



History of Art ~ First Edition

H. W. Janson

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At the time of his death, Harvard-trained art historian H. W. ("Peter") Janson was the acknowledged master of the domain for both general and professional audiences. Longstanding chairman and professor of the department of art at New York University, Janson won numerous awards for his art scholarship. His body of work--books, articles, and presentations--solidified his reputation as the preeminent authority, but nothing did more to introduce the masses to the subject matter than his titanic textbook, *History of Art, The Western Tradition*. Janson's original publishing deal in 1959 was the stuff of a bygone era. There was no agent. He simply proposed the book--an enormous full color undertaking--to Harry Abrams, the founder of the eponymous publishing house, and Abrams published it three years later. In the 1950s, such handshakes were common between publishers and authors of textbooks and illustrated volumes. Abrams established *History of Art* as the definitive text; and Abrams' distributor, Prentice Hall, grew its audience considerably in schools and colleges. Maintaining market leadership in academic publishing, however, requires regularly scheduled revisions: used bookdealers are quick to resell bestselling texts without economic benefit to authors or publishers; and sales representatives of competing texts are ready to swoop in with cutting edge research, fresh art, and a new copyright, all benefits to professors who want to look hip to students. The game is relentless. Janson lived to complete a few of the frequent revisions of the book. When he died in 1982, his son Anthony, also a Harvard Ph. D. art historian, took over the project, now branded Janson's *History of Art*.

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