

IN MEMORIAM

Horst Waldemar Janson

H. W. JANSON, as he always signed himself professionally, Peter as so many of us knew him, died in Europe on September 30 at the age of 68. On that day, this Society lost a patron, leader, and steadfast friend, and Renaissance Studies a commanding presence. Peter was one of the rare quadruple threats of our profession: great scholar, legendary teacher, skilled disseminator to popular audiences, and person of extraordinary generosity in advancing the common good of the community of scholars.

The public H. W. Janson was accessible in some fifteen languages through his balanced and clear-minded *History of Art*. First published in 1962, this art historical bible to generations of students throughout the world has long since passed the two million mark. From writing on art for children with his wife Dora Jane, to making sources available in translation to students, to exercising a guiding hand in the TIME-LIFE Library of Art, Peter demonstrated a commitment to sharing the fruits of scholarship with lay audiences in an intelligent and tasteful way.

H. W. Janson was best known to members of this Society for scores of lectures, articles and reviews on Renaissance Art, and two prize-winning books, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (1952), and the magisterial *Sculpture of Donatello* (1957). Not all readers will be aware of his intense concern for well over a decade with nineteenth-century sculpture, exemplified by the Andrew W. Mellon lectures at the National Gallery in 1974, and his contributions on sculpture to a forthcoming text on nineteenth-century art. Indeed, Peter and several of his students have brought and are bringing a badly neglected field back to life. Never one to let the dust settle, he was preoccupied in the last years with a new subject, East-West relations in the arts.

Beyond his scholarly accomplishments, Peter lives on in the organizations and lives he helped to shape. Born in St. Petersburg in 1913, a graduate of Hamburg University and a 1942 Harvard PhD, in 1949 he found his permanent home at New York University where over a

quarter of a century he carefully built one of the finest undergraduate departments in the country. At the same time, he taught at the University's graduate Institute of Fine Arts, where his rate of success in guiding students through the academic mine fields to their degrees was outstanding. His enormous contributions to the University were recognized in the conferral of an honorary degree in 1981.

In serving the wider community of teaching and learning, Peter was equally at home on both sides of the Atlantic, and at times seemed both places at once. His volunteer activities on an international stage are too numerous to list, and we may here remember those closest to home: member of several visiting committees; President of the College Art Association; editor of the *Art Bulletin*; founding member, patron, Vice President, and then President of our Society. Through it all he showed up to teach at the appointed hour, and never was too busy to tend to a student in distress or a young colleague in need of advice.

Each of us who knew him has our own version of that gentle soul in a bearish frame, who at the same sitting could extoll the virtues of the young Benny Goodman, bullshots, and Heinrich Wölfflin. With Peter gone, our collective insight and energy are diminished, yet we are deeply thankful for having shared time with him. Our gratitude and memories will endure, something we want Dora Jane and the Jansons' children, Anthony, Peter, Josephine, and Charles to know. But enough. If H. W. Janson were here, he would break up the meeting and tell us to get on with the work at hand.

A. Richard Turner