

## Best books...Charles Saumarez Smith

*Charles Saumarez Smith, the Secretary and Chief Executive of the Royal Academy of Arts, chooses the books which have most influenced his interests in art and architecture. He is speaking at the Charleston Literary Festival with Hannah Rothschild on May 22<sup>nd</sup> and with Julia Peyton-Jones on May 23<sup>rd</sup>.*

**Piero della Francesca** by Kenneth Clark (out of print). Kenneth Clark's book on Piero was the first art historical monograph I ever read and I still look back on it as a model of elegant and illuminating concision. It tells one everything one needs to know about the artist in order to enhance the experience of looking.

**Nairn's London** by Ian Nairn (Penguin £9.99). My older brother lent me a copy of *Nairn's London*, when I first lived in London in 1971. I tried, as far as possible, to visit every building listed. It introduced me to the pleasures of architectural history, to the importance of individual judgment, and to modern architecture as well as historical.

**Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style** by Michael Baxandall (OUP £9.99). This was the book which introduced me to how art history could be written in a way which was deeply and provocatively thoughtful about the relationship of works of art to the social circumstances of their production. It led me to do a Ph.D at the Warburg Institute under Baxandall.

**Neo-classicism** by Hugh Honour (out of print). As an undergraduate, I specialised in the study of eighteenth-century architecture and I look back on Hugh Honour's book about Neoclassicism as a model of how to write about a style in a way which is intelligent and deeply culturally informed.

**The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things** by George Kubler (Yale University Press £10). George Kubler was a Professor at Yale, who wrote a provocatively short and reflective book about how to think about artefacts. It is the most profound book about how to write about objects without a known history.

**The East End of London** by Millicent Rose (out of print). Millicent Rose, who was one of the first students at the Courtauld Institute, wrote a wonderful, well-informed history of east London, which was published by the Cresset Press in 1951 and introduced me to the pleasures of London local history.