

Rensselaer W. Lee

The Renaissance Society of America and the whole scholarly community has suffered another great loss with the death of Rensselaer Lee, who was one of the leading historians of art and of thought and who served the Renaissance Society of America as a member of its Executive Board from 1961 to his death, as its representative in the International Federation of Renaissance Societies and Institutes (1961-71) and as its President (1977-78).

Rensselaer Wright Lee was born in Philadelphia on June 15, 1898. He received his B.A. from Princeton in 1920 with a major in classics and his Ph.D. in English from the same University in 1926. He was an instructor in English at Princeton between 1922 and 1928, and pursued advanced studies in the history of art and in archeology from 1928 to 1931. He taught art history at Northwestern (1931-40), Smith (1941-48), Columbia (1948-54), New York University (1954-55) and Princeton (1955-56). He died in Princeton on Dec. 4, 1984.

His dissertation (of which only one chapter was published in 1928) dealt with Platonism in Spenser, and another early study discussed an English Gothic embroidery in the Vatican (1932). His major contributions deal with the theory and iconography of Renaissance and Baroque painting, subjects for which he was especially well prepared by his strong background in ancient and Renaissance literature. His classical essay, *Ut pictura poesis*, appeared first as an article in the *Art Bulletin* (1940) and was later republished as a book (1967). It is still indispensable as a source of information on the theory of art during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Most of his later studies, including many articles, a lecture, and his recent book, *Names on Trees* (1977) deal with the influence of Ariosto and Tasso on the visual arts in their own and later times. These learned and delightful studies should be collected in a volume.

In addition to the Renaissance Society and the International Federation, Lee was active in the College Art Association, the American Academy in Rome, the Medieval Academy of America, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Union Academique Internationale, the International Council of Philosophy and the Humane Sciences, and the Committee on the Protection of Cultural Treasures in the War Areas.

He was a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a member of the American Philosophical Society, and repeatedly a member of the Institute for Advanced Study. He held honorary degrees from Northwestern and Princeton.

Lee will be remembered by his colleagues, students and numerous friends for his learning and civilized conversation, and for his generosity and charm. His human qualities won him the respect and affection of all those who had the good fortune to know him.

Paul Oskar Kristeller