

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
BRUCE COLE
(1938-2018)

All of us at Indiana University are deeply saddened by the passing of Bruce Cole, one of our university's most renowned scholars and public servants, who achieved great distinction both within his field of art history and in the broader arts community. A distinguished scholar of Renaissance art, he possessed a deep and broad knowledge of art and architecture that he applied to all of his scholarly and public-service endeavors, many of which he dedicated to highlighting the importance of understanding the past in order to preserve and strengthen our democracy and culture. He was also the first IU faculty member to be appointed to the university's Board of Trustees in modern times, and during his long and accomplished tenure at IU he served as a powerful champion for celebrating and enhancing the university's renowned traditions in the arts and humanities.

When he was sworn in as NEH chairman, Bruce said that "defending our homeland requires not only successful military campaigns; it also depends on citizens understanding their history, their institutions and their ideals. The humanities show us what it means to be an American, and why America's ideals are worth fighting for."

Bruce devoted his life and career to these ideals and, hence, his will be a lasting legacy within the field of humanities and for all of us who will carry on his work to preserve our nation's cultural heritage.

We at IU were extremely proud to serve as Bruce's academic home for so many years and benefit from his extraordinary accomplishments and service to the university. He will be greatly missed, and our thoughts and condolences go out to his family, friends and former colleagues here and all around the nation.

Michael McRobbie
President, Indiana University

Bruce Cole came to Bloomington in 1973 as a faculty member in art history and comparative literature, after his education at Case Western (BA, 1962), Oberlin (MA, 1964) and Bryn Mawr (PhD, 1969). He taught and wrote about the painters and schools of art of Renaissance Italy. Among his fourteen books are studies of Giotto and Florentine Painting, 1280-1375 (1976), Agnolo Gaddi (1977), Masaccio and the Art of Early Renaissance Florence (1980), Sieneese Painting in the Age of the Renaissance (1985), Love, Lust, and Loss in Venetian Painting of the Golden Age (1988), Piero della Francesca (1991), and Titian and Venetian Painting, 1450-1590 (1999). He also wrote more broad histories of art -- The Renaissance Artist at Work (1983), Italian Art 1250-1550 (1987), The Informed Eye: Understanding Masterpieces of Western Art (1999) – and (with Heidi Gealt) the text for a television series on The Art of the Western World: From Ancient Greece to Post-Modernism (1989). He rose to the rank of Distinguished Professor before he left the university in 2001 to become chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities

During his eight- year term as chair of the NEH, the longest tenure of service as chair in the history of the Endowment, Bruce Cole initiated programs to encourage the study and teaching of American history and culture, including We the People and Picturing America, published as a book in 2008, in which American art was used in public schools and libraries to tell the story of the United States and its institutions. He also supported initiatives in the digital humanities, and he established cultural partnerships with Mexico, China, and other countries. In 2008 he was awarded by President George W. Bush the Presidential Citizen’s Medal “for his work to strengthen our national memory and ensure that our country’s heritage is passed on to future generations,” and in that year he was also awarded the University’s President’s Medal for “excellence in service, achievement and teaching.” After his retirement from the NEH, Bruce Cole served as a Senior Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, as president of the American Revolution Center, which established a museum in Philadelphia, as a member of the US National Commission for UNESCO, and at the invitation of Barack Obama as a member of the Eisenhower Memorial Commission, which oversees the creation of a memorial on the National Mall to the late president.