

Robert Alexander Cumming

Personal and Contact details

Adjunct Professor in the Department of History of Art and
Architecture, Boston University

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Qualifications

MA, University of Cambridge, 1966

Barrister-at-Law

Awards

Silver Pencil Award Utrecht 1982

TES Senior Information Book Award 1983

Premio Europeo di Letteratura Giovane, Pier Paolo Vergerio,
Padua, 1985

Academic and Professional appointments

Called to the Bar, Middle Temple, (Harmsworth scholar) 1967

Practising barrister 1967-69

Hambros Bank 1970-71

Tutor, Open University 1975-1980

Lecturer Tate Gallery 1974-78

Director, Christie's Fine Arts Course, 1978-88

Chairman, Christie's Education, 1988-2000

Chairman Christie's International Art Studies 1998-2000

President Christie's Education Inc (USA), Christie's Éducation (France); Trustee Christie's Education Trust 1986-2000

External examiner, University of London 1976-80, University of Glasgow 1988-92

Director and Chairman of the Executive Board, Boston University British Programs, London, 2005-2012

Other appointments

Member, Exhibitions Sub-Committee, Arts Council 1984-88

Council Member, Friends of the Tate Gallery 1983-1995

Committee Member, Thames and Chiltern Region, National Trust 1990-96

Chairman, Contemporary Art Society 1988-90

Patron Royal Society of British Sculptors 1998-2006

Chairman Jenkins & Beckers, Wine Merchants, 1994-

Trustee, Milton Keynes Arts Centre, 2013-

Liveryman Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers 2009 -

Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts 1990-

Principal Publications

Macmillan Encyclopedia of Art (1977)

Just Look (1979)

Just Imagine (1982)

Christie's Guide to Collecting (1984)

Looking into Paintings (with TV programmes)(1985)

Working with Colour (1985)

The Colour Eye (1990)

Discovering Turner (1990)

Paolozzi Mythologies (1990)

Annotated Art (1995)

Great Artists (1998)

ART a no nonsense guide to art and artists (2001)

Art: Eyewitness Guide (2006)

Treasures in MK (2014)

Bernard Berenson, Formation and Heritage, Villa I Tatti Series 31,
Harvard University, edited by Joseph Connors and Lou Waldman
(2014)

My dear BB, The Letters of Bernard Berenson and Kenneth Clark,
1925-1959, Yale university Press (2015)

Art, A Visual History, Dorling Kindersley (2015)

Current Research

The correspondence between John Walker and Bernard Berenson
Who's that, What's this? A short guide to iconography in the visual
arts

My Dear BB ... The Letters of Bernard Berenson and Kenneth Clark, 1925--1959

Yale University Press, 2015

Hardcover

583pages

YaleUniversityPress

ISBN 978-0-300-20737-8

In 1925, the 22-year-old Kenneth Clark (1903-1983) and the legendary art critic and historian Bernard Berenson (1865-1959) met in Italy. From that moment, they began a correspondence that lasted until Berenson's death at age 94. This book makes available, for the first time, the complete correspondence between two of the most influential figures in the 20th-century art world, and gives a new and unique insight into their lives and motivations. The letters are arranged into ten chronological sections, each accompanied by biographical details and providing the context for the events and personalities referred to. They were both talented letter writers: informative, spontaneous, humorous, gossipy, and in their frequent letters they exchanged news and views about art and politics, friends and family life, collectors, connoisseurship, discoveries, books read and written, and travel. Berenson advised Clark on his blossoming career, warning against the museum and commercial art worlds while encouraging his promise as a writer and interpreter of the arts. Above all, these letters trace the development of a deep and intimate friendship.

'Robert Cumming's informative and shrewd linking commentaries, footnoted glosses and lively biographical appendix all enhance and illuminate the letters. There a skittish touches that are thoroughly endearing. He lets the correspondence's 'evolving continuity' stand as an 'authentic testimony'.' - Richard Davenport-Hines, *Literary Review*.

'Both men are blessed on this occasion in having Robert Cumming as editor. His apparatus is superbly thorough and the footnotes salvage many a dull reference. In giving us rather more than we need, Cumming

confers amplitude and completeness upon his project.'-Duncan Fallowell, the Spectator.

‘...Cumming is a perceptive and diligent editor; his annotations and notes a mine of information’ - Robert Carver, the Tablet.

"Superbly edited and annotated... Cumming's introductions to the various chapters form a deft narrative of the two lives" - Patrick McCaughey, Australian Book Review.

"The letters have been edited and annotated to superlative effect by Robert Cumming... How do I love this book? Let me count the ways. First there are the letters themselves, richissime in information and observations on art, people and the world at large... a steady stream of historical context engages the reader and leads him on... This is a real contribution to the study of art history." - Eliot Rowlands, Art Newspaper.

The correspondence is amply supported and clarified by the editor's introductions to dated sections, epistolary annotations, and a *Dramatis Personae* or guide to people mentioned. Robert Cumming had close ties to the Berenson world. And indeed without his commentary the entire correspondence would be hard to make sense of. - Svetlana Alpers, ΦBK Book Club

Further reviews

Australian Book Review (Patrick McCaughey) – 14 September 2015

Apollo Magazine (John-Paul Stonard) – 1 September 2015

Anthony Powell Society Newsletter (Michael Barber) -15 September
2015

Art Newspaper (Eliot Rowlands) - November 2015

Financial Times – June 2015

The Guardian [London] (John Crace) -June 2015
Literary Review (Richard Davenport-Hines)- April 2015
Mail on Sunday [London] (Craig Brown) – April 2015
New Criterion (Marco Grassi)- December 2015
Observer [London] (Robert McCrum) – August 2015
Private Eye [London] – May 2015
The Spectator (Duncan Fallowell) - April 2015
Standpoint [London] (Laura Freeman) – June 2015
Studio International (Angeria Rigamonti di Cutò) – October 2015
The Sunday Times [London] (John Carey) -April 2015
The Tablet (Robert Carver) – May 2015
Times Literary Supplement (Bruce Boucher) – October 2015
Wall Street Journal (John Cole) - October 2015
Weekly Standard [USA] (Henrik Bering) - October 2015
The ΦBK Book Club (Svetlana Alpers) – April 2015