

OBITUARY NOTICES

RICHARD ETTINGHAUSEN

[1906 - 1979]

Richard Ettinghausen combined a sharp and cultivated eye with a brilliant, creative and synthesizing mind. This combination was supported and fed by a rare mastery of the entire field of Islamic art and an encyclopedic knowledge of the history, literature, languages and cultures of the Islamic peoples.

This is not the place to summarize his hundreds of publications in the field of Islamic art and culture, but just to mention a few which stand out in my mind:

- He isolated and defined for posterity Arab painting;
- Early in his career he delineated a major type of Persian pottery—the famous Kashan lusterware—so completely, that his definition became canonical; and
- He fundamentally changed the understanding of the history of Islamic painting by recognizing one of the earliest Indian Islamic schools, which previously had been classified as Persian.

Not only was his comprehension of the entire field of Islamic art and culture a wonder to behold, but he saw the Islamic experience as part of the human experience and was able, because of the universal nature of his mind and spirit, to interrelate the Islamic with contemporary cultures at all periods.

He combined this rare encyclopedic scholarship with a strong object-orientedness. Both as a teacher and as a curator, one was constantly aware of his eye and mind. He introduced his students to the mysteries of the objects he loved and knew so intimately through a series of devices calculated to train their eyes. In his ceramic seminars he brought pottery sherds from his own collection and assigned one sherd to each student. And after the research reports on each had been delivered, he gave each student his or her own sherd. For those pottery types whose technique was difficult to describe, he had potters make pieces to help his students better understand how the object was made. He assigned fakes to unwitting advanced students and sat back beaming when they came to the correct conclusions about them. He took students to the studio of one of the pre-eminent restorers of metalwork where they were shown, firsthand, various metalworking techniques and methods of conservation. Sometimes, to his students' consternation, he would spend a long time having them look at a curious fragmentary object trying to figure out its use, its age and its iconography. They soon realized that this exercise was an introduction to a methodology for unlocking the many secrets of an object. He very carefully listened to all of the theories presented and then gently but firmly had them find weaknesses where they existed. It is no wonder, then, that he produced students who were, like himself, very definitely object-oriented.

His emphasis on scholarship was just as obvious to his students. He began each seminar by assigning them an article by a leading scholar and asking them to write a critique on it. He would then lead them in the discovery of how good or inadequate the scholar's methodology was and why. Thus teaching them, often without their realizing it, how to build reliable foundations for their own future theories, as well as

instilling in them the courage to criticize even the masters in the field.

As a curator he "practiced what he preached." Armed only with his magnifying glass—which he invariably wore in the pocket of one of his colorful vests—he set off week after week, here or abroad on the hunt, or to borrow a phrase—"on the chase and capture." He loved going around to dealers and auction houses and surprising his colleagues with his latest finds. He was almost like a child at Christmas when showing off his latest treasure. It was at times like these when his general reserve gave way to boyish enthusiasm: he could not stifle a wide grin or the huge twinkle in his eye. He was very proud of himself. And rightly so. And this excitement, needless to say, was contagious.

Richard Ettinghausen's passing is the end of an era in the field of Islamic art and, as the Persians would say, "his place is very empty." But let us not mourn his death; let us celebrate his life because, through his writings, his students, and the collections he formed, he will live forever.

Marilyn Jenkins
Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y.

VERONIKA GERVERS
[1939 - 1979]

The number of Islamic art historians and archeologists is still small compared with scholars in other fields of Islamic studies—and every contributor counts. The death of Veronika Gervers on July 21, 1979, after a sudden illness, leaves us all the poorer, in light of the promise which her brief but productive career held forth and the unique position which she had established for herself in this field.

She will best be remembered for the enthusiasm and scholarship that she brought to an otherwise neglected area—Islamic textiles—eschewed by most art historians because of the rare technical knowledge it demands. Through warm, personal exchanges and through her publications, she heightened our awareness of the importance of textiles to an understanding of Islamic art and social history.

Veronika was born in Hajdúnánás, Hungary, in 1939. She received her doctorate at the University of Budapest in Medieval Art History in 1965, and served as field director of a number of archeological excavations at Sárospatak. She was Associate Curator at the Rákóczi Museum, Sárospatak, and later, lecturer at the Institute of Historical Monuments of Budapest.

Veronika came to Canada and joined the Royal Ontario Museum's Textile Department in 1968. She was Associate Curator, responsible for the research and display of Oriental and East European textiles, costumes, carpets and jewelry. She also held a cross-appointment to the University of Toronto. While continuing her studies of East European textiles, Veronika soon developed an interest in the Near Eastern collections of the Museum. This led to extended field studies in rural Turkey and Iran, documenting local felt-making traditions in particular. One of her major interests was the Eurasian origin of certain European costumes, such as the Hungarian shepherd's mantle (*The*