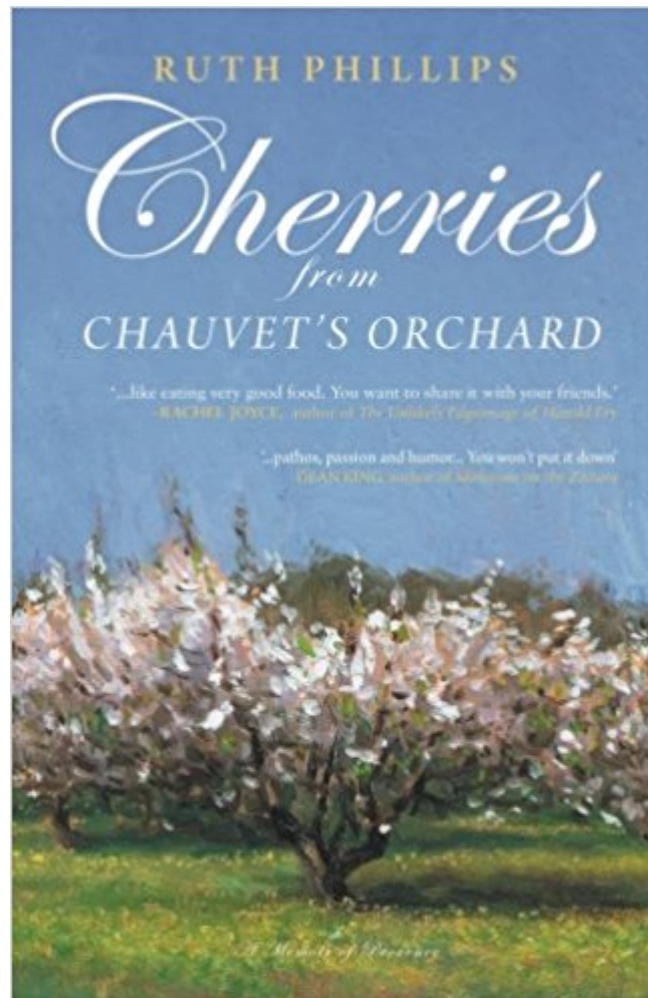




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# Cherries From Chauvet's Orchard, A Memoir Of Provence



## Synopsis

When an English painter moves to Provence in search of the muse, he is looking not only for artistic fulfillment but also for love, family and community. This funny and touching memoir chronicles his unconventional route towards almost everything he desires, whilst painting a vivid picture of how hard it can be for one man to face a blank canvas - even in paradise. 'Cherries from Chauvet's Orchard' is full of the author's passion for things Provencal, and will be read by lovers of Provence (and Provencal food) with the greatest pleasure, but it is also an extremely honest account of what it takes for an artist to find his or her way in the world. There is a gritty kitchen sink element to Cherries which is absent in the work of, say, Peter Mayle, and which lifts this book above the usual croissants-and-cafe crÃfme panegyric. This is a book about real people struggling to turn a ruin into a home and a relationship into a marriage. The ruin just happens to be set in some of the most beautiful countryside in the south of France. '-Joseph Geary, author of Mirror and Spiral

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Red Ochre Press; 1st edition (May 16, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 2953450017

ISBN-13: 978-2953450019

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 35 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,669,712 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #95 in Ã Books > Travel > Europe > France > Provence #2246 in Ã Books > Travel > Europe > France > General #4532 in Ã Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Travel

## Customer Reviews

'Set in rural Provence, this is a beautiful, vividly-written memoir about the life of paintings--how they come about and why we choose them--but also a celebration of the beauty of the ordinary, the smallest passing moments that are over even before they are painted. Ruth Phillips' descriptive prose is like eating very good food. You want to share it with your friends.'- RACHEL JOYCE, Bestselling author of The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry and Perfect'It may be the combination of her musicality and visual sense further developed by living with a painter and acting as his de facto studio assistant, that has distilled this lovely prose. Either way, the effect is quite magical.'

DEBORAH LAWRENSON, author of *The Lantern*—In Cherries from Chauvet's Orchard, cellist Ruth Phillips makes music with words, capturing on the page what her painter husband, Julian Merrow-Smith, does on canvas—a way of life that is achingly romantic yet not romanticized, that is earthbound yet exquisite, and one where sweat is rewarded with transcendence. As the couple struggles to build their home out of a farm ruin beneath the shadow of Mt. Ventoux and to make a living and life together, Julian must harness his muse. In a modern-day twist in this ancient place of luscious colors and cuisine, it is the worldwide web that changes their life. This is a true story of talent, ingenuity, and success against the odds, of pathos, passion, and humor. You won't put it down.'- DEAN KING, author of *The Feud: The Hatfields and McCoys: The True Story and Skeletons on the Zahara*—the language is precise, the voice vivid'- MORGAN ENTREKIN

Ruth Phillips grew up in South London with her artist father, Tom, and her musician mother, Jill. Needless to say she became a cellist and married a painter. Always passionate about text, Ruth spends much of her time playing opera, namely in Paris with Opera Fuoco and in the UK with Garsington Opera, and as a continuo cellist. She lives in Provence with her husband, Julian Merrow-Smith, three cats and their adopted son, Louis.

I purchased this book about a year ago and finally read it. At first it seems disjointed and chaotic. The use of saying "Christ" was revolting to me as well as "F..k". It was disgusting. Ruth seemed like a nice enough person and certainly a supportive wife, now he came off as a selfish man who thought his wife his errand girl, personal assistant and her career and talent an obvious second to his. To say he came across as awful would be an understatement. On top of that I wondered why write about such a depressing person since he seemed to be the real subject of the book. There are so many books I have read from this area and this one will go to donation.

My wife is an artist, and while hunting around on the web for images of fruit for her paintings, she stumbled upon the paintings of Julian Merrow-Smith, and through that discovery she found Ruth's book. Fast forward a couple of years and now I've given her two of Julian's still life paintings for birthday gifts, and they hang in our kitchen. I kept getting the nudge from my wife, "You need to read Ruth's book," which now, my wife has read twice. So, since we're traveling to France, and in a couple of days, my wife meets with a dozen other painters from around the world for a week long workshop with Julian, I quickly put down the mysteries and such, and I read Ruth's memoir. What a delightful success story of entrepreneurial artistic achievement. Seldom does an artist and their

family find an opportunity to live wherever they wish, paint subjects that he wants to paint everyday, and connect directly with the people who appreciate and desire to own the pictures he paints. No galleries, no art dealers, just the painter, his family, friends, the surrounding Provence countryside. Each day, on their website, a new picture gets offered via auction to the world. The Internet may have disrupted and disturbed many traditional business models, but with this painting-a-day business plan, from my perspective as someone who has worked in the arts for forty years, this is a beautiful thing. Friends tell friends, and the circle of collectors expands. Every aspiring artist should read this book and apply Ruth and Julian's formula to build their own independent and successful careers. I'd make this required reading for every artist. Well done, Ruth. You write well and tell a great story. Best of luck to you both. Jeff Dwyer

The literary beauty of this memoir caught me by surprise, as I purchased it as an "add-on" to Julian Merrow-Smith's book of his paintings. However, Ruth Phillips' writing stands all by itself as a work of art. I am very moved by her story and the quality of her writing. It is like poetry and music, combined ... and much, much more. I will keep *Cherries from Chauvet's Orchard* next to my favorite books which I open again and again in the quiet hours of the night.

I have to agree with the negative reviews and I suspect the raving five star reviews are written by the author's friends who have a lot of time on their hands. What a boring, tedious and pretentious book. I couldn't force myself beyond the first thirty pages, so I leafed through the book reading various pages to see if it might get better, but it did not. Here's a sample from page 124: "Bedoin abuts the surface of Mars, is a cool thing you might not know. I am wearing the nice shirt I brought on our harp-fetching trip, brought along because I thought, who knows, Ruth seems relaxed but Julian, who knows how posh he is going to be? A successful artist. Srsly, I mean, artist, maybe a white tee shirt, maybe whatever, something nice. Maybe a three-piece suit. You never (omit profanity) know with artists. I am the only one with a shirt with buttons on it, it turns out, but not for long. The problem is solved when I spill wine on myself and Ruth throws the shirt in a bucket of water to soak and Julian gives me a shirt of his. Not the shirt off his back, strictly speaking, but identical to the shirt on his back: a white tee shirt. That's practically the same thing. Once I have Julian's shirt, I am as relaxed as everyone else".....I actually feel guilty trying to resell this thing.

I felt that I had found undiscovered treasure when I began reading "*Cherries from Chauvet's Orchard*." I've never bought an unknown book but I had been following the daily painting website,

Postcards from Provence, and it had brightened up the days of a long snowy NYC winter, apartment-bound, recuperating from an injury. When Julian, the painter, put on the site that his wife, Ruth Phillips, had written a book about their website and new life in southern France, I had to get the back story. And it's simply fascinating. Ruth is a musician, so the writing is musical and just flows into your being. This book for so many reasons is going to be known by many in the years to come.

"Cherries" is like a bowl of those sweet fruits themselves, a good taste of the life of two artists (one, the author, a musical artist; the other visual). Not just a document of her and her husband Julian's adventures in living the dream of being an artist, Ruth Phillips' story is a humorous and touching account of their neighbors, their life in Provence, and includes first-hand reports from the people whose lives Julian's paintings have entered into. Would recommend highly.

I read Ruth Philip's book when it first came out and again as I was traveling recently to Provence to paint with Julian and twelve other painters. Ruth, a woman, musician, mother and wife to Julian Merrow-Smith has a great ability to write and describe in intimate detail their relationship and life together in a very special part of the world. After reading you will certainly want to go see for your self what a true artist and painter's life and relationship looks like and perhaps it will even inspire you to paint.

What a delightful book! I consumed it in about a week's time, and couldn't get enough of Ruth's vivid descriptions and funny characterizations in this fresh and very entertaining collection of vignettes. If you love France or food or art - or great storytelling - read this book.

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