

WORDS IN MEMORY OF H. W. JANSON

OCTOBER 4, 1913—SEPTEMBER 30, 1982

Friends and colleagues of H. W. Janson gathered to remember him in the Auditorium of Vanderbilt Hall, New York University, on Sunday, November the 14th, 1982.

LUCY FREEMAN SANDLER

About twenty years ago, while he was Editor-in-Chief of *The Art Bulletin* and I was a brand-new Ph.D., Peter Janson appointed me as Assistant Editor—nearly sight unseen, as I recall, and delighted me further by offering me at the same time an appointment in the Department of Fine Arts of New York University, of which he was the long-term chairman. I remember that our first meeting was a lunch with Jean Lilly of Princeton University Press, who was going to become the new Managing Editor of *The Art Bulletin*. Peter, who in my mind then was Professor H. W. Janson, turned to us and said, “we will call each other by our first names—for the sake of efficiency!” No person I have ever known made efficiency more charming and humane. On the model of Peter’s efficiency, I would like to recount for you today, in concise outline, what I know about his biography.

Horst Woldemar, to spell out the names he liked to hide behind the initials H. W., was born on October 4, 1913 in St. Petersburg, Russia, which I never heard him call Leningrad. His Swedish-German-Latvian parents moved their family to Finland before the Russian Revolution and then settled in Germany. Peter completed his secondary school education in Hamburg, and one of the activities of his last busy summer was to attend a fiftieth-anniversary reunion of his high school class. He was enrolled at the University of Hamburg as a student of art history from 1932 to 1935, with a year’s intermission at the University of Munich, and in 1935, following his Hamburg professor Erwin Panofsky, he arrived in the United States for graduate work at Harvard, supported by a grant from the National Socialist government which he efficiently used to finance his permanent emigration. At Harvard he received the M.A. in 1938 and Ph.D. in 1942. Among his teachers were Arthur Sachs and Chandler Post. His dissertation, an unpublished classic, was on the sculpture of Michelozzo. While a student at Harvard he began to lecture at the Worcester Art Museum—Francis Henry Taylor was then the director—and having completed his coursework, accepted a position at Iowa State University, where he remained from 1938 to 1941. During this period he married Dora Jane Heineberg, who had been a Radcliffe undergraduate. In 1941 they moved to Washington University in St. Louis; during the next eight years Peter rose from assistant to associate professor and three children were born, the twins Peter and Anthony and their sister Josephine. These were followed by Charles, born in New York in 1952. In 1949, after a year as a Guggenheim Fellow, Peter came to New York University as Professor of Fine Arts and Chairman of the Department of Fine Arts at the College of Arts and Science. His affiliation with New York University lasted until his death. Between 1949 and 1974, the twenty-five year period of his chairmanship, the full-time department faculty grew from three to thirteen members and the number of courses from seventeen to forty-five a year. Almost all of the current members of the department were discovered by Peter Janson, and he saw to it that six worthy women scholars attained tenure while he was chairman, an achievement of which no other department at New York University could boast. Peter enthusiastically welcomed a nascent program in urban design studies which had been initiated by Phyllis Bober at the University Heights Campus of N.Y.U., and ob-

tained a large NEH grant for its development. He was instrumental in enlisting the support of Mrs. Abby Grey for the construction of the Grey Art Gallery to house N.Y.U.’s heretofore homeless art collection and for the provision of handsome new quarters for the department. To the N.Y.U. art collection he and Dora Jane made significant gifts; and Peter stocked the department library with recent publications and even deposited his own library in that of the department.

Peter Janson’s teaching—at Washington Square and at the Institute of Fine Arts—ranged widely. Little wonder from the author of the *History of Art*, although he once said to an interviewer that after the book came out he left the teaching of the introductory art history course to his colleagues; he suspected, he said, that he would be “far more tempted than anyone else to quote myself.” But he was counted on to offer Renaissance courses at Washington Square and Donatello seminars at the Institute of Fine Arts, and from an early date introduced a graduate course on sculpture from Canova to Calder. This extension into the present was considered to be pretty daring when I arrived at the Institute in 1955. In more recent times, Peter’s profound interest in nineteenth-century sculpture encouraged the research of a new group of Institute of Fine Arts students, and his fascination with cross-cultural movements from East to West and back resulted in an innovative undergraduate course which he offered first in 1978 after a year spent in preparation at the National Humanities Institute in New Haven. In 1979 he received the College Art Association’s Award for Distinguished Teaching of Art History.

Peter’s bibliography fills eight pages in the volume of essays published in his honor in 1981, which to his evident delight we titled *Art the Ape of Nature*. Even had he never written *History of Art*, his published work would have been impressive. He wrote hundreds of introductions, reviews, pamphlets, and articles, and edited a number of important series, including “Sources and Documents in the History of Art” and “Artists in Perspective.” Sixteen of his notable articles were reprinted as a collection—*16 Studies*—published in 1973. Of his books, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, of 1952, was written with the aid of a grant from the American Philosophical Society and immediately followed by his first Charles Rufus Morey Award; *The Sculpture of Donatello*, of 1957, was written with the support of his two Guggenheim Fellowships, of 1948 and 1955, and followed by his second Charles Rufus Morey Award, in 1957. Admirable efficiency! After having given the Mellon Lectures on nineteenth-century sculpture in 1974 at the National Gallery and collaborated with Peter Fusco on a major exhibition of French nineteenth-century sculpture, *The Romantics to Rodin*, in 1980, Peter completed just last summer his monumental study of nineteenth-century sculpture.

Of Peter’s *History of Art*, first edition 1962, second edition 1978, published by Harry N. Abrams and Prentice-Hall, of *History of Art’s* predecessors, *The Story of Painting for Young People*, *The Picture History of Painting*, and *Key Monuments of the History of Art*, all written with Dora Jane, and of the offshoots of *History of Art—History of Art and Music*, with Dora Jane and Joseph Kerman, and the *History of Art for Young People*—of the fourteen foreign language editions of *History of Art*, and the more than two million copies in print—of all this I

would like to tell one little story which Peter made part of my instruction in pedagogy. When I first came to Washington Square, I was asked to teach a "service" course — with 130 students — that proposed to treat the entire history of western art in one semester. Nearly overwhelmed by this challenge, I said to Peter, "of course I'll use your book." "No," said he, "use Gombrich." (That is, Gombrich's *Story of Art*). We soon stopped giving that course, but it is still widely offered, and in a practical-minded response to clear needs, Peter's *History of Art for Young People* was transformed into *A Basic History of Art*, in 1973, and was recently revised by his son Tony Janson.

From 1952 to 1955 Peter was the Book Review Editor of *The Art Bulletin*. Ten years later he was the Editor-in-Chief. As Editor he presided over both a great expansion of *The Art Bulletin* and the revival of the College Art Association's Monograph Series, these made possible by a grant from The Samuel H. Kress Foundation on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of *The Art Bulletin*. Peter continued to be indispensable to the program of scholarly publications of the College Art Association to the end — he was the Chairman of the Art Bulletin Committee and was also chairman of the Millard Meiss Publication Fund Committee, which has been supporting publication of selected art historical studies since 1975 on behalf of the College Art Association.

Finally, in the wider reaches of the art historical discipline, Peter was twice a member of the Board of Directors of the College Art Association, from 1959 to 1963 and from 1976 to 1980, and he was President of the Association from 1970 to 1972. He was the College Art Association's delegate to the American Council of Learned Societies and the Chairman of the National Committee for the History of Art. He was the past President of the Renaissance Society of America. Internationally, he was a Vice President of the Comité International d'histoire de l'art. The last item he asked to have inserted in the College Art Association's newsletter was the announcement of the XXV International Congress of Art History in Vienna in September 1983 — a meeting he was instrumental in organizing.

In 1980 Peter Janson was awarded an honorary degree by his own institution. The citation extolled him as builder of the Department of Fine Arts at New York University, distinguished scholar and great teacher, leader of the community of art historians in this country and abroad, and as interpreter of the history of art to the entire world.

WILLIAM S. HECKSCHER

Brevis esse laboro, obscurus fio

The years in Janson's life I wish to discuss are 1933 until 1936. The place — Hamburg. The time — when Erwin Panofsky was packing his suitcases to go to America. It was also the time when heroic Germans were wetting their pants at the thought that someone might have seen them talking to a Jew; the time a newly appointed professor began his introductory lecture by clicking his heels and offering the German salute while shouting Heil Hitler! — all at once; the time when a handsome and blond young woman, Lise Lotte Möller (who hailed from a farm in Schleswig Holstein) resolutely went to the Alte Rabenstrasse and rang the Panofskys' doorbell to introduce herself to Pan in order to express her chagrin at being cruelly deprived of the privilege of enrolling as his student. As it turned out, by the end of 1933, Lise Lotte Möller, H. W. Janson, and W. S. Heckscher were to form a trinity which was bonded together by a friendship *aere perennius*.



H.W. Janson at nineteen.

Photo: William S. Heckscher

Janson after having attended the Wilhelm Gymnasium in Hamburg, where his classmates found him "radiant" — "incredibly imaginative" — passed his Abitur on the 2nd of February 1932. I think he spent the first academic year in Munich. I presume under the tutelage of the gifted but treacherous Wilhelm Pinder. I myself was at that time at N.Y.U. In the spring of '33, when Panofsky and I returned to Germany, our boat was greeted at the entrance of the Elbe River by a forest of masts displaying, in endless repetition, the swastica flag of the new regime. I bought my last copy of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* which, in bold letters, proclaimed what everyone of us felt: "*Schmutzwelle über Deutschland.*"

I presume that Janson and I first met in the autumn of 1933. I would describe the nineteen-year-old, from the first impression I had, as a slender, pale, pleasantly un-athletic human being. His wonderful eyes showed that he was bursting with curiosity, ready to critically observe, record, interpret, and formulate. He was then, and remained afterwards, a man of the *via recta*, which, I think, helps to explain his strengths but also his weaknesses as a scholar. Perhaps I am right if, in retrospect, I describe young Janson as totally devoid of Teutonic characteristics. His speech, terse and to the point, made one sense that here someone spoke, transforming Ciceronian cadences into German prose, which he delivered in his typically Baltic accent.

At that time Peter Janson was neither Horst nor Woldemar. Janson and I called each other "Janson" and "Heckscher" and we naturally used the formal "*Sie*," which we also used when addressing our mistresses. In fact there was very little "*duzen*" going on. In those years we were understandably subdued, under constant stress. Quite in general it was a time devoid of *geloias*. Yet, it was people like Janson and Lise Lotte Möller — *rarae aves* indeed — with whom one could laugh about the utter futility of one's existence.

There were some twenty-five or so graduate students in the Hamburg Art Department at that time. We were like orphans abandoned in the course of an unimaginable catastrophe which had culminated in the abrupt departure of Panofsky, Fritz Saxl, Edgar Wind, Richard Salomon, Charles de Tolnay, Hans Liebeschütz. What had come in their place was either pathetic or unspeakable. And yet, we seemed to be able to keep on an even keel. As it turned out, there was in our midst only one traitor — his name forgotten.

Janson and Heckscher — apart from spending evening hours playing eighteenth-century music on their key-board instru-

ments (J. on his custom-built harpsichord, H. on a restored eighteenth-century clavichord), alone and in unison—did all kinds of extravagant things. To name only one, they signed up for Baron von Uexküll's Seminar für Umweltforschung. Uexküll was not only a first rate scholar, he was also a gentleman and as such a vociferous member of the academic resistance. In one of his so-called Publikums, a lecture open to the laity, he devoted a thrilling hour to a discussion of the reasons that persuaded dogs to lift their legs at lamp-posts. Janson and I dealt in a joint report with human Umwelt problems of a slightly different kind. He, in his part, argued that the distance at which the human eye could still discern three dimensions was limited to 42 meters. As Janson pointed out, that knowledge must have been at the back of the minds of the ancient architects planning the Pantheon in Rome. In it, the diameter of the rotunda and the height of the structure both measure 42 meters. Whether the Romans arrived at his insight intuitively or by reasoned calculation, no one could tell. Whatever the motivation, the architects had chosen those measurements with the agreeable result that a normal pair of human eyes could see from the ground of the Pantheon the stereometric concavity of the coffered ceiling. However, we committed on that occasion a horrendous blunder: we cited Jewish authorities. The next day a warning came from the academic authorities to whom our betrayal of a true Germanic science had apparently been reported by one of the ubiquitous Gestapo Spitzels.

Americans on the whole are blissfully ignorant—and nobody can blame them for it—of the truly surrealistic situation under which we pursued our studies. We were literally expecting every moment, day as well as night, that ominous knock at the door—and by door I mean the door of the room we were in, not the front door, because to the latter a Nazi Blockwart had a key which admitted him to the house at any time he chose.

Needless to say, our private conversation centered on how to flee the country in order to avoid ever-threatening arrest, interrogation, concentration camp, or service in the German Army. Janson's sensible plan was to get to the United States on what I think was then known as an "exchange studentship." A precondition to such a study sojourn abroad was that candidates had to join the S. A., the militia of the brown shirts. And so it came that H. W. Janson marched with his S. A. group in Munich, parading before the Führer, on the historical 30th of June 1934 when, in the course of the "great blood purge," the leader of the S. A., Ernst Röhm, was arrested and dispatched.

When the time had come for Janson to negotiate his trip to America, which would allow him to study at Harvard, we discussed the vital aspects: the oath he would have to take that he would return in order to join the German Army, the source that would finance the never-to-be-used return ticket, and other fine points. With these problems in mind, I called on the division of social services of a Jewish private bank in Hamburg which was about to wind up its affairs. I said to my friend there that I had a wonderful young scholar who desperately needed financial support for the boat ticket and other travel expenses. I pointed out that my client was not Jewish and that he wore the brown uniform of the storm troopers which the Hitlerians called "das braune Ehrenkleid"—and I encountered nothing but instantaneous understanding and utter willingness to support Janson's flight from Nazi Germany.

H. W., as you know, was born and raised in St. Petersburg in pre-Soviet Russia. Until he was six years of age he spoke Russian and then had to switch to German. The result was a kind of annoying speech defect. The Jewish bank provided a therapist who thoroughly improved his speech—a marvellous woman—who soon after ended her life in a concentration camp.

Janson and I lived together under one roof, in my mother's house, where he had his own rooms and where we shared a vast book-lined study at which, night after night, we worked, brew-

ing endless cups of tea from the urn of a samovar, communing, yet never disturbing each other. His wonderful self-discipline, his unmatched talent for organization of work on hand, all this was demonstrated to me *ad oculos*. We excerpted books and articles and, in order to economize on time, we exchanged and shared those elaborate excerpts which we scribbled on legal-size sheets. Needless to say, it was Janson who devised this ingenious mutual-aid program that, among other advantages, allowed us to augment our output manifold. In a sense he became my tutor. God only knows what I contributed to his work.

The end of the Hamburg phase came in 1936, when both of us managed to get away safely—each in his own style. Lise Lotte tells me that Janson in his first letter to her from Harvard signed himself: Americanophilus.

I firmly believe that a great and creative human being ultimately creates him- or herself. Genius is self made. And yet, I feel I should mention the fountainhead of what I would call Janson's incredible stamina and also his *sang-froid*, and that was his mother. I had seen Frau Janson in her gloomy flat at the Hammerlandstrasse, dressed all in black—a frail and somewhat fussy German widow. But this is what happened: early in the war she was arrested by the Nazis, along with her mother and sister. The older Jansons had apparently never bothered to acquire German citizenship. Helene Janson culminated her prison-camp phase in a camp far East. That camp was overrun by the Russians, who managed to execute most of its inmates. She survived, thanks to the fact that she spoke fluent Russian. Within hours she enlisted in the Russian Army, valiantly fighting her way into Germany, across the Oder River. It would take too much time to trace the incredible adventures of Janson's mother. Let it suffice for me to hazard the guess that she showed the kind of innate, hidden strength and stamina which her distinguished son sublimated in his intellectual life-work.

IRVING LAVIN

To me Peter Janson always seemed larger than life—the monumental figure of a man animated by some elemental force of nature. His mountainous bulk and unfathomable vitality were superhuman, and, also like nature, he seemed to act in accordance with certain innate laws. I think I have discovered three such Peter Principles, which I shall try to define and illustrate from the period he spent at Washington University in St. Louis, where my wife and I first came to know him as students. It was 1941–49, that is, from his twenty-eighth to his thirty-sixth year.

Peter Principle No. 1 says that human beings are worth something. It is not easy to convey the luminous example Peter and Dora Jane, as we were urged to call them, provided to a generation that reached intellectual awareness during the mid-1940s as the War drew to a close. We were convinced that after such madness men would surely create a new world, in which reason and decency would at last reign supreme. Bertrand Russell was the thinker who symbolized our ideals of reason and decency, but the Jansons actually embodied them. To visit their house in the wasteland that St. Louis then seemed was like being transported to the Brave New World itself, where one discussed art and ideas and listened to records from a vast collection that ranged from Gregorian chant to New Orleans jazz. I was to graduate the following year and wanted to study philosophy and mathematical logic, so I seized the opportunity offered by one such occasion to discuss with Peter how to proceed on absolutely no money. No matter what the problem, Peter could naturally figure it out—after all, he even taught physics as part of the war effort. His solution was like a bolt, or rather two bolts

from heaven: "Why not write to Bertrand Russell to see if he would take you as a student, and why not try to find some sort of grant-in-aid?" I never dreamed such things could happen, but with Peter's help they did, and the rest is history. Within a year I had proven conclusively that I was a failure as a logician, and I was back at Peter's doorstep asking for help to become an art historian. By that time he had moved to New York and he persuaded Walter Cook to find me some money and give me a job binding slides at the Institute; the following year he persuaded Walter Friedlaender to take me on as his research assistant. In sum, Peter never faltered in his faith in me, though I often did, and we all know that this principle held true for countless others over the years.

Peter Principle No. 2 holds that our universe is expanding and so should we. During his years in St. Louis, Peter also served as curator of Washington University's art collection—an agglomeration of late nineteenth-century paintings, ceramics, and miscellaneous bric-a-brac—the very pits of Philistia to a progressive liberal of the time. Peter became in effect the executive officer of a committee charged with updating the collection.* About 120 paintings and 500 objects were deaccessioned in a series of auctions held in May 1945. The sales yielded a total of \$40,000, with which Peter went on what must have been an intoxicating buying spree in the New York galleries. He acquired some thirty-five works by major contemporary masters, from Max Beckmann to Carl Zerbe. Although deaccessioning had a long history, Peter was well aware that selling off a major portion of an institutional collection in order to acquire contemporary works was quite unprecedented. He said so himself in a publication about the transaction, adding that "nearly all the works were by minor academic masters, both European and American. The only conspicuous item was Frederick Remington's *A Dash for Timber*, which brought the record price of \$23,000, more than all the other pictures put together. . . ." Peter elsewhere made the following comment on the Remington sale: "We were fortunate that a private collector had sentimental reasons for wanting that painting." (It is now a showpiece of the Amon Carter Museum at Fort Worth.) In submitting the program for acquisitions, he stated its high purpose:

The committee realized well enough that to choose wisely among contemporary works of art would be far more difficult than among those of the past, and that some of its selections would inevitably be subjected to violent criticism by conservative opinion. But the members felt that if they permitted considerations of this sort to stand in their way, they would not be fulfilling the duty of intellectual leadership imposed upon them by their calling.

Peter was putting the point about conservative opinion mildly, to say the least; here is the lead sentence of an article that appeared in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* when the new acquisitions were displayed in the new gallery Peter arranged on campus:

Chancellor Arthur Compton of Washington University, in an address before 100 guests at a preview of the university's new gallery of modern art in Givens Hall yesterday, confessed he couldn't understand what the modern paintings in the gallery meant.

The wonder about this impassioned crusade on behalf of modern art is that the focus of Peter's own research was much earlier—he was already deeply into the Donatello catalogue and the book on apes and ape lore in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. No doubt the reevaluation of nineteenth-century art that has taken place since 1945 would prevent such a transaction today. The wonder here is that with his last scholarly work, the study of nineteenth-century sculpture he finished just before he died, he placed himself in the vanguard of that same reevaluation. As the universe expanded, so did Peter.

According to Peter Principle No. 3, art history is the history of ideas. I heard him use this phrase when I was taking his undergraduate course in St. Louis, and I have never forgotten it. Incidentally, my grade in the course was A—, but only because my future wife was one of the teaching assistants who graded my final exam. I can illustrate what he meant by quoting the following two descriptions of illuminated pages from early Celtic manuscripts:

. . . the background and also the panels within the letters are filled with various forms of decoration, some geometric, such as the interlaced bands and knots, spiral and quatrefoil; others naturalistic, such as foliage, birds, reptiles, grotesques, and occasionally a human form. All are interwoven with a facility, an intricacy, and a fine sweep of line that leaves one astounded at the possibility of such execution, and also at the vigor, fancy, and infinite variety found in one initial.

Compare now this analysis:

It is as if the world of paganism, embodied in these biting and clawing monsters, had suddenly been subdued by the superior authority of the cross. In order to achieve this effect, our artist has had to impose an extremely severe discipline upon himself. His "rules of the game" demand, for instance, that organic and geometric shapes must be kept separate; that within the animal compartments every line must turn out to be part of an animal's body, if we take the trouble to trace it back to its point of origin. There are also rules, too complex to go into here, concerning symmetry, mirror-image effects, and repetitions of shapes and colors. Only by working these out for ourselves by intense observation can we hope to enter into the spirit of this strange, maze-like world.

The first quotation comes from one of the textbooks then in wide use, the second from Peter Janson's *History of Art*. The difference is nothing less than that between art perceived merely as an emotional effusion and art conceived as a deliberate mode of communication whose message can, with reason, patience, and sympathy, be deciphered.

Although the *History of Art* was not to be written until many years afterwards, the intellectual excitement that would produce it scintillated from the podium three times a week at those undergraduate lectures by the young Janson. With respect to Peter, I have ambivalent feelings towards the younger generation: I envy those who did not have to live in that benighted world before his *History of Art*, and I feel sorry for those who will not have shared our personal experience of his great power of illumination.

*What follows is based on materials kindly supplied by Mr. Gerald D. Bolas, Director of the Washington University Gallery of Art, and Mr. Joseph E. Ketner, Curator and Registrar: *Number Two Hundred One. Representative Paintings by Famous XIX Century Artists . . . Property of Two Educational Institutions . . . May 4 . . .*, Sales Cat., Kende Galleries at Gimbel Brothers, New York, 1945 (prices noted); *Number Two Hundred Two . . . Public Auction Sale . . . May 10-12*, Kende Galleries at Gimbel Brothers, New York, 1945 (prices . . .); "Dr. Compton admits he can't understand Modern Paintings," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 15, 1946, p. 1; R. Hynds, "W. U. Collection of Contemporary Art to go on exhibition Monday in Givens Hall," *St. Louis Star-Times*, April 13, 1946, p. 3; A typescript report of the Corporation Committee on Fine Arts, presumably by Janson, on the formal opening of the new Exhibition Gallery, including a list of prices of the recent acquisitions, titled *Committee on Fine Arts*, dated May 2, 1946; H. W. Janson, *Modern Art in the Washington University Collection*, St. Louis, 1947; idem, "The New Art Collection at Washington University," *College Art Journal*, VI, 1947, pp. 199-206; G. D. Bolas, ed., *Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis, Missouri. Illustrated Checklist of the Collection*, St. Louis, 1981.

CRAIG HUGH SMYTH

I first met Peter Janson in the summer of 1947 aboard a small American troop transport, the *Marine Jumper*, a ship aptly named, which had been converted to inexpensive transportation for scholars and students just after the war. Marvelous photographer himself, Peter had been conducting a photographic campaign in Europe with someone from the firm of Brogi, in preparation for the book on Donatello he had recently undertaken. Although I had long wanted to meet him, I had no thought of it there. Looking down over the ship's railing at people still boarding from the pier in Le Havre, I heard someone near me say, "That's Mr. Janson." Ever since I have carried a vivid mental picture with me of the man he indicated, fifteen or twenty feet below, moving energetically towards the gangplank, head and shoulders intently forward. I came soon to think with great affection of this carriage of figure as expressing especially optimistic expectancy, concentrated interest, and dependable determination.

Soon we met and managed to take possession of a little area of deck, high on the side of the ship, where there had formerly been a gun emplacement. It was all open now to the sun, but still sheltered by a solid bulwark from the wind. Somehow, we kept our turret for the whole ten-day crossing—talking, reading. It was then I first experienced, with wonder and pleasure, the wide range of Peter's interests (including, to my astonishment, jazz, a special one of mine), his endless intellectual curiosity, and the depth of his learning. Best of all, he was great fun to be with. Among others who came often to share our turret were students thinking of beginning graduate study in the history of art. I first witnessed then Peter's great willingness and conscientiousness in giving counsel, in giving encouragement and help—especially his supportiveness and wisdom for people with difficulties. Neither of us was yet at New York University, but I should say, perhaps, that we suggested the Institute of Fine Arts to two of the younger people who were with us much of the time, and we could afterwards take satisfaction that they came here: Ruth Rubinstein of the Warburg and Richard Judson.

Peter had taken Professor McMahan's place at New York University by the time I arrived here, three years after our Atlantic crossing. Very shortly I had direct experience of his great, habitual optimism: when it became a question of my being acting director of the Institute. I shall never forget the firm assurance he gave me that, as soon as I had learned the ropes, administration would not take so much time as to get in the way of research and writing. Well, he was judging by his own superb capacity for simultaneous administration and scholarship: no one ever put both together more effectively or achieved a better balance between the two.

An old student of the Institute has just said to me that losing Peter is like losing the Rock of Gibraltar. He *was* the Rock of Gibraltar. Many is the time he has taken on responsibility for advising a student with promise who was faltering. He gave strength as well as guidance. Generosity and thoughtfulness were essentials of his nature. One saw this, for example, in his constant care, over many years, for the needs of Walter Friedlaender, great and ancient professor of the Institute. Another vivid mental picture I carry is of Peter Janson sitting on the floor of Friedlaender's bedroom-livingroom, working to install the wiring of Friedlaender's hi-fi. Nothing seemed too much for someone he felt needed him.

The Jansons and Smyths were together at the American Academy in Rome most of the year 1959-60. There we had a first-hand view of his capacity for work: we saw him writing his book, *History of Art*. All day long and often far into the night he would work in his study, coffee and cigarettes at hand. So sure was his grasp of the whole sweep of his subject that, as I remem-

ber it, upon writing and then revising a chapter, he could send it off to the printer before beginning the next one. At times, of course, he took breathers. Outings together at the beach—both families—were especially good, though my wife remembers Peter sitting with his feet neatly tucked up, *not* enjoying the sand. At Christmas time our car, which was reaching the end of its effectiveness, broke down at Bolsena while the Smyth family was driving to see friends in Florence. We went on by train without it. Afterwards, on our return to Rome, Peter, with typical kindness, offered to drive me back to get the car, which he happily termed "the mess at Bolsena." Driving with him, one could say careening with him, in his Citroen was colorful; but it was a skillful performance.

I could say a very great deal about the contribution Peter Janson made to the Institute of Fine Arts. His teaching was seminal, especially in seminars. His flow of ideas—perceptive, original—inspired the work of student after student. Again and again, his clear thinking started a student off in the right direction—to use the words of a very grateful student, who was speaking of him to me the other day. One could scarcely count the number who have had from him an essential helping hand. In faculty meetings, his judgments of students were balanced and fair. He was the spokesman for reason. At the same time, his enthusiasm for works of art was contagious. That in itself was wonderful to behold, and an essential of his teaching.

Since leaving New York, we have seen DJ and Peter often, in Italy and Zurich as well as here. On Sunday, September 26th, they came to spend a few days with us at I Tatti. Peter had finished the manuscript for his new book with Robert Rosenblum and also, at the same time, a course of treatment; and he had set off with DJ on a trip to see as much as his strength would allow. The stop at I Tatti was scheduled at the end of the trip. When Peter arrived, he seem exhausted and pale, but game as always. It was a joy to see him apparently regain his strength and be the old Peter, full of plans for the future, talking long over lunch and elsewhere with Fellows and Visiting Scholars. DJ was a marvelous, buoyant support. By the end of their stay, it seemed to us that Peter was very close to the top of his form. He took a realistic view of his illness and his chances, but he looked ahead eagerly to more travel and new projects. They left us in good spirits Thursday morning, September 30th, to take the train to Zurich.

GERT SCHIFF

It must have been early in 1962 that I for the first time received a letter signed "H. W. Janson." I was a research fellow at the Swiss Institute for Art Research in Zurich, working on the catalogue raisonné of Henry Fuseli. Professor Janson had seen a print after Fuseli's *Nightmare* in the home of a San Francisco psychoanalyst. This and the fact that Freud had a copy of the same print in his Vienna apartment triggered his interest. He collected material for an article and we began to correspond. Characteristically, he started our exchange of ideas by correcting a glaring error in my chronology of the various versions of the *Nightmare*. If this was slightly humiliating, it was more than made up for by the excitement of seeing his ideas about the picture taking shape. As so often in his career, he noticed something quite obvious—only nobody had seen it before him. The demon squatting upon the beautiful dreamer's breast referred not to the content of her bad dream, but to her traumatic physical experience of the nightmare. Moreover, in a bold conjecture Janson connected the painting with an unhappy love affair of Fuseli's, so that the dreamer became the unattainable young

woman and the incubus a projection of the artist's frustrated desire, jealousy, and thirst for revenge.

This brilliant interpretation made me all the more curious about the man possessed by this sharp and inquiring mind.

Before I ever met him in person, I chanced upon his effigy. During a visit at the Warburg Institute in London I found, pasted into a copy of *Apes and Ape Lore*, a photograph of its author. It showed him, still a slender figure, shying at the slap of a little monkey who apparently felt offended by some of the more sinister traits which the book ascribed to his kind. Given Peter's delight in emblematic allusions, he must have relished this autobiographical *Image Made by Chance*.

When a few months later I finally met my correspondent "in the flesh" I found him quite imposing, not merely in stature but rather on the grounds of certain mental qualities which might well intimidate a younger colleague. What struck me first of all was an unrelenting concentration, a meticulous attention to detail that led to his instant absorption of a given fact in all its consequences; a gift that did not permit the slightest imprecision on the side of his interlocutor. There was something almost frightening about this never-slackening presence of mind—especially since it went along with the most relaxed manners and the most unconstrained cordiality. One could find a similar duality in the expression of his eyes: they could glint with intellectual excitement, twinkle with impish humor, radiate kindness—and within split seconds be as distant again as a glacier. There *was* indeed something distant about him.

But be that as it may, we spent the first afternoon in the most animated of conversations, in which we were later joined by Mrs. Janson. One or two years later, I found myself as an assistant professor in his department at Washington Square College. My coming to this country, and to N.Y.U., was thus entirely due to Peter, as I would call him from now on; and for that I shall always be grateful to him.

I now came to know him as a teacher and departmental chairman. He arrived every morning with his European-style briefcase stuffed to the bursting point and settled down to work. He obviously enjoyed his work; moreover, he gave the impression of never admitting any priorities among his many professional activities. Whatever he did was done with the same dedication: whether he graded exams or updated his *Donatello*, whether he embarked upon far-reaching research projects or edited a foreign scholar's manuscript, whether he prepared his Mellon Lectures, or hung with his own hands prints by Rauchenberg or Salvator Rosa on the walls of the study room.

At this point I cannot help citing yet another instance of his interest in office decoration. There had been in front of my study in Switzerland a balcony completely overgrown with wild roses. One day Peter asked me to sit down with my writing pad in the middle of this thorny thicket, and he took my picture in a somewhat incongruous variation on the theme of the *Sleeping Beauty*. The inference was, of course, my seemingly interminable involvement in the *Fuseli* catalogue. Later, in New York, he had this picture blown up and hung above my desk as a reminder to come to an end with the book.

He himself finished everything on time. "If you do much, you can even do more" was his maxim. Nothing was too much for him: if on a Sunday afternoon he had given a lecture in Texas, he would enter the Institute Monday morning at seven and meet his class, fully prepared, at noon.

As a teacher, he taught his students above all to think—and look—for themselves. He took great delight in refuting traditional concepts as, for instance, when he demonstrated that the colored dots in a painting by Seurat do *not* blend on the retina of the beholder.

There was another side to his teaching that set him apart from most of his colleagues: he would grant even the least promising beginner the benefit of the doubt. If he felt there was a

potential, the student was encouraged to go on—even if that potential did not at all show in his or her grades. Nobody could be more helpful when in an oral examination the candidate was too nervous to show the true extent of his knowledge. If at all possible, Peter cast his vote for a pass. By the same token, he agreed to sponsor more dissertations than was, strictly speaking, his duty. And this was neither nonchalance nor sheer love of mankind: his judgment could be very harsh if, on a more advanced level, somebody's published work or academic performance did not meet his standards.

Was he, then, motivated by a democratic desire to make the benefits of higher learning available to the largest possible number of young people? To a great extent, yes. Out of the same conviction he lent his advice to several popular publications. Thus, we read in his introduction to *The Time-Life Library of Art*: "Anyone is capable of following the art historian's guidance as far as his curiosity and inclination will take him," and H. W. Janson was always willing to provide such guidance. But more than anything, I believe, he was prompted by the example of his teacher Erwin Panofsky, who, when asked why he gave A's to B or even C students, invariably replied: "How can I know how good he or she *will* be?"

That Peter adopted this principle was in keeping with the foremost quality of his character: his limitless generosity. He was as generous in sharing his knowledge as he was overjoyed when he succeeded in finding a position, a piece of information, or a publisher for a colleague. He put all his influence and imagination to the service of others, and in doing so, once more, did not admit any priorities.

His presence, at the Square as well as at the Institute, could be compared to a towering tree within a forest of varying growth. Quite like such a tree, he took on annual rings, in the form of little bits of paraphernalia that enlivened his comfortable dress of tweed and flannel. The first ones were a succession of exotic ties. These documented his many travels, be it in Mexico or in the Alpine countries. Next came an elegant golden wrist watch, proud symbol of the worldwide success of his *History of Art*. A pair of Biedermeier-style, flat, gold-rimmed eyeglasses followed. He was an *Augenmensch* and he requested no less from his eyes than from his mind. Thus, he spent one summer in a Paris archive photographing several hundreds of tiny *pointcons*, or master's stamps, in order to help Mrs. Janson in her study of nineteenth-century jewelry. Hence, it was amazing that he did not need eyeglasses before he was past sixty. However, the last and most consequential of these annual rings was—a ring, which he wore on the middle finger of his right hand; the green stone was engraved with a portrait of Berthel Thorvaldsen.

This ring bore testimony to the overriding concern of his last years: nineteenth-century sculpture.

It is perhaps the most unusual feature of Janson's personality as a scholar that he was equally capable of the broadest synthesis and of minute interpretation of esoteric phenomena. On the one hand the *History of Art*, on the other *The Putto with the Death's Head*.

He was not only an organizer on the grandest scale, but also a *homo ludens*, playfully searching the history of painting for *Images Made By Chance*, such as the little rider in the cloud on Mantegna's *Saint Sebastian*. When he embarked upon his last project, the systematic inventory of Western sculpture between Canova and Rodin, he proved himself once more the great organizer: almost overnight, a photo archive was established and immediately put at the disposal of interested scholars. Many of the prints bear witness to his own photographic skill, to his unique sensitivity to sculptural epidermis.

But in pursuing sculptural form and content into the most extreme of marginal phenomena, he betrayed again his exquisite sense of the esoteric. Thereby it could happen that certain

themes of his research in earlier periods reappeared in different shapes. We all know his article on the *giganti* of Milan Cathedral, those statues that stand on the pier buttresses, in the zone just below the roof level, supporting the waterspouts. Fourteen years later, Peter was the first to photograph with a telephoto lens yet another series of giants: Geoffroy de Chaume's Apostles on the roof of Notre Dame in Paris, each 3.50 m. high, in hammered copper, the top one being a portrait of Viollet-le-Duc.

These statues were among Peter's recent discoveries, which we discussed when I last saw him, early in August, in his apartment in Zurich. He spoke with great animation about historicism in French sculpture. But all of a sudden he interrupted himself, smiled, and drew my attention to a curious sound that stood out among the diffuse noises of this summer evening. It was his neighbor's parrot, intoning every ten minutes: "Happy birthday to you," and "O du lieber Augustin." An acoustic chance image had taken precedence over Peter's art historical argument. This time, also, in his dedication to everything that was funny, beautiful, or in any other way noteworthy, he did not admit priorities.

And so I shall remember him. We shall never see his like again, but we shall always wish that he were still with us.

JUNE HARGROVE

The following remarks have been excerpted by the author from a transcription.

In the mid-sixties I elbowed my way through an anti-war demonstration at Berkeley to hear H. W. Janson speak on "Donatello and Humanism." Needless to say, my roommates insisted, "But this is not relevant"; and I replied, "it's relevant to me; I want to go to graduate school."

After the lecture I mustered up my courage to stop him outside to say that I wanted to come to New York to study nineteenth-century sculpture with him. He looked at me and said, "Why did you choose nineteenth-century sculpture?" Well, in the kind of response that only a panic-stricken undergraduate could come up with, I blurted out, "I guess because it's so huggable." He started laughing, then I started laughing, and he looked over at that hostile crowd of youths and said, "That's something that your generation certainly needs to know more about. Call me when you come to New York."

The following year I did, and I was astonished that this terribly important and busy man took time out of his schedule to give guidance to an undergraduate whom he really didn't even remember having met. What is extraordinary about that encounter is that I'm just one of hundreds of people that Peter found time for.

As I was getting ready to come to New York last week—I've been on sabbatical for a year—a colleague came into my office and said, "I don't know if you know what Peter Janson did for me this year," and proceeded to explain all that Peter had done to help him further his research project. Peter was always full of suggestions to help a good idea come to fruition. Plus, he was a "connector." He had a way of putting you in touch with just the right person to solve your problem.

Shortly after I moved to Cleveland to take my present job, The Cleveland Museum of Art inaugurated the "Year of Sculpture." Peter came out to do a series of lectures and a seminar, and he was so lionized by the local hostesses that I began to see him as Daniel about to be devoured by them. After a friend of

mine had a dinner party in Peter's honor, she commented, "He's not what I expected. He's such a *raconteur*, a real *bon vivant*." (I never did ask what she really expected.)

I confess that I wasn't immune to dinner party fever that year myself; so when Dora Jane came too, I decided to invite friends over to my apartment. On the appointed day an almost predictable chaos thwarted my every effort, and I finally left the office after six, in total disarray. It was my guests of honor who saved the day. Dora Jane did things like mend a couch that had been torn and Peter made spaghetti alla carbonara, while I set the table. It is just that kind of flexibility and *joie de vivre* that has endeared both of them to so many.

Peter's unflappable pragmatism remained constant, even in the most unlikely situations. My favorite memory of Peter is one afternoon in Paris. Dora Jane had gone to the Bibliothèque Nationale to look at cameos, so Peter and I decided to go to Père Lachaise to photograph nineteenth-century tomb monuments. We were just about to leave when, from an upper terrace, a gardener started yelling at us and telling us that we couldn't take photos. He wanted us to turn in our rolls of film. We really didn't pay very much attention to him until I looked around and there was a herd of angry gardeners running towards us, shaking rakes and shovels. Peter took off! (As Joey Janson noted later—I may hold the unique honor of having seen Peter run.) I wasn't about to hang around like a hostage. We were zig-zagging down the hill when Peter took a sharp right. The next thing I knew, I was yanked into a little mausoleum. Peter slammed the door and the gardeners thundered on by. After a moment of silence, I queried tremulously, "Professor Janson, what do we do now?" He looked over, his eyes twinkled, and he said, "First, you start calling me Peter; then I'll call a cab, and we'll go get Dora Jane for dinner." You know, after studying with Peter, I thought that *Raiders of the Lost Ark* was a documentary.

Peter often made serious points in class through playful anecdotes, and sometimes his comments were just plain fun. He described Dannecker's *Ariadne Riding on the Back of a Panther* as "Pauline Borghese à la Ringling Brothers," and compared the Guardian Angel on Dalou's *Monument to Victoria's Grandchildren* to a harrassed babysitter.

We learned a lot from Peter besides art history. I went to a meeting, a national meeting, which I'm sorry to say sank to an all-time low. There was everything—clashing egos, male chauvinism, and petty bickering. As I walked out of that meeting with a colleague who had been across the room, I admitted that I was appalled. "I have never in my life experienced anything like this." He shrugged and smiled, "well, that's what happens when you study with Janson," and I thought, how true. I never once heard him malign another colleague, another human being. The strongest criticism I heard him utter was "that silly man," in reference to someone who refused information to one of his students.

His philosophy really was that knowledge is based on exchange; the more you give, the more you get. I think it was ultimately his greatest asset as a teacher—this generosity—and it certainly accounts for the *esprit de corps* among Janson's students (and we all say that with pride). There's a network of sharing and loyalty among us that Peter generated.

In my dissertation, I wrote that to study with a great scholar is a rare privilege for a student. To study with a great man is an enriching and enduring experience. But if you were to ask me why we all loved him so much, I'd have to say, because *he* was so "huggable."

Continued on following page

DORA JANE JANSON

Ladies and gentlemen: I thank those of you who have remissed about my husband, as well as those in the audience—some of you having travelled long distances to attend this service—for being here. I have two questions to address, simply because they have come up over and over again, both in letters and in conversation.

The first one is simple: those of you who have expressed a sort of frustration because there has been no occasion to which one could send flowers, please send whatever you might have wished to spend on a floral tribute to the Washington Square College, Department of Fine Arts, N.Y.U., and enclose a note to Dr. Lucy Sandler saying that it is for the department's library fund. Periodicals, which my husband used to subscribe to and then pass on, are expiring under my nose, and they should be kept on without a gap.

The second will take a bit longer. From his earliest to his latest students, in word and letter, I receive a message of puzzled wonder: "How did this phenomenal person come about?" A force of nature, he has been called, for want of anything more rational. Well, we are all, in one way or another, forces of nature, and he had the good luck to inherit a lively intelligence and a remarkably strong constitution; the first he used, the second he abused.

We have heard a lot about "Peter Janson," and I would like to talk about Horst Woldemar Janson. The name itself tells much about his roots. Horst was not, at the time of his baptism, a very common Christian name: it became a sort of "theme name" under the Nazis (and therefore anathema to himself). It simply means "woods," as a Cedarhurst, Long Island. Woldemar: in one of those moments of serendipity, it came to him that this is the same as the Russian name Vladimir. Janson: his father was of Swedish descent, but changed the E to O because his business was mainly with Germany. His mother was of German origins, the first of the family having settled in Riga in the wake of Napoleon's Russian defeat. But it is mainly about his mother, and the background from which they came, that I want to speak. Some two decades ago there appeared in *Encounter* magazine two consecutive articles about this unique Baltic Lutheran colony under the Czars. The Protestant virtues not only were taught (and we must remember that the Reformation stressed action, rather than faith alone), but also proved quite profitable. Honesty, devotion to one's job, probity, industriousness, reliability all combined to make this implanted, rather exclusive enclave the preferred stratum of Russia's middle-class society from which civil servants were drawn. Thus it provided white-collar jobs, secure, and rather privileged, for quite a number of the men (not all: it was also a resort town, so hotels were also managed by such people), and this in turn tended to preserve and reinforce the inculcation of these virtues.

My mother-in-law, with whom I was privileged to share the same roof for ten years after the second World War (thanks to the rescue effort of Henry Heckscher, William's brother), was a revelation to me. Forty of her more than ninety years were spent in circumstances that would have felled most of us—from near penury to outright terror. She was born in Riga in 1878, youngest by far of a family of four children. Each of the girls was taught a useful skill (hers was tailoring). But she was also Miss Career Girl of 1900, when she moved in with a sister and brother-in-law in Moscow. There, oddly enough with the American Vacuum Oil Company, she had a secretarial job to start with, and soon became the office manager. In other words, she had a strong middle-management position (as we would call it today) until she married in 1908 and produced three sons, of whom only Peter survived beyond World War II.

What amazed me most about her, and I learned more about

being positive from her than I can tell you now, was her almost instantaneous and nearly faultless ability to get to the heart of any matter and to distinguish between right and wrong. She held no grudges; she was kindly, even merry (ask any of our children), and took pleasure in the smallest bits of good fortune. Bad fortune was turned into a sort of game until her luck turned. Fortitude is what it adds up to.

She would, without hesitation, have filled in any form asking her religion with "Evangelisch" (Protestant-Lutheran), whereas her son would have written in "None." But she was no more a church-goer than he. Yet, she once said that during the years when she was a displaced person after the war, it was the old prayers, learned by rote, that gave her courage. And, in the end, through his interest in one of his students' dissertation on *Depictions of the Soul in Ancient Art*, Horst-Peter (who had, too soon it seemed to me, inherited an interest in death by editing his revered teacher, Panofsky's, book on tomb sculpture) sidestepped death, as it were, to turn his thoughts to humanity's evolving beliefs in an after-life, ending with the rather curious version of Emanuel Swedenborg, which swept even Catholic Europe in the nineteenth century.

That teachers learn as much from their students as the latter from their teachers is a truism. Peter's students always took first place in his efforts, so no wonder that some of you, as one told me recently, feel orphaned. Once, when he came home jubilating because one of his little flock had won a prestigious scholarship, his mother said, "It always gives me such pleasure to hear that kind of news, because I have had so little opportunity in my life to help others." Therefore, service to one's fellows, in whatever form, was part of this secularized religion.

It hardly need be said that one does not have to be either Baltic or Lutheran to acquire priorities such as these. But it helps. My neighbor Mrs. Redlich, wife of the dean of the Law School, told me the other day that she had known a few people of similar cast, all of them from the region around Hamburg. And, as Hans Konrad Roethel, a companion in Pan's seminar, pointed out in a book about the three great Hansa cities, Hamburg, Lübeck, and Bremen, each had its subsidiary colonies. Riga was Hamburg's.

The mothers of two of our speakers, Mrs. Heckscher and Mrs. Schiff, shared in this heritage and its locus. They and their like formed a totally unrecognized—to this day—underground during the Nazi tyranny. No part of any cell, which might betray them, or might have been betrayed, they quietly transmitted to their children the virtues and the staying power of which I have spoken. All hail to them, and to their eminent offspring.

Thank you.



Dora Jane and H. W. Janson with Department of Fine Arts, New York University.