

Obituary for Erik Hansen.

Architect, Professor Emeritus Erik Hansen passed away quietly in his home on Christianshavn on the last day of the old year. This year he would have turned 90, and evidence for his remarkable accomplishments within the field of building conservation can be found in many different parts of the world.

With a qualifying exam in mathematics from Ribe Cathedral School and an apprenticeship in carpentry from the technical school in Ribe, Hansen was accepted to the University of Copenhagen as a student of mathematics, physics and chemistry, and he passed the preparatory exam for teaching. After a year he switched to the School of Architecture at the Academy of Arts, where his studies of building conservation under Professor Mogens Koch combined well with his artisanal interests.

Throughout his career, the examination of the monuments of the culture of building was performed with careful measurements with the aim of understanding the structural engineering of the monument and organizational relations behind it. The model for Hansen's artisanal approach to conservation was the Danish architect and archaeologist Ejnar Dyggve.

Erik Hansens "purist" measurements and his incredible stringent lines in pen, which for all their simplicity succeeded in providing the information necessary for an understanding of the monument's structural condition, established a school not only in Denmark but in many other countries to which he was summoned by the UNESCO.

The commitment to Greece was one of the more durable and particularly associated with the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. A few times he stayed there for several years, at other times he visited the site every six months. The first major work for the Ecole Francaise d'Athènes was the study of the famous Siphnian Treasury at Delphi in the years 1955-1965 together with G. Daux, a large-scale topographic atlas of the entire sanctuary, which was completed in 1968, and finally his outstanding research on the Temple of Apollo and its reconstruction after an earthquake in 373 BCE together with P. Amandry. His extraordinarily accurate measurements of one stone after another read with epigraphically preserved construction contracts with named contractors were released in three volumes in the monograph series of the French school, Fouilles the Delphes, in 2010 and achieved great attention.

On his travels Erik Hansen was accompanied by his Swedish wife Inger, called Kickan, a trained pharmacist. They both became involved with the local populations and wrote about their experiences. In Delphi they knew all the inhabitants, and whenever someone travelled to Delphi they had to bring a bag full of letters for their local friends. And Kickan and Erik also had their own traditions - When the moon was full; they stole out of the temple at dusk with a bottle of ouzo and sat there in silence, while the moon slowly rose above the deep valley of Delphi.

Alongside his work for UNESCO for example in Cambodia, Afghanistan and Korea, Erik Hansen was deeply engaged in the difficult restoration of the beautiful marble bridge over the channel of Frederiksholm in Copenhagen and its portals in the years 1977-1982. Preserved from this work are piles of exquisite drawings in his hand-drawn line acknowledged by Akademiraadet, the Danish Royal Academy of Arts, in 1977 when the council awarded him the Eckersberg Medal.

Subsequently, he was also awarded the distinguished C. F. Hansen Medal for his work with the Siphnian Treasury, and in France he was awarded the Prix Mendel in 1987 by the Academie des Inscriptions an Belles Lettres.

Finally, the simple, architecturally expertly preserved, traditional Danish, middle class house in Christianshavn where Erik Hansen lived with Inger is a fine example of his legacy. In this house the Hansens formed a close friendship with the family of Merete Femø and Allan Pedersen living in the back building, a friendship which provided anchorage for Erik Hansen in the years after the death of Inger.

Erik Hansen's motto: "Well begun is half done - but well finished is only half begun," summarizes well his distinctive way of life.

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