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Obituary

Howard Hibbard 1928-84

HOWARD Hibbard died on 29th October, 1984, after a long illness that seemed especially cruel for afflicting this outstanding scholar and endearing person at the prime of his life.

Hibbard was born in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1928. He graduated in 1949 from the University of Wisconsin, where his father was a noted professor of agricultural economics. He did graduate work at Columbia and at Harvard, receiving his Ph.D. in 1958. While at Harvard he met Rudolf Wittkower, who became a primary force in his subsequent development. In 1959, he joined the faculty at Columbia and taught there until his death, having served as Department Chairman in 1978-81. Hibbard was a Fellow of the American Academy in Rome and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and received grants from the American Council of Learned Societies, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He was an advisor to the National Humanities Center, a member of the National Committee for the History of Art, a Director of the Society of Architectural Historians, and he served the *Art Bulletin* first as Book Review Editor, later as Editor-in-Chief. He was Slade Professor at Oxford in 1980-81.

The first phase of Hibbard's scholarly career centred on his pioneering archival studies of Roman architecture around the turn of the seventeenth century – comparable in richness to the vast accumulation of material half a century earlier by Johannes Orbaan. Whereas Orbaan's was largely an undigested collection of documents, however, Hibbard gave his discoveries the organisation and interpretation of a sophisticated art historical mind. Hibbard's work, which helped to inspire a veritable gold rush of American archival studies in Rome, shed much light on this woefully neglected terrain and resulted in a long series of publications. His doctoral dissertation, a monograph on the Palazzo Borghese published in 1962, was an exhaustive study of one of the major domestic buildings of the period. Among his articles two especially stand out. In one, on the early architectural history of Sant'Andrea della Valle [1961], Hibbard defined a critical moment in the development of early baroque ecclesiastical design. An essay on the programme of the altarpieces of the Gesù [1972] revealed the thematic principles of Jesuit church planning. The culminating fruit of Hibbard's archival researches was the definitive study of Carlo Maderno, one of the Zwemmer series on architecture [1972]. The volume is a masterpiece of art historical craftsmanship. Although Maderno had received some attention because of the important buildings

for which he had been responsible (including the nave of St Peter's), he was treated as the representative of a phase of 'transition' (read 'decadence') between the giants of the high renaissance and those of the baroque. Apart from the massive contribution to scholarship contained in the catalogue, Hibbard's Maderno book is chiefly distinguished by a comprehensive and lively survey of the late sixteenth-century Roman architectural scene, in the best tradition of Ludwig von Pastor's accounts of the building activities of the popes. Characteristic of Hibbard was the sympathetic but reserved estimation of Maderno as an architect; he remained an historically important but essentially transitional figure.

During the 1960s Hibbard took an unexpected tack. He became interested in psychoanalysis and obtained special admission (the first to do so) to the training programme of the Psychoanalytical Clinic for Training and Research at the Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons (1967-70). His goal was to add a deeper and more private dimension to the discipline of art history. Also during this period, he began a series of artists' biographies to which he devoted the last part of his life: *Bernini* [1965], *Michelangelo* [1975], *Caravaggio* [1984], first delivered as the Slade Lectures at Oxford, and, remaining unfinished, *Rubens*. The artists were aptly chosen – major figures of undoubted genius, yet in need of reliable, up-to-date, readable treatments in English. Written in careful, often moving prose, these monographs are remarkable in that they have found a place on every undergraduate reading list, while contributing original observations and new material that make them profitable reading for the specialist as well. The last book was produced during Hibbard's heroic struggle with a relentless disease. In the concluding epilogue he brought his experience in psychoanalysis to bear on the difficult art and personality of Caravaggio, achieving in this work a synthesis of the fundamental ideals toward which he strove – sound scholarship, penetrating interpretation, and great art.

Hibbard had a sharp wit with which he could skilfully deflate pomposity in others, and sometimes even the value of his own achievements. Yet he was gentle and unassuming, a huge bear of a man not only in physical size but also in bigness of heart and playful good humour. Open and welcoming by nature, generous to those with whom he disagreed, Hibbard had many devoted students and close friends by whom he will be sorely missed.

IRVING LAVIN