

Slow Looking  
Robert Cumming



Illustrations  
Gino Ballantyne



The Lutterworth Press

SAMPLE

Slow Looking

Book One

Learning to Look

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

Bernard Berenson, the pioneer connoisseur of Italian Art who lived at the Villa I Tatti outside Florence (now The Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies) came to believe that the direct experience of nature was better than the first-hand experience of art. As I grow older I am inclined to agree. I would also add to his observation the intimacies of a happy family life with children. Thus, my principal words of appreciation are for my wife Carolyn, our two daughters Chloe and Phoebe, our sons-in-law David and Edward, and our grandchildren Bertie and Sophia. To be with them, to look at them and to enjoy their company are experiences so full of delights and surprises that, for me, they surpass those of the four paintings in this book. Carolyn has created from a neglected wilderness a wonderful garden which constantly opens my eyes to the beauties of nature. I wish to dedicate this book to them all and to Carolyn especially for without her constant loving kindness, understanding and support Slow Looking could not have been written.

Robert Cumming

June 2024

The Lutterworth Press  
P.O. Box 60  
Cambridge  
CB1 2NT  
United Kingdom

[www.lutterworth.com](http://www.lutterworth.com)  
[publishing@lutterworth.com](mailto:publishing@lutterworth.com)

Hardback ISBN: 978 0 7188 9805 2  
Paperback ISBN: 978 0 7188 9774 1  
PDF ISBN: 978 0 7188 9776 5  
ePub ISBN: 978 0 7188 9775 8

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A record is available from the British Library

First published by The Lutterworth Press, 2024

Copyright © Robert Cumming, 2024

Copyright © Gino Ballantyne, 2024

All rights reserved. No part of this edition may be reproduced, stored electronically or in any retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission from the Publisher ([permissions@lutterworth.com](mailto:permissions@lutterworth.com)).

# Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Preface  | 11  |
| Foreword   | 13  |
| <b>Early Years</b>   | 17  |
| <i>First Tastes of Aesthetic Experience</i>  | 19  |
| <i>Learning to look</i>  | 33  |
| <b>The Paintings</b>   | 41  |
| <i>Introduction</i>  | 43  |
| <i>Velázquez Las Meninas (Madrid, Prado)</i>   | 47  |
| <i>Fra Angelico The Cortona Altarpiece (Cortona, Museo Diocesano)</i>                              | 77  |
| <i>Canaletto The Arrival of the French Ambassador in Venice<br/>    (St Petersburg, Hermitage)</i> | 107 |
| <i>Jackson Pollock One: Number 31, 1950 (New York, MoMA)</i>                                       | 139 |
| Thanks and Acknowledgements  | 173 |