

DONALD P. HANSEN, 1931-2007

In Memoriam

The Institute of Fine Arts mourns the passing of Professor Donald P. Hansen, who died on Thursday, February 15, after a year-long struggle with cancer.

The entire Institute community---faculty, staff, students past and present---owes Professor Hansen immeasurable debts. We lose in him a very fine scholar, an inspired archaeologist, a dedicated teacher and mentor, a close colleague and a true friend. Donald came to the Institute in 1963, having earned a PhD from Harvard. He was drawn to Near Eastern art at Dartmouth College, publishing a text in his senior year on the fine Assyrian reliefs in its collections. After graduate school, he gained his initial professional training at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. His major scholarly contributions always rested on sound and resourceful fieldwork throughout the Middle East. In the course of his career, he participated in digs at Sardis, in Iran, and at Nippur, and served as field director at Mendes, Tell Abu Salabikh, and Al-Hiba.

At the Institute, Donald served as Director of Graduate Studies for 38 years--an unparalleled record at New York University--advising generations of students with his smart, open-minded advice. A meticulous archaeologist as well as a true aesthete, equally conversant with Mesopotamian cylinder seals, Mughal miniatures, and Impressionist paintings, Donald exemplified the best of the Institute's traditions in art history and archaeology. He had been looking forward to dedicating his retirement to advancing the publication of his excavation projects, and it is a great loss to the discipline that he was not granted this long-standing wish. It is difficult to imagine the Institute without Donald's rigorous commitments to the quality of our programs or without his steady and kindly presence. We will remember him also for his vivid interest in his beloved animals and carefully nurtured flora, about which he spoke with wonder and authority.

Donald's funeral will be held privately. The Institute will host a tribute to his life and accomplishments later this year. Please join me in extending heartfelt condolences to family, friends and to Donald's many students.

Mariët Westermann
Judy and Michael Steinhardt Director

16 February 2007