

Christian Petersen Is Dead

Christian Petersen, sculptor-in-residence at Iowa State University, died at Mary Greeley Hospital in Ames Tuesday evening. Petersen, 76, was associate professor of applied art since 1944 and a well-known Midwestern sculptor.

He came to Iowa State in 1934 to complete a group of figures in the Dairy Industry Building Court and was a member of the staff for 25 years.

In his association with Iowa State and Iowa, the tall, sensitive man taught and worked, and the results of his creative spirit adorn the Iowa State campus and cities throughout Iowa.

Petersen's works at Iowa State include the Dairy Court group and Veterinary Medicine Quadrangle group, statues in the Library and the Memorial Union fountain and MacKay Hall fountain statuary.

Hilton Comments

President James Hilton commented, "Petersen's death is a tragic loss to the University. He

A requiem mass for Christian Petersen will be sung at 10 a.m. tomorrow at the St. Peter and Paul Church located two miles from Gilbert. He will be buried at the church cemetery there. The body will lie in state at his home in Gilbert today.

was a wonderful person and made genuine and lasting contributions to the cultural side of life of this institution."

The son of a Danish immigrant, Petersen came to this country with his parents as a boy of nine, and spent most of his early life along the Atlantic seaboard in New Jersey and parts of New England.

At 16, young Petersen went to work in a New Jersey jewelry factory and learned the art of steel engraving and die-cutting.

Early Specialty

The application of these arts to medal stamping became his early specialty and by the time he was 30 years old he had risen to the top of his field and was one of the nation's best known steel engravers.

Many of his early medals and medallions made by the sculpture method (using bronze replicas developed from hand-modeled wax originals) are considered by the experts to be the finest achievements of their kind.

Petersen studied sculpturing at night and became so enthusiastic over this medium of free ex-

pression that he opened a studio in Boston.

His background included training at the Fawcett Art School and the Newark Technical School in Newark, N. J.; the Art Students League, New York City; work with H. Kiston, Boston sculptor; and further study at the Rhode Island School of Design.

In 1933, he was commissioned to work on the Grant Wood Memorial in Iowa City. He came to this task from private commission.

Courtyard Beginning

Petersen's work on the sculptured fountain in the courtyard of the Dairy Industry Building in 1934 led to a chance for a full-time teaching position.

The change from the crowded hectic life he had led in Chicago, Boston, and New York City to the peaceful serenity and friendliness of the Iowa farm country was refreshing and he decided to accept the offer.

Petersen worked and taught in his studio in the Veterinary Medicine Quadrangle until 1955 when he retired from active teaching. Still, he continued to dedicate himself to nurturing an interest and appreciation in art and worked to foster a cultural environment at Iowa State. It has been said that rarely has a college been so unified by the stamp of one artist.

1936 Exhibit

In the late 1930's, 60 pieces of Petersen's work were exhibited in the Youngers' Tea Room Galleries in Des Moines. His works, including a number of busts of prominent Iowa State staff and faculty members, are extensive and are well known in the East as well as in the Midwest.

In recent years he completed a number of outstanding religious works for assorted Iowa cities. Two of the largest are the terra cotta statue of St. Francis Xavier Church in Dyersville and a heroic depiction of St. Bernard at the Mount St. Bernard Seminary in Dubuque, carved from a 20-ton piece of stone.

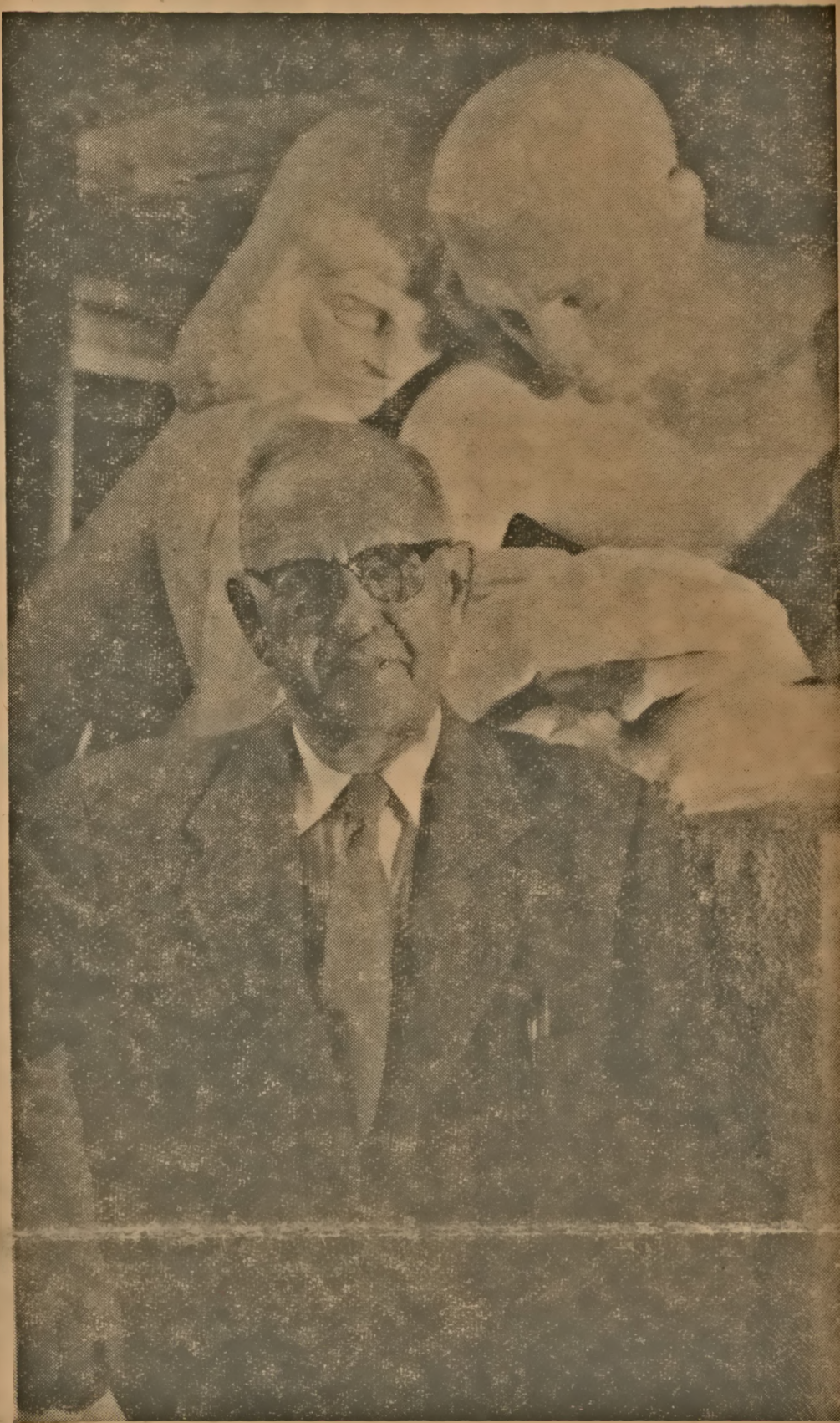
Other Existing Works

Other existing works include the Battery D Memorial in New Bedford, Mass.; Spanish-American War Memorial, Newport, R.I.; Gov. G. W. Clarke and Henry C. Wallace, Des Moines Historical Society; Madonna of the Schools, St. Cecilia's Church in Ames; a sculpturing of L. Myron Boozer in the Presbyterian Church in Ames.

Petersen applied two basic methods to his sculpturing techniques. He carved his figures out of stone or marble to achieve one type of sculptural art. His terra cotta studies, which were his most numerous, were first modeled in clay and then baked for long hours in a kiln at temperatures up to 2,200 degrees Fahrenheit. With sculptural designs he made a small clay model first to work from. With portraits he had his subject pose whenever possible, but achieved extraordinary results when he worked in a traditional manner — from photographs.

Honorary Member

Petersen was an honorary associate member of the Iowa chapter of the American Institute of Architects. He was a member of Delta Phi Delta, art recognition society, and Tau Sigma Delta, architecture and allied arts honorary society. He



Christian Petersen, associate professor of applied art and famed sculptor throughout Iowa and the Midwest, died Tuesday night at Mary Greeley Hospital. Many of his statuary groups are passed by most students every day on their way to classes. These mute statue groups will serve as a reminder of a great sculptor for years to come.

was also a member of the city council at Gilbert where he made his home.

During the past winter, Phi Kappa Theta social fraternity, of which Petersen was a member, promoted a fund-raising drive to erect on the campus a group of figures depicting students studying at the University. The drive was successful, and the group will be placed in the near future.

On March 26 Petersen was honored by friends at a formal reception in Gilbert.

Petersen is survived by his wife, Charlotte, and their daughter, Sister Mary Kerstan, B.V.M., of Round Lake, Ill.