

In memoriam Hans A. Lüthy (1932–2009)

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Dr. Dr. h.c. Hans A. Lüthy, one-time Managing Director of the Swiss Institute for Art Research (now SIK-ISEA), passed away in Egg ZH on 8 March 2009 at the age of 76.

Let us remember a friend of overwhelming openness and warmth. After studying Art History at the University of Zurich, Hans A. Lüthy was elected to his position as Managing Director of the Swiss Institute for Art Research, now SIK-ISEA, in 1963. The Institute, founded in 1951 by Marcel Fischer, had been wisely conceived, but it was still in its infancy. Hans A. Lüthy, who was assistant to Gotthard Jedlicka at the time of his appointment, made developing the Institute his lifetime mission. Over the next thirty years, he succeeded in building its national reputation and international visibility. Hans A. Lüthy had a particular knack for winning political figures to sit on the Institute's committees and for recruiting promising and recognised academics alike. What made these political and academic conquests all the more astounding was that the Institute was by no means adequately blessed with public funds. Hans A. Lüthy performed the difficult task of steering the Institute through one year after the next and winning numerous friends and benefactors over to the cause. Milestones on the road to consolidation were membership of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAHS) in 1971 and recognition by the Federal Council in 1981 as a research institute entitled to funding.

This unconditional commitment on behalf of the Institute obliged Hans A. Lüthy to limit his own academic activities. Instead, however, he took a greater interest in the art history research undertaken by others. All his life, his academic heart belonged to Théodore Géricault, and his bitterest disappointment came when the National Fund turned down his innovative research project on *The Raft of the Medusa*, not least because Lorenz Eitner at Stanford University then picked up the same topic and published a well received monograph. Despite his workload as Managing Director, Hans A. Lüthy maintained an academic presence thanks to numerous publications and lectures. He fostered affectionate links with colleagues

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and institutions in the United States: the College Art Association and the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, and was among the first class of scholars in 1985/86.

Hans A. Lüthy was one of the inventive and motivating spirits in art history. He established a reputation for Ferdinand Hodler outside Switzerland, especially in the United States. He was one of the first to explore and advance the grandiose history of collecting. At a time when few talked of encouraging the younger generation, Hans A. Lüthy made this his personal cause. He obtained funding or support for an extraordinary number of art historians. After retiring as Managing Director in 1994, Hans A. Lüthy redoubled his efforts on behalf of young colleagues, working in particular with the *Centre Allemand* in Paris under Thomas W. Gaehtgens. The University of Neuchâtel paid tribute to the selfless and far-sighted work of Hans A. Lüthy by granting him an honorary doctorate in 2000.