

Albert Sutherland Roe

April 16, 1914 — December 19, 1988

Albert S. Roe, or “Shad” as he preferred to be called, was a professor of history of art in the College of Arts and Sciences. He was brought to Cornell as a full professor and chairman of that department in 1961 in order to reorganize and revitalize its curriculum. He put the department on its feet, expanded its faculty, increased its course offerings, and negotiated outside funding for a newly initiated graduate program.

Born in New York City, Shad earned his Bachelor’s degree in 1936 and a Master of Fine Arts degree in 1940, both from Princeton University. During World War II, he served as a commissioned officer with the United States Navy. After the war, he resumed his studies in history of art, obtaining his Ph.D. degree from Harvard University in 1950. Before coming to Cornell he held academic appointments at Bowdoin College, Swarthmore College, the University of Pennsylvania, the State University of New York at New Palz, and the University of Delaware.

Throughout his scholarly career, Shad devoted himself to the study of Blake’s watercolors which culminated in the publication of *Blake’s Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* (Princeton University Press) that won the Emily S. Hamblen Memorial Award of the Poetry Society of America in 1954. He also specialized in the study of American art. Through his association with the Winterthur Museum, which developed during the period that he taught at the University of Delaware, he became increasingly interested in American decorative arts and the European sources for their designs. The highlight of his courses on American art at Cornell was the several-day field trip he organized at the Winterthur Museum so that his students could study real objects close at hand.

Love of the actual art object led Shad not only to collect art on his own, but also to serve in curatorial positions in a number of museums. He was curator and acting director at the Bowdoin College Museum of Fine Arts from 1946 to 1953, and keeper of prints and painting at the Winterthur Museum from 1958 to 1961. In 1964, while still in the midst of reorganizing and revitalizing the History of Art Department at Cornell, Shad was asked to take on the additional responsibility of serving as curator of collections at Cornell’s art museum, then housed in the building we know today as the Andrew Dickson White House. It was a much-troubled period in the museum’s young history when Shad stepped into the breach. The director had suddenly resigned and left the operation without an experienced leader. Drawing on his previous museum experience at Winterthur, Shad gave much needed direction and assistance to the staff. He was instrumental in designing and overseeing a major exhibition to celebrate the museum’s first decade of existence. Entitled *Desired Acquisitions: A Tenth Anniversary Exhibition*, this imaginative

project and the accompanying catalogue have become models of the type, and have stimulated similar exhibitions at other institutions like Cornell. Shad went on to serve as the senior curator at the museum before stepping down in 1967 to return to his regular academic duties. Without his timely help and nurturing, the art museum might not have survived this critical period in its growth. He also served as a consultant for the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, assisting in the preparation of the catalogue for a major exhibition on American colonial art titled, "New England Begins: the Seventeenth Century." It was held in the spring of 1982.

A warm, generous, thoughtful person, and always a gentleman, Shad, together with his wife, Daphne, made it a point to take bewildered new faculty members, graduate students, and especially international students, under their wing, giving them a home away from home, and making them feel like welcome members of the Cornell community. For those of us to whom he reached out, his interest and caring hospitality will never be forgotten.

Shad was a faithful and active member of the Episcopal church at Cornell, a stabilizing, reassuring and beloved presence in the congregation for twenty-seven years. Shad's kind and generous disposition of heart and mind encompassed all who came his way.

He is survived by his wife, Daphne Roe of Ithaca; two sons, David Imbrie Roe of Portland, Oregon, and Adrian Nathaniel Roe of Washington, DC; one daughter, Laura Cynthia Roe of London, England; and one grandson.

Maurice F. Neufeld, Martie W. Young, Robert G. Calkins