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Census of Antique Works of Art  
and Architecture Known in the Renaissance  
Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften  
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

In Kommission bei  
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PHYLLIS PRAY BOBER

2. 12. 1920 – 30. 5. 2002

J. B. TRAPP

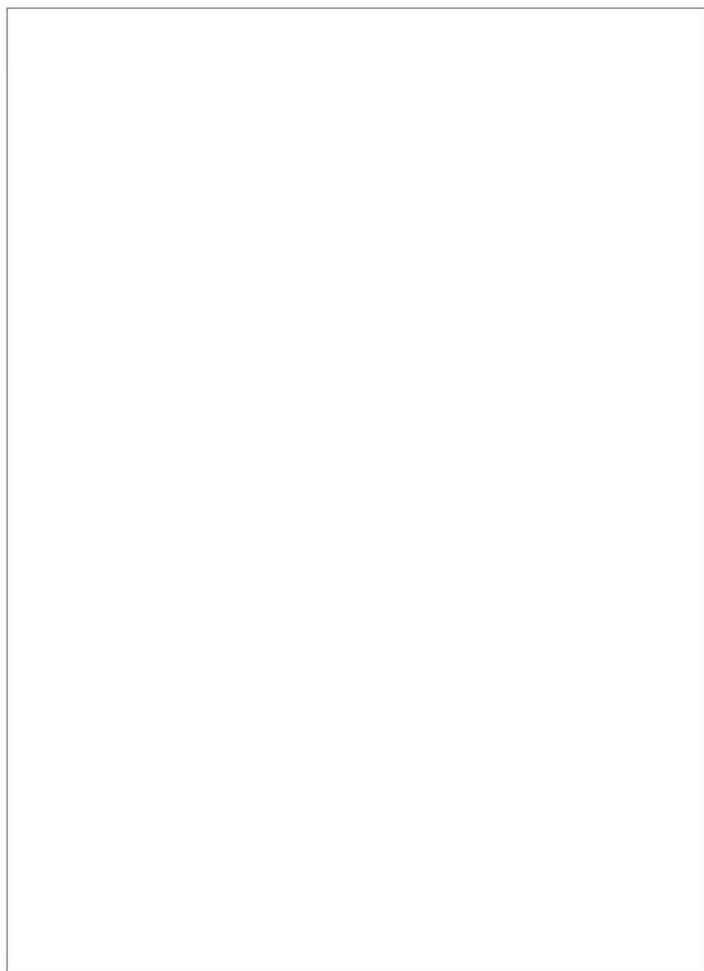
The first thing to say about Phyllis Bober, who died in her eighty-second year at her home in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, on 30 May 2002, is that without her there would be no such thing as the *Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture known in the Renaissance*. That is far from being her only distinction but, for *Pegasus* at least, it is her chief claim – and a large one at that – on a grateful memory.

Phyllis Barbara Pray was born on 2 December 1920 in Portland, Maine; she continued to regard that part of the world as home though for a good deal of her childhood and throughout her long academic life many changes of place made it no more than a beloved summer refuge. The original temper of her mind and her determination to pursue a life of scholarship manifested themselves early. At the age of nine, fired by accounts of the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen, she read John Henry Breasted's *History of Egypt* – »the big one, not the abridgement«, as she would later insist – and resolved to become an archaeologist; at high school she was diverted from Egypt towards Greece and Rome by one of her teachers, a gifted recent classics graduate of the famous Wellesley College for women near Boston. For Miss Page it was unthinkable that any young woman would continue her education anywhere but at her own *alma mater*; in 1937 Phyllis Pray therefore turned her back on the nearby co-educational University of Maine and, on Miss Page's recommendation, was accepted by Wellesley. Paternal hopes, nevertheless still centring on her equipping herself there to become Girl Friday to some high-powered executive, were frustrated by the intellectual adventurousness and width of interest that would always characterize her. Equally taken by ancient Greek and the history of art, at Wellesley she had her first real taste of archaeology when, still an undergraduate, she was given the task of cataloguing a hoard of ancient coins from Princeton University's dig at Antioch-on-the-Orontes. A Wellesley seminar on Byzantine art with the great Sirarpie Der Nersessian confirmed her taste for scholarship and for classical antiquity and its *Nachleben*; on graduation in 1941 she was persuaded to enrol in New York University's Institute of Fine Arts, to study Greek and Roman architecture under Karl Lehmann (-Hartleben). She found at that Institute a

cosmopolitan, serious and spirited ambience that exactly suited her. Walter W. S. Cook had established the Institute only a few years before, recruiting in part American-born scholars and in part those who had escaped from the intellectual ruins of Hitler's Germany and Franco's Spain; by the time she arrived it had already reached a peak – a high plateau rather – which it has perhaps never equalled since. Some of its teachers held permanent and full-time appointments, some were long-term moonlighters, some came as visiting lecturers; among them, besides Lehmann, were Walter Friedlaender, Julius Held, Richard Krautheimer, José López-Rey, A. Philip McMahon, Richard Offner, Erwin Panofsky, Alfred Salmony, Guido Schoenberger, Herbert Spinden, Dimitri Tselos, Martin Weinberger, ranging in their interests from Greece and Rome to Byzantium through Europe to Asia and Meso-America.

In New York, Phyllis Pray was to become the favoured pupil of Karl Lehmann, adopting his approach to Greek and Roman archaeology through – as she put it – »the History of art and in the full context of history of ideas«. In 1941 in New York also, she was to meet her future husband, Harry Bober – as it happened at the first class she attended, a lecture by him on palaeolithic art; he invited her to dinner after it. Harry Bober was at the time an advanced graduate student who was already teaching at the City University of New York and the star pupil of Erwin Panofsky, who took her too under his wing. They married in 1943, as he was setting out on war service; in the same year her Master's thesis on the sculptures of the Arch of Septimius Severus at Leptis Magna was accepted. Prevented by the war from following up on the spot her ideas about the visual rhetoric of the Arch, she turned for her doctorate to Roman provincial sculpture and its complicated iconological background in a different environment. This she studied in three Gallo-Roman manifestations, one reflecting the official art of the capital, one the diffusion of classical Greek prototypes in the imagery of Mercury carrying the infant Bacchus and one the after-life of the Celtic underworld divinity, the stag-god Cernunnos. Her account won her the Alumnae Gold Key award for the outstanding dissertation submitted at New York University in 1946. In that year, she and Harry Bober were admitted to E. A. Lowe's celebrated palaeography seminar at the Pierpont Morgan Library and she was invited to join an equally important New York colloquium, the Ancient Civilisation Group, founded a few years before by Lehmann of NYU and W. L. Westermann of Columbia.

Harry Bober having been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship on return from the war to pursue his interests in French and Flemish fifteenth-century



1 *Phyllis Pray Bober in Paris, 1956/57*

manuscript illumination, the couple sailed for Europe almost at once; in Brussels, Paris and London during 1946–47 they spent the coldest and most exacting winter in living memory. In Brussels Phyllis Bober made a first passing acquaintance with Renaissance sculpture gardens and in France had the opportunity of studying at first hand some of the monuments she had so far known only in photographs; the Bobers were welcomed in Paris by the Guignards, the Baltrusaitises, the Adhémars and the Porchers – all of them friends of the Warburg Institute in London, where Harry Bober had been enlisted by Fritz Saxl, on Panofsky's recommendation, to complete the third

volume of the *Catalogue of Astrological and Mythological Illuminated Manuscripts of the Latin Middle Ages*, dealing with libraries in London, Oxford and Cambridge, which had been left incomplete at the death in an air-raid in 1941 of the Institute's Librarian, Hans Meier. From Paris, at the prompting of Lehmann and Krautheimer, Phyllis Bober offered herself to initiate the putative *Census of Antique Works of Art known to Renaissance Artists*. The story of how this had grown out of Krautheimer's lament that too little precise information was available about Quattrocento acquaintance with the admired art of antiquity has already been told in these pages.<sup>1</sup>

Phyllis Bober was surely the ideal person to give form to such a thing, with her scholarly aptitude, versatility, quickness and appetite, her special concern with ancient art, and in particular with late Antique religious syncretism and *interpretatio Romana* of the classical deities – a favourite area of Saxl's investigations – as well as her omnivorous interest in the art of later periods. At the Warburg Institute in London she was drawn into an ambience which corresponded with what she had been introduced to in New York; not only, intellectually and experientially speaking, was it at least as distinguished, it was also still then uniquely familial – Saxl, for too short a time before his premature death in 1948 and Gertrud Bing in South Kensington and at home in East Dulwich Grove, Enriqueta Harris, Anne Marie Meyer, the Wittkowers, Gombriches, Buchthals, Kurzes, Mitchells, Ettlengers. In her initial bibliography and establishment of a system of objective criteria for the identification of ancient models, she laid the surest of foundations for the development of the new *Census*.

Back in the USA, she took up a position as Instructor in Wellesley's Department of Art, which she held until 1949, spending the summers of 1948 and 1949 with Lehmann at the NYU excavations in Samothrace before there began what she called »an almost ludicrous game of academic musical chairs« involving her husband and herself. In 1949–51, she taught in H. W. Janson's department at Washington Square College of New York University, returning to Wellesley in 1951 as Lecturer, with some responsibility for the Middle Ages, and Curator of the Farnsworth Museum, to which she added a position as Teaching Associate in MIT's School of Architecture from 1951 to 1953. She was unable to continue digging at Samothrace, but there was compensation in summers spent in London, pushing forward the *Census*, for which, and for herself, she had found a new friend and supporter in Henri Frankfort, who had succeeded Saxl as Director of the Warburg.

1954 saw a great change, both in her circumstances and in those of the *Census*. Harry Bober returned to the New York Institute and she took up a position there as Research Associate, which she held until 1973; she was responsible for the *Census*, of which the Institute now became co-sponsor with the Warburg. This meant maintenance on two sites, but it also meant funds, lacking in London, to bring her there and for travel in the search for drawings after the Antique; and she could supply Enriqueta Frankfort at the London end with the information needed to assemble the photographic documentation which was incorporated, in its distinctive blue files, in the cabinets of the Warburg's Photographic Collection and keyed to bibliographical references and discursive notes on large 20 by 12 cms. record cards. In 1957, Ruth Olitsky Rubinstein joined the Collection, with special responsibility for the *Census*, which grew apace; in 1986 their partnership produced, out of the *Census* and their combined expert knowledge, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture: A Handbook of Sources*. Far the most significant publication to have emerged from the *Census* and indeed one of the most important surveys in depth of the field to have been published in the second half of the twentieth century, this was also the most effective demonstration of the general utility and value of such specialized scholarship. It was soon twice reprinted, in 1987 and 1990 and has become a standard work, much used and much praised; a second, revised edition is imminent.

The birth of two sons in 1955 and 1957 engaged much of Phyllis Bober's attention for ten years or so thereafter, though a two-day week at the New York Institute, together with summer visits to London and a spirited correspondence, full of learned reference, academic gossip and family news, kept the *Census* moving. In 1957 her *Drawings after the Antique by Amico Aspertini*, published as the twenty-first volume of Studies of the Warburg Institute, initiated a series which supplemented the *Census* files of photographs and record cards. This was more than the simple edition of a sketch-book; its introduction described such fundamental matters as the contrast between Quattrocento and Cinquecento approaches to the antique and the role of sarcophagi as transmitters of ancient iconography; plagiarism of it by a Harvard professor was much resented. The series so begun now comprises Erna Mandowsky and Charles Mitchell on Pirro Ligorio (1963), with its valuable Introduction on Renaissance antiquarianism; Nicole Dacos on the discovery of the Domus Aurea and its effects (1969); Norman Canedy on Girolamo da Carpi (1977); Gunter Schweikhart on the Codex Wolfegg (1986) and Arnold Nesselrath on the Fossombrone

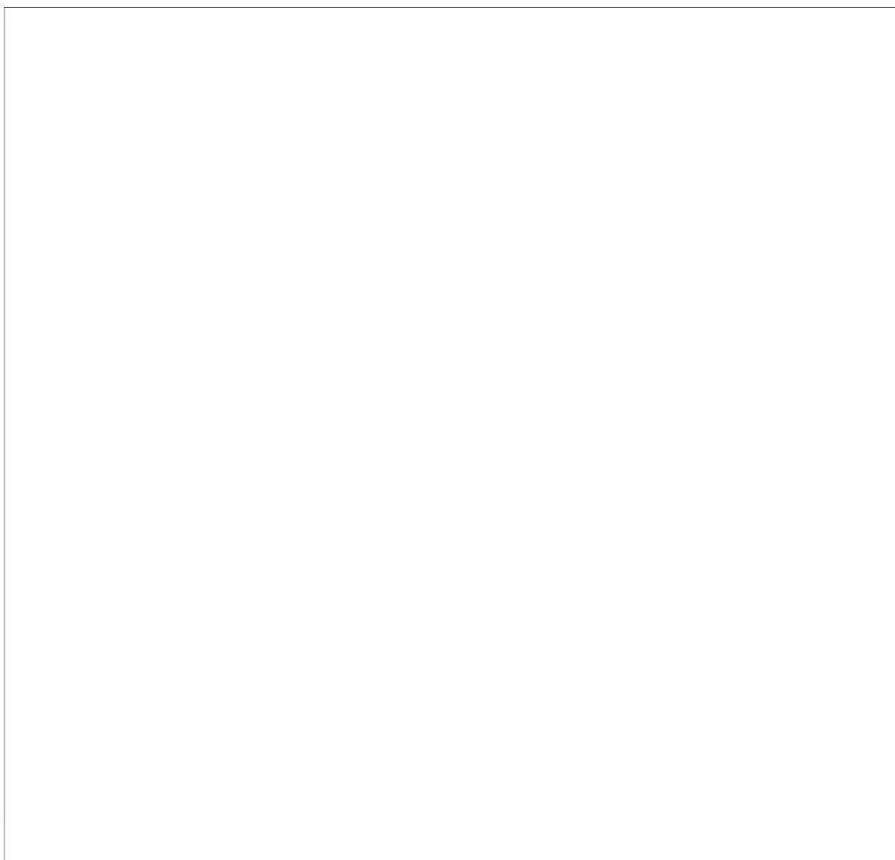
sketchbook (1993); *hors série*, the Regione Toscana published *Antiquarian Drawings from Dosio's Roman Workshop: Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale N. A. 1159*, by Ruth Rubinstein and Emanuele Casamassima (1993). The learned articles written by collaborators and others which draw upon the *Census* are now too many to record here, though Phyllis Bober's are listed below.

Phyllis Bober's horizons were widened yet again in 1965, when she returned to full-time teaching at NYU, founding in 1967 the Department of Fine Art at University College, of which she remained Chair until 1973, from 1970 with the title of Professor, as well as continuing her labours on the *Census* at the Institute of Fine Arts. She gave survey courses on the history of art, as well as innovatory and highly successful specialized ones on Architectural Ecology and other topics. In the summer of 1972 she was back at the excavations in Samothrace.

In 1973, on the ending of her marriage, she began a new life as Dean of the Graduate School at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, also receiving the titles of Professor of the History of Art and of Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology. From that time, the formal collaboration on the *Census* between London and New York having been terminated by New York, Phyllis Bober was obliged to continue her work on the *Census* as an individual. Her personal commitment was undiminished and her input remained substantial, though her visits to London were unavoidably fewer. A Guggenheim Fellowship in 1979–80 allowed her to work intensively in Rome at a project she had long had in mind because of its value to the *Census* as well as its intrinsic interest: an edition of the *Statue di Roma* of Ulisse Aldrovandi; it remains in draft. She continued her supply of new information to the *Census* after its enlargement by co-operation with the Bibliotheca Hertziana and its computerisation, which had been made possible by its inclusion in the Getty Art Information Program, advising also on publications and presiding over the joint Warburg-Hertziana-Getty international symposium in London in 1983, at which she gave the opening paper on »Theme and Programme in Renaissance Collections of Classical Antiquities«. Her last visit to England was in 1999.

On her return to Bryn Mawr from her Guggenheim Fellowship in 1980, Phyllis Bober had stepped down from her Deanship in order to teach and devote more time to her research, in which henceforth Aldrovandi contended with a serious concern for the history of food. Always a superb cook in her own right, a worthy member of the Dames d'Escoffier, to whom she was elected in





2 *Phyllis Pray Bober working in London, September 1999*

1995, she had been fired during her time in London in the 1950s by the experimental Roman dinners, prepared strictly according to Apicius by Barbara Flower and Elisabeth Rosenbaum (-Alföldi), to which Warburgians were regularly invited. In New York in the 1960s, with the support of a sympathetic Dean, she was already giving university courses, requiring practical work, on ancient Roman culinary arts; for the Bryn Mawr Forum she now began extramural classes on Culture and Cuisine and The Art, Science and Politics of Food, on which she later instituted a regular undergraduate course; and in the 1990s she gave a series of papers both at the annual Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery and at the international conferences organized by the Oldways Preservation and Exchange Programme. These were a function of her

firm belief in the universal obligation to make the best and most responsible use of natural resources as well as of a Brillat-Savarinian sense of the importance of food as an indicator in social and cultural history. The triumphant outcome was a large, fully illustrated and best-selling volume *Art, Culture and Cuisine* (Chicago University Press 1999), taking the story from prehistoric times to the end of the Middle Ages and the International Gothic Style; before her death she had completed the continuation volume, on the Renaissance and Baroque periods, which the same Press hopes to publish in 2004. Her menu for a Roman dinner can be found on the Internet.

Phyllis Bober's achievements were recognized by Bryn Mawr in 1987 when she was appointed Leslie Clark Professor in the Humanities; on retirement she assumed the titles of Clark Professor Emerita, as well as Professor Emerita of the History of Art and of Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology; she had been President of the Renaissance Society of America in 1983–84, and of the College Art Association in 1988–90, as well as Senior Fellow in the Society of Humanities at Cornell University in 1984; she held visiting appointments at Florida State University in 1998 and as Ruth and Clarence Kennedy Professor of the Humanities at Smith College in 2000; she was awarded an honorary doctorate by Bowdoin College in 1999 and she was Charles Homer Haskins Lecturer of the American Council of Learned Societies in 1995 and Walter W. S. Cook Lecturer at the New York University Institute of Fine Arts in 2001. Outside America her achievement was equally recognized: as early as 1958 she was already Korrespondierendes Mitglied of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, in recognition of her contribution to »Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs« in 1993, besides being appointed Honorary Fellow of the Warburg Institute, she received an honorary doctorate of the University of Rome, and she was elected Socio straniero of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei in 1996. Not merely for these distinctions but for the teaching, scholarship and writing by which they were won, she is much missed; her passing is equally mourned for the loss of her articulate, positive, unflagging and aspiring – and strikingly handsome – self.<sup>2</sup>

#### THE WRITINGS OF PHYLLIS PRAY BOBER

1942–45

An Editor of *Marsyas*: A Publication by the Students of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University

1946

The Sculpture of the Arch of Septimius Severus at Leptis Magna, Summary of M. A. Thesis (1943), in: *Marsyas* 3, 1943–45, pp. 162–3

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1948

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Studies in Roman Provincial Sculpture, Summary of PhD Dissertation (1946), in: *Marsyas* 4, 1945–47, p. 115

1951

Cernunnos: Origin and Transformation of a Celtic Divinity, in: *American Journal of Archaeology* 55, pp. 13–51, 13 ill.

1952

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1957

Drawings after the Antique by Amico Aspertini. Sketchbooks in the British Museum, London (Studies of the Warburg Institute, vol. 21), The Warburg Institute, 108 pp., 148 ill.

1963

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1964

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1967

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1977

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1984

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1986

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1988

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1989

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1991

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1992

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1993

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1995

A Life of Learning, Charles Homer Haskins Lecture, New York, American Council of Learned Societies, (ACLS Occasional Paper, vol. 30), 24 pp.

Lobster: Endangered »Monarch of Seafoods«, in: Disappearing Foods. Studies in Foods and Dishes at Risk, Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, 1994, Totnes, pp. 51–57

1996

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1997

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1999

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2000

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Art, Culture and Cuisine: Renaissance and Baroque, Chicago

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> J. B. Trapp: The Census: Its Past, its Present and its Future, in: Pegasus. Berliner Beiträge zum Nachleben der Antike 1 (1999), pp. 11–21.

<sup>2</sup> Much of my information comes from Phyllis Bober: *A Life of Learning*, The Charles Homer Haskins Lecture for 1995, supplemented from the Annual Reports and the correspondence files of the Warburg Institute; the memory of kind friends (Enriqueta Harris Frankfort and the late Ruth Olitsky Rubinstein in particular) have amplified and corrected my own; and Susan Bielstein of Chicago University Press provided a final and vital piece of information.