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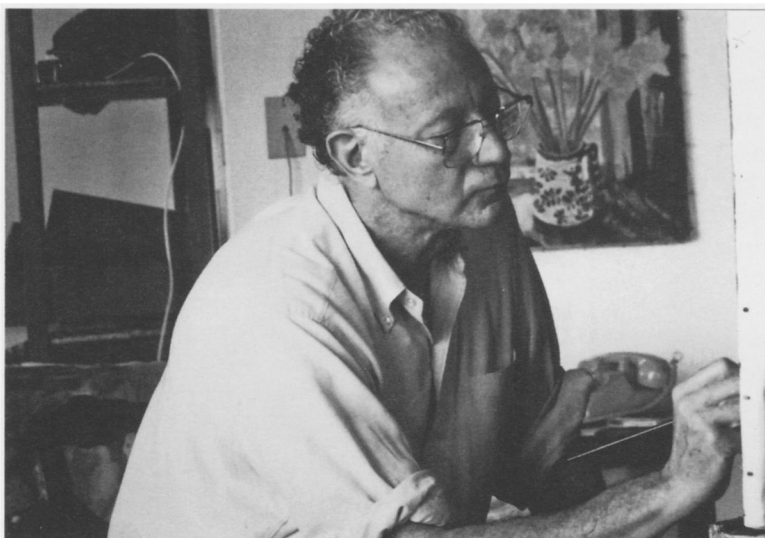
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Vincent John Bruno, 1926–2008

R.T. SCOTT

Vincent John Bruno, equally accomplished as an artist, sailor, and expert on Greek and Roman painting, died of pneumonia on 23 February 2008 in Sierra Vista, Arizona. Born in Manhattan, New York, on 8 February 1926, he was a graduate of Kenyon College and went on to study painting in Paris at the École des Beaux-



Arts before serving in the United States Information Service in Algeria and Korea. He subsequently entered the graduate program in art history and archaeology at Columbia University. There he studied with Otto Brendel, who advised his doctoral dissertation, for which Vincent's talent as an artist was crucial. As he wrote in the introduction to the book that developed from it, *Form and Color in Greek Painting*, "[a]s part of the work, I submitted to my committee a folio of the water colors I had made in the course of my studies at various sites in Greece and Bulgaria."¹ He went on to explain that these sketches (a number of which appear in the book) were made to "show more clearly the brushwork and the balance of color characterizing different methods of ancient shading, since these subtleties are often lost in photographs."² In fact, his ability to produce such sketches went to the heart of his investigation of how ancient painters achieved effects of chiaroscuro and created the three-dimensional picture plane that would be variously invoked and interpreted in later European painting, especially that of the Italian Renaissance. And it is only accurate to say that throughout his scholarly career, Vincent engaged with

ancient art as an artist, illustrating and writing about it in a remarkably graceful style.

He was drawn to Greece, of course, in search of the origins of the Roman paintings of Campania; his first seminal article, "Antecedents of the Pompeian First Style," appeared in the *AJA* in 1969.³ *Hellenistic Painting Techniques: The Evi-*

dence of the Delos Fragments, published in 1985,⁴ reflects the same orientation, and again watercolor sketches and the artist's eye were essential to his argument. For example, while correctly reading the Ariadne frieze ("monochrome in white") from Delos as exhibiting a technique "that rejects outline and works from within the forms,"⁵ Vincent went on to compare it with Henry Moore's stated approach to the rendering of form without the classical contour line. On a later occasion, he reversed the flow and famously documented the influence of Pompeian Second Style on the work of Rothko.⁶

Cosmopolitan Manhattanite that he was, it may, however, have been on the coasts of Campania and Etruria that Vincent was most at home. He and Anne Laidlaw worked together at Pompeii and the Latin colony of Cosa, where he, along with students from the State University of New York, Binghamton, undertook the excavation of an elaborate first-century house that, once restored, became part of the site museum.⁷ As an archaeologist, he was active on land and sea. While working at Cosa, he acquired a sleek Swedish sailboat, baptized it *Orithyia*, and brought it down into

¹ Bruno 1977, 12.

² Bruno 1977, 13.

³ Bruno 1969.

⁴ Bruno 1985a.

⁵ Bruno 1985a, 49.

⁶ Bruno, 1993.

⁷ Bruno 1993.

the Mediterranean, where he began research on sailing routes, cargoes, and harbors, and, significantly, the representation of coastlines in ancient painting. Representative articles from this period include “The Mystery of the Etruscan Coastline,”⁸ “Exploring the Gulf of Talamone,”⁹ and “The Island of Pontia.”¹⁰

Vincent was successively professor and chair of the Departments of Art History at the State University of New York, Binghamton, and the University of Texas at Arlington, and enjoyed a long association with the American Academy in Rome. For the advancement and publication of his research, he received numerous grants from these institutions and a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in 1978. In 1984, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by his alma mater, Kenyon College. It should be noted that his Kenyon roommate of years before, the author E.L. Doctorow, received an honorary doctorate on the same occasion, and it was Vincent’s influence that drew Doctorow and his family to Sag Harbor and sailing. Following his retirement from the University of Texas, Vincent returned to New York. There, as he more than once recalled, he found himself painting the portraits of the children of those whose portraits as children he had painted while pursuing his doctoral studies at Columbia. He moved from Brooklyn to Arizona in 2004.

The recapitulation of a scholarly cursus can only convey one facet of a subject’s life. To do justice to Vincent Bruno, I can do no better than quote these lines written by one of his nieces: “Vincent led a life to which many of us aspire, full of world travel, intellectual pursuits and stimulation, good wine, food and

music, and the unending quest for an understanding of artistic beauty. He regaled us with his adventures and discoveries.”¹¹ I should add in closing that the conversations he established between ancient and modern artists were especially rewarding.

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⁸Bruno 1973.

⁹Bruno 1981.

¹⁰Bruno 1985b.

¹¹*The Sierra Vista Herald*, 27 February 2008.