to sell it after being sent to a Soviet Labor Camp. When word of this Titian gets out, suddenly there are other bidders and Helena must use her considerable skills to protect herself and to discourage the other bidders.

This was a surprisingly exciting story set mostly in Hungary. It sets several tropes about the art world on its ear. This thriller also did a great job of painting a grim picture of life under the Soviets. It's a period of history little known to the west. I did have a problem with names and place names, but that's always going to be a bit of a problem for me with any book set in Eastern Europe. Well written, fast paced, with characters you become invested in, I am hoping this might become a series.

My thanks to NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Viva says

2 stars = it was ok by GR's rating system.

When I first started reading, I wondered if it had been written in a foreign language (like Hungarian where the story is set) and then translated into English because the writing was so awkward but no, it was written in English.

The story is told from 2 POV: Helena Marsh, art expert and Attila Feher, ex-detective. Both characters are well drawn and interesting. The setting of modern day Hungary is also interesting and informative from a cultural, political and historical point of view with many references dating back to the post WW2 days. I enjoyed the characters as they were full of life as was the setting. The story is that Marsh is completing the sale of a valuable Titian painting for a buyer and Feher putting obstacles in her way.

So far so good. The issue that I had was that I thought the writing was disjointed and didn't flow smoothly.

There were a lot of supporting cast and it took an effort to figure out who was who and how they fit into the story. They seemed to be randomly introduced and in fact I had to check the back of the book to make sure that this wasn't one book in a series and I had missed out on the back story of all these people from previous books.

So I liked the backdrop of Hungary. I liked Marsh and Feher, only that they were seemingly thrown into a story that was not adequately explained. In the end, I ended up not enjoying the book but just reading faster and faster just to get to the end.

I got this book as a free ARC.

Kathleen Gray says

Maybe a bit overly dramatically cloak and dagger in parts but gosh, it's an interesting read. Helena is an art appraiser and she's in Hungary trying to buy back a Titian. Big bucks. Porter clearly has a strong understanding of the art world, which is in fact used to launder money and where corruption abounds, especially in the netherworld in post War Europe and Eastern Europe. I was most intrigued by the details. Thanks to Netgalley for the ARC. This is different from many of the "woman goes back to Europe to find something" novels because it's not a family romance except with art. You'll learn something while reading it which makes it all the more worthy.

Laura says

I wanted to like this more than I did—the world of international art sales intersecting with war crimes and post-Communist Hungary—but it was a bit flat. I don't know that I found either of the main characters interesting enough to follow their adventures.

Margaret1358 Joyce says

This fabulous thriller is set in contemporary Budapest and has layer upon layer of seriously interesting history regarding German and Communist rivalries during and after WW2, whilst not ever losing a beat in the storyline: a Christies art restorer who specializes in restitution of stolen art goes from Toronto to Budapest in search of her client's original painting by Renaissance painter, Titian. As I said, lots of history to absorb here, not to mention the Slavic names of people and places. An eye-opener of a read.

Lynda says

A thriller about the art world. Very slow in spots. Did not enjoy it very much.

Martha says

characters & plot leave me confused but not worth rereading

Linda Wallace says

Found this very confusing. Between Helen Marsh's many disguises and different personas and the Hungarian names, I found myself at a loss. The twist at the end was interesting.

Ruth says

I like books that involve art and the nefarious aspects related to authenticity, forgery, etc. This also takes place mainly in Budapest which makes for an interesting setting. It also has a powerful main character, who is not only an art expert, but trained in martial arts, disguises, etc.

Josue Lagos says

RESEÑA PRONTO EN MI CANAL!!!

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRTB...>

En este libro vemos a Helena, una mujer que trabaja con arte, y fue empleada por un hombre que quiere recuperar un pintura carísima que pertenecía a su familia y les fue robada durante el período Nazi. Por otro lado, tenemos a Attila, un hombre que trabaja para el gobierno, y le han asignado vigilar a Helena a toda costa.

Todo se resume en saber el pasado de varios personajes, saber quién está mintiendo, pues aquí nada es lo que parece, y sobre todo, ¿con quién terminará la pintura?

El libro no me gustó para nada, la verdad que le faltó mucho porque yo creía que iba a ser muy distinto. Pensé que sería tipo "La pantera rosa" pero sin la parte cómica, osea, el robo de la pieza de arte, saber dónde está, pues el libro dicen que es un genial libro de suspenso, y todo el libro solo era historia, RELLENO INNECESARIO POR TODAS PATES, nada de acción, y todo era puro negocio.

El libro me dejó con muchas ganas de más, de algo impactante, y el gran misterio se resolvió solo en 2 páginas.

Con decirles que terminé el libro y todavía no me quedó claro si la pintura era real o una réplica.

Louise says

I enjoyed this book. It was compelling - read it in one day! The characters were strong, the history interesting. A good read!
